What are the Steps Involved in Self-Forgiveness?

by

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B.A., Brock University, 2003
M.A., Brock University, 2007

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

Most forgiveness research focuses on the person harmed by a transgression and the benefits of granting forgiveness to the wrongdoer. This dissertation sought to contribute knowledge to the emerging field of forgiveness of the self. The aims of this study were to ascertain whether laypersons define self-forgiveness in the same manner as researchers and to explore the validity of a process-model of self-forgiveness. Of interest was also whether individuals in different stages of self-forgiveness differ in their beliefs and whether laypersons have the same understanding of self-forgiveness and the steps involved as the counsellors from whom they may seek guidance. Study 1 explored these questions in a sample of 121 undergraduate students, Study 2 in a sample of 189 members of the broader community, and Study 3 in a sample of 80 counsellors and psychologists. Participants provided a definition of self-forgiveness and put the hypothesized steps of self-forgiveness into a temporal order. Although there were differences in perspectives, participants tended to agree with researchers that self-forgiveness is letting go of negative thoughts and emotions, and adopting positive thoughts and emotions toward the self. However, participants went beyond this, stating that self-forgiveness is in large part learning to accept the self, moving on from the past, and growing from the experience. The majority of participants agreed that the steps

proposed in the model are comprehensive of the self-forgiveness process. In each study, participants also agreed with the proposed ordering of approximately half of the units. However, students, community members, and counsellors had significantly different beliefs about the ordering each of the units. In addition, the ordering of the units often depended on the participant's stage in the process of self-forgiveness (e.g., have never felt the need to forgive myself, would like to forgive myself but have not begun, am in the process of forgiving myself, have fully forgiven myself). The results of this study have practical applications for future self-forgiveness researchers, laypersons searching for information about how to begin forgiving oneself, and counsellors who encounter clients struggling with guilt, shame, and self-blame.

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Acknowledgments

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CHAPTER I

Literature Review

1.1 Introduction

The day the child realizes that all adults are imperfect, he becomes an adolescent; the day he forgives them, he becomes an adult; the day he forgives himself, he becomes wise.

Attributed to Alden Nowlan

Mention the word ‘forgiveness’ to any man, woman, or child, and most likely, they will have a personal story to tell about a time they granted or withheld forgiveness, or a time when they were, or wished to be, forgiven. Forgiveness has long been a concept relevant to individuals and groups; references to forgiveness are found in almost all religions of the world (Leach & Lark, 2004). For instance, Buddhist doctrine emphasizes compassion, the avoidance of revenge and grudges, and the importance of moving on from the past whereas Christianity puts the onus on confession and repentance as the path to healing relationships with other humans as well as with God (Witvliet, 2001).

Prior to the mid-1980s, almost all academic writings about forgiveness were theological or philosophical (Enright & Eastin, 1992), emphasizing the religious and moral issues related to the topic. Although psychological research also taps into these facets, the focus tends to be more clinical, examining situational, dispositional, and relational factors that contribute to the forgiveness process. From a psychological standpoint, forgiveness becomes relevant first, when an individual perceives that harm has occurred, and second, when the impact of this perceived harm is too great to simply dismiss.

1.2 Defining Forgiveness

1.2.1 What Is It And What Is It Not?

For almost all researchers, forgiveness is a phenomenon applicable only to people (individuals, families, neighbourhoods, communities, and nations; Enright, Freedman, & Rique, 1998). A minority believe that forgiveness can be extended to a situation such as an illness or natural disaster (Thompson & Snyder, 2004; Thompson et al., 2005), but most disagree, stating that these researchers are describing *acceptance* rather than *forgiveness*; forgiveness entails interpersonal and moral elements which are not applicable to the body or a natural disaster (Enright et al., 1998).

Most researchers are also very clear about what forgiveness is not. For instance they agree that forgiveness is not forgetting (e.g., Enright & Zell, 1989), but rather, a reframing of the negative event, "forgiveness is the changing of seasons…when you forgive, you do not forget the season of cold completely, but neither do you shiver in its memory" (Coleman, 1998, p. 79). Forgiveness is also distinguished by many from condoning, excusing, justifying, and pardoning (Affinito, 2002; Enright, 2001; Enright & Eastin, 1992). Condoning refers to an individual overlooking or minimizing the transgression and ultimately repressing his or her anger (Enright, 2001; McGary, 1989); excusing minimizes any responsibility on the part of the wrongdoer even though a wrong was clearly committed (Belicki, Rourke, & McCarthy, 2008); justifying means that there were mitigating circumstances and as such, the wrongdoer did not actually commit a transgression (Belicki et al., 2008), and a pardon can only be issued by a judge (Enright & Eastin, 1992).

Finally, although a few believe that reconciliation and forgiveness are

synonymous (Hargrave & Sells, 1997; Veenstra, 1992), the majority of researchers (e.g., Enright, 2001) disagree. Certainly, forgiveness greatly facilitates reconciliation (Enright, 2001; North, 1987); however, forgiveness is an internal process and is an individual's response to harm, whereas reconciliation is the coming together of both the affected party and the responsible party into a relationship in which trust has been restored (Enright, 2001; Enright & Eastin, 1992; Fincham & Beach, 2001; North, 1998; Worthington, 2001).

All definitions of forgiveness make reference to a relief from negative thoughts, emotions, and behaviours such as anger, resentment, and the desire for revenge (e.g., Affinito, 2002; Thompson et al., 2005). In addition, forgiveness is believed by many to be an intentional choice (e.g., Coleman, 1998; Enright & Eastin, 1992; Worthington, 2001). In addition, a large group of researchers believe that once the negatives are released, forgiveness means that the void must be filled with positive emotions, thoughts, and behaviours toward the wrongdoer (e.g., Enright, 2001). For instance, Worthington (2001) defines forgiveness as the letting go of hate, bitterness, and the desire for revenge followed by the adoption of positive feelings such as empathy, compassion, and even love toward the wrongdoer. North (1987) and Enright (e.g., 1998) both similarly state that forgiveness is an often undeserved gift given to the offender, in which a harmed individual lets go of his or her resentment and negative judgments and fosters compassion, benevolence, generosity, and love toward the offender.

1.2.2 Researcher Definitions vs. Layperson Definitions

For almost twenty years, researcher conceptualizations of forgiveness went unchallenged. When researchers finally thought to ask those in the general population about their definitions, the results were somewhat surprising. Certainly, the definitions of

the general population showed some similarity to those of researchers'. For instance, laypersons tend to agree that forgiveness is not the same as forgetting, excusing, or justifying (Freedman & Chang, 2010; Kanz, 2000). Furthermore, they most commonly define forgiveness as a letting go of negative emotions and thoughts (DeCourville, Belicki, & Green, 2008; Freedman & Chang, 2010; Younger, Piferi, Jobe, & Lawler, 2004). However, a glaring discrepancy between the definitions of researchers and the general population is that a number of laypersons do not equate forgiveness with the adoption of positive thoughts, emotions, and behaviours. In addition, many view it as synonymous with, or strongly linked to, reconciliation whereas most researchers are adamant that these are separate processes (DeCourville et al., 2008; Kanz, 2000; Younger et al., 2004). The results of these studies comparing layperson and researcher definitions challenged the prevalent belief that there existed only one type of forgiveness and researchers began exploring and confirming the existence of different types of forgiveness.

1.3 Forgiveness and Health

1.3.1 Forgiveness, Physical Health, and Mental Health

Certainly, forgiveness is beneficial at the relational level; however, it also contributes to individual well-being. Numerous studies have demonstrated a link between unforgiveness and mental health issues such as chronic anger, anxiety, general distress, guilt, and depression (e.g., Leary, Springer, Negel, Ansell, & Evans, 1998; Worthington, Mazzeo, & Kliewer, 2002). Individuals high in dispositional forgiveness tend to score lower on scales of depression, anger, and anxiety, and higher on scales of life satisfaction (e.g., Thompson et al., 2005), and forgiveness interventions have been shown to aid in the

promotion of positive mental health (e.g., Hebl & Enright, 1993; Lin, Mack, Enright, Krahn, & Baskin, 2004).

In addition to the apparent mental health benefits of forgiving, research has begun to establish a plausible relation between forgiveness and physical health benefits. For instance, forgiveness has been linked with less fatigue (Lawler et al., 2003), less chronic back pain (Carson et al., 2005), lower heart rate, lower blood pressure, and increased immune system functioning (Harrar, 2002; Lawler et al., 2003).

1.3.2 How Does Forgiveness Influence Health?

Forgiveness may influence health, for instance, cardiovascular health, by reducing the physiological stress brought on by anxiety, anger, and hostility (McCullough, 2000; Witvliet, Ludwig, & Vander Laan, 2001).[2] In one study in which participants had coronary artery disease, those with higher levels of trait forgiveness had less perceived stress and lower total cholesterol (Friedberg, Suchday, & Srinivas, 2009). In another study, in which participants recalled a real-life transgression, those imagining the transgression ending in forgiveness had a heart rate two times lower than those imagining holding a grudge (Harrar, 2002). Similarly, Witvliet et al. (2001) had participants recall a real-life transgression and imagine it ending in forgiveness and then, a grudge. During the forgiveness imagery, participants were less aroused, had a lower heart rate and lower blood pressure, lower skin conductance levels, and less tension in the brow area.

Stressful interpersonal relations are also associated with changes in the endocrine system (i.e., increased levels of cortisol) which can affect physical and mental health

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[2] A second way that forgiveness may affect health is through the re-establishment of relationships that provide the individual with social support (McCullough, 2000).

(Berry & Worthington, 2001). For instance, negative feelings can lead to sweating, trembling, nausea, and an accelerated heart rate, and negative feelings that persist can turn into depression or anxiety (Clark, 2002). When an individual experiences stress, corticosteroids increase the release of AVP (arginine vasopressin) which raises blood pressure and increases aggression. This is adaptive if one is in an emergency situation and needs to act quickly. However, if the stress is prolonged, the hippocampus region of the brain may actually shrink, leading to impaired cognitive functioning, decreased serotonin production, and poorer decision making (Clark, 2002). In addition, activity in the brain of someone who is ruminating about unforgiveness is very similar to the brain activity observed in an individual having a stressful experience. Their hormonal patterns, blood chemistry, and tension in facial muscles are also similar (Worthington & Scherer, 2004). This suggests that unforgiveness, like stress, can lead to a disruption in the production of cytokines and antibodies, both of which help the immune system fight infections (Worthington & Scherer, 2004).

1.4 Forgiveness Interventions

The desire to help offended individuals experience the mental and physical health benefits of forgiveness has prompted researchers to explore the efficacy of forgiveness interventions. Many individuals do not possess the skills necessary to deal with the negative emotions that follow a transgression; attending a forgiveness intervention is one way in which they can learn to acknowledge and resolve their anger in a healthy and appropriate way (Fitzgibbons, 1998).

1.4.1 The Effectiveness of Forgiveness Interventions

A meta-analysis of 14 process-based interventions (each included a comparison

group) found that forgiveness intervention groups forgave more (effect size .82), had a greater increase in positive affect (effect size .81) and self-esteem (effect size .82), and a greater decrease in negative affect (effect size .54). All of these changes were maintained at follow-ups; age and student status did not significantly affect the outcomes (Lundahl, Taylor, Stevenson, & Roberts, 2008).

More specifically, Al-Mabuk and Enright's (1995) forgiveness intervention geared toward young adults deprived of love as children resulted in the forgiveness group (as compared to control) gaining a significant increase in hope, self-esteem, and positive attitude toward their parents, being more willing to forgive, and experiencing a decrease in trait anxiety. Similarly, in an intervention with post-abortion men (men whose partners had an abortion against the man's wishes; time elapsed since abortion ranged from 6 months to 22 years) the forgiveness group experienced an increase in forgiveness of their partner as well as an increase in self-forgiveness, and a decrease in anxiety, anger, and grief (Coyle & Enright, 1997). Yet another example is Freedman & Enright's (1996) intervention with incest survivors. Following the forgiveness intervention, participants (as compared to a control group) experienced a decrease in levels of depression and anxiety, an increase in hopefulness, and all were able to forgive their abusers.

1.4.2 Prolonged Effectiveness of Forgiveness Interventions

Although not all intervention studies have followed up with participants at a later date, the results of those that have are encouraging: the beneficial effects of forgiveness interventions seem to be long-lasting. For example, in Freedman and Enright's (1996) aforementioned study, the benefits experienced by the participants continued to be maintained one year following the study. In another forgiveness intervention study

conducted by Blocher and Wade (2010), the benefits of the forgiveness intervention were sustained even after two years had passed. Specifically, participants' negative reactions to the responsible party continued to diminish while the decrease in vengeful thoughts and negative psychological symptoms obtained immediately following the intervention were maintained. In addition, participants stated that the information they had learned in their forgiveness group had been useful to them when dealing with new transgressions.

The results of the aforementioned forgiveness intervention studies suggest the usefulness of these programs, and although the simple passage of time is mildly effective (i.e., leading to acceptance), interventions aimed specifically at forgiving have been found to be more effective (Wade, Worthington, & Meyer, 2005).

1.5 Self-Forgiveness

1.5.1 Defining Self-Forgiveness

Forgiveness interventions, as well as most forgiveness research, have been focused on other-forgiveness. Although some academics have discussed self-forgiveness (e.g., Enright & the HDSG, 1996; Snow, 1993), only recently have researchers begun to empirically examine this process.

Most often, the need for self-forgiveness evolves from a morally-related transgression (Mills, 1995; Murphy, 2003). When individuals let themselves down by breaking their own personal moral codes, they are often left feeling ashamed about having thwarted their ideals and guilty about the specific transgression that they have committed (Murphy, 2003). Individuals can feel the need to self-forgive for hurting someone else or for hurting themselves because of having done something they should not have done or, conversely, for failing to do something they should have (Hughes, 1994;

Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013a). However, not only responsible parties need to seek self-forgiveness: Offended parties may also feel the need to self-forgive because they (rationally or not) believe that they contributed to the transgression (Peterson & Park, 2004).

As with other-forgiveness, self-forgiveness is often differentiated from condoning (Enright & the HDSG, 1996; Hall & Fincham, 2008; Snow, 1993), excusing, and forgetting (Enright & the HDSG, 1996; Hall & Fincham, 2008); it is a way for individuals to acknowledge their mistakes and accept responsibility for their actions (Mills, 1995; Romero, et al., 2006). Although self- and other-forgiveness have been found to be moderately correlated with each other (Macaskill, 2012; Wilson, Milosevic, Carroll, Hart, & Hibbard, 2008), they are separate constructs (e.g., Macaskill, 2012; Ross, Kendall, Matters, Wrobel, & Rye, 2004); an individual can be forgiven by another and continue to struggle with self-forgiveness, or a person can forgive him/herself without obtaining forgiveness from the offended person(s). Some individuals may find other-forgiveness easier than self-forgiveness because the latter requires one to be both forgiver and forgiven (Tipping, 2011; Worthington Jr., 2006). In addition, whereas researchers strive to differentiate other-forgiveness from reconciliation (e.g., Enright, 2001), self-forgiveness is ultimately a reconciliation with the self (Enright & the HDSG, 1996; Tipping, 2011).

Most researcher definitions of self-forgiveness make reference to the individual feeling compassion, benevolence, and respect for the self, loving the self, and putting an end to self-punishment (Enright & Eastin, 1992; Hall & Fincham, 2005; 2008; Holmgren, 1998). For instance, Enright and the Human Development Study Group (1996) define

self-forgiveness as "…a willingness to abandon self-resentment in the face of one's own acknowledged objective wrong, while fostering compassion, generosity, and love toward oneself" (p. 116). Similarly, Wohl, DeShea, & Wahkinney (2008) define self-forgiveness as "...a positive attitudinal shift in feelings, actions, and beliefs about the self following a self-perceived transgression or wrongdoing committed by the self" (p. 2). In other words, according to researchers, self-forgiveness is the cessation of negative thoughts, emotions, and behaviours toward the self, and the adoption of positive emotions, thoughts, and behaviours toward the self (Enright & the HDSG, 1996).

The argument has been made that current definitions of self-forgiveness focus too much on the end-state of self-forgiveness, the pleasurable experience of feeling positively toward the self, and fail to recognize the vital importance of the *process*: experiencing the negative emotions and taking full responsibility for one's actions (Wenzel, Woodyatt, & Hedrick, 2012; Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c). In fact, these current definitions could just as easily be referring to pseudo-self-forgiveness in which the responsible party fosters a positive view of him or herself through defense mechanisms (such as rationalization, minimization, and deflection of blame) rather than genuine self-forgiveness; both result in positive feelings toward the self (Fisher & Exline, 2010; Hall & Fincham, 2005; Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013a; 2013b, 2013c, 2014). Woodyatt and Wenzel (2013a) suggest that self-forgiveness be defined as a process that revolves around acceptance of and moving on from our misbehaviour through the recognition of the consequences of our actions and acknowledgment of our responsibility in causing the harm. Although this results in the responsible party feeling positively toward him or herself, the actual process of self-forgiveness may be quite uncomfortable.

1.5.2 Self-Forgiveness and Health

Of the few studies that have empirically explored self-forgiveness, most have demonstrated that it is associated with lower levels of shame and guilt (e.g., Fisher & Exline, 2006; Rangganadhan & Todorov, 2010; Romero et al., 2006). For instance, in a sample of women with breast cancer, the inability to engage in self-forgiveness was associated with poorer quality of life and higher mood disturbance (i.e., psychological distress). Self-forgiveness was also a unique predictor of both mood disturbance and quality of life, and researchers suggested that self-forgiveness may be beneficial because it elevates quality of life which can be decreased by prolonged feelings of shame, guilt, and overall self-blame (Romero et al., 2006). In another study, shame uniquely explained 18% of the variance in self-forgiveness which suggests that elevated feelings of shame may make it more difficult for an individual to engage in self-forgiveness (Rangganadhan & Todorov, 2010).

As with other-forgiveness, self-forgiveness has been associated with mental health benefits, while lack of self-forgiveness has been linked to poorer psychological functioning. For instance, failure to forgive oneself is associated with higher levels of depression and anxiety (Maltby, Macaskill, & Day, 2001; Mauger, et al., 1992), low self-esteem (Mauger, et al., 1992; Ross, Hertenstein, & Wrobel, 2007), social introversion (Mauger, et al., 1992), aggression, and self-harm, including suicide (Ross et al., 2007).

The ability to self-forgive has also been shown to positively affect negative behaviours, such as procrastination. In one study, students who reported self-forgiveness for procrastinating on studying for their first exam reduced their procrastination on the second exam (they also improved their grade). This relation was mediated by negative

affect, suggesting that self-forgiveness can improve behaviour by decreasing negative affect (Wohl, Pychyl, & Bennett, 2010).

Very little research exists on the relation between self-forgiveness and physical health. In one study conducted on a sample of healthy individuals, self-forgiveness predicted 9.4% of perceived physical health (other-forgiveness predicted 3.9%), and self-forgiveness was a unique predictor of perceived physical health (Wilson et al., 2008). Given the emerging relation between improved physical health and other-forgiveness, self-forgiveness likely would have the same effects.

1.5.3 Self-Forgiveness, Religion, Gender, and Personality

As of yet, no relation between religiosity and likelihood to forgive the self has been discovered[3] (Ingersoll-Dayton, Torges, & Krause, 2010; Rangganadhan & Todorov, 2010; Toussaint & Williams, 2008) and results on gender differences are mixed. For example, Mauger et al. (1992) found that women had slightly more difficulty forgiving themselves as compared to men, while Rangganadhan and Todorov (2010) found no gender differences in likelihood to self-forgive, although they did find that women were more likely to feel shame, guilt, personal distress, and empathy.

Researchers have, however, established a relation between self-forgiveness and personality. For instance, self-forgiveness has repeatedly been negatively associated with all facets of neuroticism (Maltby et al., 2001; Mullet, Neto, & Rivière, 2005; Ross et al., 2004; Ross et al., 2007), especially the anxiety, hostility, depression, and anger facets (Mullet et al., 2005). This is most likely caused by the neurotic person's tendency to

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[3] In one exception to this, adults over the age of 65 who did not feel forgiven by others, including God, were less likely to forgive themselves (Ingersoll-Dayton et al., 2010).

focus on the internal, stable causes and consequences of offending (Ross et al., 2007). Neuroticism is a significant negative predictor of self-forgiveness (accounting for 40% of the variance), suggesting that self-forgiveness may be quite difficult for individuals who lack emotional stability (Ross et al., 2004).

Self-forgiveness is also positively correlated with extraversion (gregariousness, warmth, positive emotions), conscientiousness (competence, achievement, striving, self-discipline), and the trust and modesty facets of agreeableness (Ross et al., 2004). In addition, although narcissistic individuals are slow to forgive others, they are quick to forgive themselves (Macaskill, 2012; Tangney, Boone, & Dearing, 2005). That both narcissism and the above personality traits are positively correlated with self-forgiveness seems contradictory. However, these mixed findings may be the result of an ambiguous definition of self-forgiveness. When self-forgiveness is only measured as an end-state in which the individual releases negative feelings and begins to feel positively about the self, it becomes indistinguishable from behaviours such as denial or minimization of responsibility, which would be more typical of the narcissistic individual (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013a).

Lack of self-forgiveness and certain psychological disorders such as borderline personality disorder and schizotypal personality disorder also appear to be related; individuals with borderline or schizotypal personality disorders appear to be less likely to forgive themselves (Ross et al., 2007).

1.5.4 When Should Self-Forgiveness Occur?

Self-forgiveness is a topic clouded with arguments about whether it should occur before or after other-forgiveness, and whether it should take place if other-forgiveness is

not obtained. In fact, some suggest that self-forgiveness should never occur. Of course, merely because an event requires other-forgiveness, does not mean that the responsible party will feel the need to seek self-forgiveness, and this is especially true for less-serious transgressions (Hughes, 1994; Murphy, 2002). However, if guilt and shame are affecting the life of the responsible party, self-forgiveness may be the solution.

According to some, this solution should only be explored if the responsible party has repented and sought forgiveness from the person harmed (Murphy, 2003; Snow, 1993). North (1998) claims that although self-forgiveness must occur in order for the responsible party to fully accept forgiveness from the affected party, the process of self-forgiveness can only be completed if he or she receives forgiveness from the affected party.

In support of self-forgiveness occurring after other-forgiveness, Zechmeister and Romero (2002), in analyzing affected party and responsible party narratives, found that self-forgiveness was associated with less empathy for the person harmed, more self-focus, and more blaming of the affected party. Given these findings, individuals who engage in self-forgiveness may be less likely to subsequently make amends to the person harmed (because of their lack of empathy). However, these results should be interpreted cautiously because the researchers did not ascertain how participants were defining self-forgiveness: participants may have been referring to a process in which one lets the self "off the hook" by dismissing or minimizing their responsibility in the harm. Woodyatt and Wenzel (2013a) contrast this *pseudo-forgiveness* with what they term *genuine self-forgiveness* in which individuals take full responsibility for their actions; both result in individuals releasing negative emotions and feeling better about the self.

Requiring self-forgiveness to be conditional on the reception of other-forgiveness places the power fully with the affected party, who may not be able or willing to grant forgiveness to the responsible party (Mills, 1995). In this instance, the responsible party would be doomed to a life weighted down by feelings of guilt and shame. According to Murphy (2003), this is not necessarily negative; even if individuals engage in self-forgiveness, they should carry around some guilt and shame about the event in order to keep them humble.

However, others believe that condemning a person to a life wracked with guilt and shame is unhealthy, and that although other-forgiveness should be given priority, forgiving oneself and not obtaining other-forgiveness is acceptable in cases when other-forgiveness is not possible (e.g., the affected party is dead, has moved away, refuses to speak with responsible party, etc.). In these situations, self-forgiveness is beneficial because it allows the responsible party to regain self-confidence and to move on with his or her life (Snow, 1993). On the other hand, some believe that "...self-forgiveness is always appropriate and desirable from a moral standpoint of view, whatever the offender has done, whether or not she can make full restitution for the wrong, and whether or not the victim forgives her" (Holmgren, 1998, p. 75).

Regardless of when self-forgiveness happens (before or after, with or without other-forgiveness), many authors stress that genuine self-forgiveness is a process that involves taking full responsibility for one's actions (e.g., Mills, 1995; Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c). Others seem to believe the opposite: Self-forgiveness is a self-indulgent action that allows individuals to absolve themselves of responsibility for having hurt another (Dillon, 2001).

In line with this view, critics of self-forgiveness assert that it is incompatible with respect for the affected party: The affected party was the one harmed and as such, he or she is the one who should have the right to decide whether or not forgiveness (in any form) occurs (Holmgren, 1998; 2002). In actuality, these researchers may not hold opposing views of self-forgiveness, but rather, as previously mentioned, they may be referring to different forms of self-forgiveness. The former are referring to a process which is slow and painful, and which, through the act of accepting responsibility, demonstrates respect for the affected party. The latter are referring to pseudo self-forgiveness which is a selfish act that allows individuals to absolve themselves of responsibility (e.g., through denial, minimization, or shifting of the blame) and as such, is disrespectful to the affected party.

In response to the suggestion that responsible parties must await forgiveness before engaging in self-forgiveness, some researchers ask what should be done if the responsible party cannot seek forgiveness because the affected party is unavailable, and point out that individuals can still atone for their transgressions through self-forgiveness: by accepting responsibility and acting in less harmful ways (Holmgren, 1998). In fact, as Holmgren (1998) points out, chasing affected parties for forgiveness can disrespect and re-victimize them. Allowing responsible parties the right and responsibility to work through the transgression, by allowing them to engage in self-forgiveness and move away from self-condemnation, increases not only the respect and compassion they have for themselves, but also for others (Holmgren, 1998).

1.6 Negative Consequences of Offending

Having committed a transgression, many individuals experience negative

thoughts and emotions, and engage in negative behaviours (e.g., substance abuse). For instance, they may feel guilt, shame, disappointment, remorse, anguish, despair, self-doubt, low self-worth, alienation from the self (Dillon, 2001), and self-loathing (Murphy, 2003). Often, self-loathing arises because individuals view themselves as evil, or because they did not live up to a personal moral standard. However, individuals can also feel self-loathing after having done the "right" thing [the example given by Murphy (2003) is of the last-standing member of an army troupe feeling guilty at surviving when his comrades did not].

1.6.1 Self-Blame

When responsible parties experience self-loathing related to transgressing, they are in a situation in which they blame themselves for a negative outcome in which either another person or themselves were the affected party (Hughes, 1994); of course affected parties of a transgression may also engage in self-blame, believing they could have done something to foresee or prevent the negative event (Flanigan, 1992), or because of fear that others believe they were responsible for the harm (Enright, 2001). Affected party self-blame is quite common: 88% of one sample (164 individuals against whom a transgression had been perpetrated) believed they had contributed to the occurrence of the transgression (Leary et al., 1998). As a result, these individuals had negative self-ratings and experienced more hostility, guilt, anxiety, and general distress.

Although individuals may be correct in blaming themselves for a transgression, remaining in a state of self-blame and self-condemnation can have serious effects. For instance, among women with breast cancer, those who engaged in self-blame had more general distress, increased anxiety and depression, and poorer psychological adjustment

(Glinder & Compas 1999).

In general, individuals who blame themselves more are inclined to experience more depression (Fischer & Exline, 2006; Wohl et al., 2008; Worthington, Witvliet, Pietrini, & Miller, 2007), guilt, shame, and anxiety (Fischer & Exline, 2006; Worthington et al., 2007). They also tend to engage in poorer self-care (Worthington et al., 2007) and excessive self-punishment (Dillon, 2001). Moreover, individuals who remain in a state of self-blame often have a reduced quality of life (Holmgren, 1998), lower life satisfaction, lower self-esteem, increased anger (Fischer & Exline, 2006), and poorer social relationships because of their impaired ability to relate to others (Holmgren, 1998). In small doses, negative emotions (e.g., guilt and shame) may not be too troubling, but chronic guilt and shame is debilitating, interfering with a person's quality of life and social relationships (Tangney et al., 2005).

1.6.2 Guilt

Guilt is a form of emotional distress that often occurs following the harm of another, for which one blames the self (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994; Estrada-Hollenbeck & Heatherton, 1998). It tends to occur in response to a specific negative event (Estrada-Hollenbeck & Heatherton, 1998; Halling, 1994) and is often stronger when the harm occurred in the context of a close relationship (Baumeister et al., 1994).

Responsible parties may feel guilty either for an intentional or accidental act which violated their own or another's moral standards. A person may also feel guilty for surviving an event such as a natural disaster (Baumeister et al., 1994). Affected parties may feel guilt because of the anger they are experiencing about a transgression (Enright,

2001), because of their hesitation in re-establishing a relationship with a responsible party (Scobie & Scobie, 2002), or because they blame themselves for the transgression. This is especially true if the responsible party also blames the person harmed (Baumeister et al., 1994). Affected party-guilt is frequently caused by hindsight bias; affected parties believe (often falsely) that they could have foreseen or prevented the event (Kubany & Watson, 2003).

From the perspective of responsible parties, guilt tends to occur when they become concerned about the effect of a particular behaviour that they performed (Tangney, 1992); in other words, it is an other-oriented emotion (Hall & Fincham, 2005). This often elicits tension, remorse, regret (Tangney et al., 2005; Tangney, Wagner, & Gramzow, 1992), empathy (Hall & Fincham, 2005), and a desire to engage in reparative action (Hall & Fincham, 2005; Fisher & Exline, 2010; Tangney, 1990; 1992; Tangney et al., 2005). Engaging in reparative action frequently aids in the re-establishment of a social bond because it implies that the responsible party cares about the well-being of the affected party, wants to repair the harm, and will not engage in this type of action again (Baumeister, et al, 1994).

Although moderate guilt in appropriate circumstances can have positive effects, the experience of disproportional or chronic guilt can have severe consequences. For instance, chronic guilt is associated with a variety of emotional disorders, especially those characterized by depression and anxiety (Caprara, Manzi, & Perugini, 1992). Becoming overwhelmed by guilt can lead individuals to engage in (ineffective) self-punishment, or in an attempt to avoid the guilt, to make excuses and refuse to take responsibility for their actions (Fisher & Exline, 2010; Schwan, 1998). Some suffer from guilt for decades

(Ingersoll-Dayton & Krause, 2005) which can result in alcohol or drug abuse; a desperate attempt to alleviate the guilt (Kubany & Watson, 2003). In addition, vindictive affected parties may use the responsible party's guilt as a way to manipulate the responsible party (Baumeister et al., 1994).

Guilt can also have a negative impact on a person's well-being, increasing hostility (Tangney et al., 1992) and threatening self-esteem, self-image, and self-confidence (Schwan, 1998). In addition, individuals suffering from guilt may deal with their anger in non-constructive ways, for example, with physical aggression, verbal aggression, nonverbal aggression (e.g., slamming doors), indirect aggression (e.g., damaging something belonging to someone else), and displaced aggression (Tangney, Wagner, Hill-Barlow, Marschall, & Gramzow, 1996).

Although prolonged guilt has some adverse effects, researchers agree that it is less debilitating and easier to overcome than prolonged shame (Bassett et al., 2008). This is because, unlike with shame, when individuals feel guilty, their self-concept and self-identity remain intact (Tangney 1990; Tangney et al., 1996).

1.6.3 Shame

Shame has been found to be a unique negative predictor of self-forgiveness (Macaskill, 2012). Prolonged shame can be an extremely devastating emotion, because rather than being contained to a specific behaviour/event, it stems from a negative evaluation of one's entire self (Tangney, 1990; 1992; Tangney et al., 1992); it is a perception of the self as having a fundamental deficiency (Kaufman, 1980). Because the self is seen as flawed, the individual has a sense of being worthless and powerless, and often describes the sensation of "shrinking" (Tangney, 1990; 1992; Tangney et al., 2005;

Tangney, et al., 1992; Tangney, et al., 1996).

Prolonged shame is a barrier to reconciliation (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2006) and is often accompanied by a loss in self-respect (Dillon, 2001), a feeling of being exposed (i.e., others being able to see the defectiveness) (Kaufman, 1980; Tangney et al., 1992), a feeling of disgusting others, hopelessness (Miller & Tangney, 1994), a loss of self-efficacy (Tangney et al., 1996), a loss of self-confidence, and also a sense of embarrassment (Enright, 2001). In contrast to guilt, for which the focus remains on the negative behaviour that occurred, with shame, negative attitudes are internalized and become part of the person's core identity (Kaufman, 1980).

Whereas guilt can make a person move toward behaviours that are likely to aid in the healing of the transgression (e.g., reparative action), individuals who feel shame are more likely to withdraw and hide (Halling, 1994; Tangney et al., 1996; Tangney et al., 2005), deny responsibility for a transgression (Tangney et al., 2005), and displace their anger at themselves toward others (Tangney et al., 1996; Tangney et al., 2005). In one study, shame displacement (blaming others and expressing anger toward others) increased the likelihood of individuals engaging in bullying behaviours, whereas shame acknowledgment predicted less bullying (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2006).

In addition, individuals who feel prolonged shame are less likely to notice the emotions of others, less likely to come up with effective solutions to interpersonal problems, and more likely to act in aggressive and/or self-destructive ways (Fisher & Exline, 2010). Shame has also been linked to anger, hostility, anxiety, depression, obsessive-compulsive tendencies (Tangney et al., 1992), rage (Flanigan, 1987; Kaufman, 1980), and rumination (Tangney et al., 1996). In one study, shame moderated the

association between alcohol and self-forgiveness: In the high-shame group, high levels of self-forgiveness were related to lower levels of alcohol use (Ianni, Hart, Hibbard, & Carroll, 2010).

The all-encompassing nature of prolonged shame is difficult to overcome and so it tends to inhibit self-forgiveness (Fisher & Exline, 2010; Halling, 1994; Hall & Fincham, 2005). One reason for this may be the strong relation between shame and rumination: those who experience shame tend to ruminate about the transgressions for which they hold themselves responsible; guilt is moderately negatively correlated with this (Tangney et al., 1996).

1.6.4 Rumination

When a stressful event occurs, individuals may ruminate (engage in cognitive rehearsal), which involves being plagued by (often) intrusive thoughts, images, bad dreams, and strong emotions about the event (Horowitz, Wilner, & Alvarez, 1979; Sukhodolsky, Golub, & Cromwell, 2001; McCullough, 2000; Worthington, 2006); in other words, they continue to relive the stressful event (Sukhodolsky et al., 2001). Rumination, especially intrusive rumination, which can last for years (Ingersoll-Dayton et al., 2010), often impedes an individual's ability to fully engage in emotional processing because it narrows the person's perspective, leads to less self-reflection and therefore, less emotional awareness (Greenberg, 1995).

Consistent with this suggestion, rumination is associated with emotion-focused coping, in which behaviour and thoughts are focused on the moods brought on by an event (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991). Ruminative individuals also tend to alienate others which results in the loss of social support (Ingersoll-Dayton et al., 2010), engage in more

self-criticism, experience more negative affect (Kasch, Klein, & Lara, 2001), feel shame, disgust, sadness, isolation (Skinner, Edge, Altman, & Sherwood, 2003) and be more depressed (Ingersoll-Dayton et al., 2010; Kasch et al., 2001; Siegle, Steinhauer, Carter, & Thase, 2000; Ysseldyk, Matheson, & Anisman, 2007). Rumination may increase and prolong depression because for ruminative individuals, depressed mood and negative thinking interferes with problem-solving and instrumental behaviour (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991).

In addition to the negative emotional and mental health consequences of rumination, cognitive rehearsal can also result in poorer physical health. When individuals ruminate, the hormonal and neural patterns activated during the actual event are mimicked: the sympathetic nervous system is activated, adrenaline and noradrenaline are released into the bloodstream, and heart rate and blood pressure increase, resulting in wear on the blood vessels (Sapolsky, 2005). Furthermore, to distract themselves from the intrusive thoughts and emotions, individuals may try to suppress or escape their ruminative tendencies by engaging in reckless behaviours (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991). Because they are focused on the hurt and the negative emotional reaction initially experienced following a transgression, ruminative individuals are more likely to experience unforgiveness (Worthington & Wade, 1999). Although this finding refers to the unforgiveness of others, rumination about the wrongness of one's own behaviour may well decrease the likelihood of forgiveness of the self.

1.7 Self-Forgiveness Models and Interventions

1.7.1 Usefulness of a Self-Forgiveness Intervention

Although studies of self-forgiveness are few, self-forgiving individuals seem to

experience greater well-being (higher self-esteem, satisfaction with life, emotional stability, and lower depression, anxiety, and anger), as well as lower remorse and self-blame (Fisher & Exline, 2006). The relation between self-blame and depressive affect has been found to be mediated by self-forgiveness (Wohl et al., 2008), suggesting that self-forgiveness may have positive effects through its impact on self-blame.

As aforementioned, some doubt the usefulness of self-forgiveness, viewing it instead as a way for responsible parties to let themselves off of the hook (e.g., Dillon, 2001); to get on with their lives as if the negative event never happened. The tendency is to derogate the responsible party and sympathize with and support the affected party. However, self-forgiveness is a very introspective and difficult task. The essence of genuine self-forgiveness is not excusing behaviour, but rather, it requires accountability - admitting and accepting full responsibility for one's role in a transgression (DiBlasio, 1998; Dillon, 2001; Hall & Fincham, 2005; Holmgren, 2002; Wohl, et al., 2008). Accepting responsibility for a transgression requires an intense, difficult, and often uncomfortable examination of the self (Hall & Fincham, 2005) that involves understanding why the behaviour was wrong (Holmgren, 2002), developing empathy for the affected party (DiBlasio, 1998) and, as a result, feeling remorseful (Wohl et al., 2008).

Going through the steps that lead to accepting responsibility to be able to forgive the self is a daunting task, one with which many struggle. Many obstacles to self-forgiveness can exist, such as depression, self-condemnation, the severity of the harm, and the responsible party continuing to engage in the harmful behaviour (Worthington, 2006). Indeed, individuals may not be aware of the steps they could take that would lead to self-forgiveness, or may feel so remorseful and self-loathing that they do not believe

they deserve self-forgiveness.

The aforementioned guilt, shame, and ruminative tendencies that can afflict a responsible party can lead the responsible party to feel very angry. In fact, angry memories are a unique negative predictor of self-forgiveness, meaning that those who hold on to their angry memories have more difficulty forgiving themselves (Barber, Maltby, & Macaskill, 2005). This anger can be channeled externally (toward others) or internally (self-punishment), and if it becomes intense enough, can even prompt an individual to commit suicide (Flanigan, 1992).

A self-forgiveness intervention would offer struggling individuals the opportunity to embark on a difficult but rewarding journey in a supportive environment. The group setting of the intervention would allow responsible parties the realization that they are not the only ones who have behaved "badly" – that many people make mistakes, and many struggle with finding a way to move on from the burden of that mistake.

Ideally, such an intervention would focus on three elements: cognitive self-forgiveness (reconciling real and ideal views of the self), behavioural self-forgiveness (making reparation – to the self or the affected party), and emotional self-forgiveness (re-establishing self-esteem, integrity, self-acceptance, and self-respect; Enright & the HDSG, 1991; 1996; Enright 2001; Ingersoll-Dayton, & Krause, 2005).

The goal would be for the responsible party in the intervention to undergo a series of motivational changes, such as a decrease in the motive to avoid things associated with the transgression (e.g., the affected party and places or objects related to the transgression), a decrease in the desire to retaliate against the self, and an increase in the desire and ability to act benevolently toward the self (Hall & Fincham, 2008).

1.7.2 Predictive Models of Self-Forgiveness

In order to create a successful self-forgiveness intervention, a solid model of self-forgiveness is needed. To date, no well-established predictive model of self-forgiveness exists. In 2005, Hall and Fincham (2005; 2008) suggested a predictive model of self-forgiveness that took into account social-cognitive, emotional, and transgression-related factors that affect self-forgiveness. They proposed that self-forgiveness is influenced by attributions about the transgression (e.g., accidental versus intentional), the severity of the transgression, empathy toward the person harmed, guilt and shame, conciliatory behaviour, and perceived forgiveness. Following analyses, they suggested that the pathways from shame, empathy, attributions, and conciliatory behaviour to self-forgiveness be removed (Hall & Fincham, 2008).

Five years later, Rangganadhan and Todorov (2010) suggested that the model needed to be revised because it failed to properly take empathy and shame into account. They found that although Hall and Fincham's (2005) model accounted for 28% of the variance in self-forgiveness, it did not yield a good model-to-data fit; they proposed a new model. This model also accounted for 28% of the variance in self-forgiveness but had better model-to-data fit X^2 (3, N=150) = 3.09, p = .379. Rangganadhan and Todorov's (2010) model demonstrated that although shame and guilt predict each other (they tend to co-occur), only shame uniquely predicts self-forgiveness (more shame leads to less self-forgiveness). In addition, personal distress empathy was also uniquely predictive of self-forgiveness, whereas conciliatory behaviours were not[4].

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[4] Of note, guilt was predictive of conciliatory behaviours; the more guilt one feels, the more one is likely to engage in conciliatory behaviours.

1.7.3 Theoretical Models of Self-Forgiveness

Theoretical models of forgiveness-seeking and self-forgiveness do exist, but none have been empirically tested. For instance, North (1998) proposed a nine-stage model of forgiveness-seeking for responsible parties. The first is a cognitive stage in which responsible parties realize that they have committed a wrongful action, become aware of the consequences of the action, and recognize that they deserve to be punished for it.

The second stage is emotional, in which the responsible parties experience remorse and regret for their wrongful actions. The third is what North terms a volitional stage, in which the responsible parties resolve to become better people, reflect, and understand the motives for their behaviour and the context within which it occurred. The fourth stage of this model revolves around repentance. Responsible parties develop a sense of self-respect and begin to feel worthy of forgiveness.

By the fifth stage, responsible parties have overcome feelings of self-hatred and now want to be forgiven. Following this stage, responsible parties should request forgiveness through an apology, making amends, and demonstrate to the affected party how they have changed. In the seventh stage, responsible parties achieve some degree of self-forgiveness and patiently wait for forgiveness from the affected party. In the eighth stage, perpetrators accept the forgiveness offered by the affected party and as a result, experience an increase in self-esteem (if the affected party refuses forgiveness, responsible parties must accept that they have done all they can and move on).

The final stage revolves around some form of reconciliation between affected party and responsible party. North's model is fairly philosophical in nature and, rather than focusing on self-forgiveness per se, focuses instead on the seeking of forgiveness

from another, from which self-forgiveness is a natural consequence. This model fails to take into account that receiving forgiveness from another and forgiving oneself are independent constructs and one does not necessarily lead to the other (e.g., Macaskill, 2012; Ross et al., 2004).

Holmgren (1998, 2002) advocates a six-stage model of self-forgiveness in which self-acceptance and a positive self-view are the goals. The first stage encourages responsible parties to regain their self-respect and to realize their value as human beings, despite the harmful action that they have committed. This is followed by a stage in which responsible parties are required to accept complete responsibility for their actions. This involves developing respect for the person harmed, themselves, and their moral obligations.

The third stage is about responsible parties learning to view their affected party as an equal – as an individual with needs, feelings, and vulnerabilities similar to their own, while the fourth stage asks responsible parties to allow themselves to experience the negative emotions that are a result of their actions (guilt, remorse, grief, revulsion). In the fifth stage, responsible parties reflect on the attitudes and beliefs they held that allowed them to act in a harmful way, and in the sixth stage responsible parties offer an apology to the person harmed, make amends, and demonstrate that they have changed for the better. Although this model's final stage is similar to North's second-to-last stage, in which responsible parties are required to apologize and make amends for their behaviour, this model is more focused on self-forgiveness rather than forgiveness-seeking from the affected party. However, the placement of regaining self-respect as the first step to occur in the model is slightly puzzling as individuals would likely need to work through their

negative thoughts and emotions before coming to a place where they can fully achieve a sense of respect for themselves.

One model that focuses solely on self-forgiveness without any elements of forgiveness-seeking from another is Tipping's (2011) model of Radical Self-forgiveness. Although this model is highly spiritual in nature, in simplistic terms it consists of five stages, in the first of which responsible parties tell their story as objectively as possible, with no excuses or justifications. This allows them the opportunity to have their story heard and validated. In the second stage, responsible parties are encouraged to experience the transgression-related emotions of guilt, shame, fear, anger, regret, and remorse.

Tipping refers to his third stage as a form of collapsing the story which involves responsible parties moving from a place of self-judgment to one of self-love (developing compassion and empathy for the self). The fourth stage is the most spiritual stage; however, in psychological terms, responsible parties now reframe their story and look for some unforeseen benefits that may have arisen from their negative behaviour. Tipping's final stage is an integration of the personal transformation that has taken place and he recommends that responsible parties do something physical so that their body as well as their mind can register the shift that has taken place (e.g., breathing work, writing, etc.).

As aforementioned, Tipping's model is quite spiritual in nature. In addition, it does not include developing any empathy for the person who was harmed, nor does it address the underlying causes of the behaviour and the acceptance of responsibility for one's actions.

Two well-known models are those of Worthington (2006) and Enright (2001). In Worthington's (2006) REACH model of forgiveness-seeking, responsible parties accept

that they committed a wrong, attempt to make things right with the affected party, decide to forgive themselves, and make a commitment to living a more virtuous life. In the REACH acronym, responsible parties *Recall* the transgression without judgment and self-blame, they develop *Empathy* for themselves, as well as self-love and compassion for the self. This also involves exploring the emotions of guilt and shame, and understanding the circumstances that led up to the harmful action. Responsible parties then offer themselves the *Altruistic* gift of self-forgiveness (and experience a more positive sense of self as a result), *Commit* publicly to forgiving themselves, and finally, *Hold On* to that self-forgiveness in the future when self-doubt arises.

Worthington's model is not one of self-forgiveness, but rather, one of seeking forgiveness and does not directly address the acceptance of responsibility for one's actions.

Enright's (2001) model of forgiveness-seeking is quite similar to his phase model of forgiveness of others. Phase one of this model is *Uncovering of Guilt and Shame*. In this phase, responsible parties admit that they were wrong and explore whether they feel any guilt, remorse or shame over their actions and whether they have tried to lie about or hide what they have done. They also learn that guilt and shame can be exhausting and explore whether that has manifested for them. They bring to light any instances in which they have compared themselves with the affected party (innocent person versus a bad self), and whether they believe their life and sense of self has been permanently changed by their harmful behaviour.

Phase two is *Deciding to Seek Forgiveness*. In this phase, responsible parties explore whether they should ask the affected party for forgiveness and whether they

would be able to accept the forgiveness if it were offered to them. Phase three is *Working on Receiving Forgiveness,* and the goal is for responsible parties to understand what the affected party has gone through, be grateful for forgiveness if it were offered, and attempt to reconcile with the affected party. If the affected party is unwilling to forgive or reconcile, the responsible parties must learn to accept this. In the final phase, *Discovering*, responsible parties explore how their forgiveness journey was a learning experience and how forgiveness has changed them.

Similar to Worthington's (2006) REACH model of self-forgiveness, Enright's (2001) is more a model of forgiveness-seeking from another which happens to have self-forgiveness nested within it. As such, it does not specifically address the issues of exploring one's motives and taking responsibility for one's actions.

In addition to his model of forgiveness and his model of seeking-forgiveness, Enright and the Human Development Study Group (1996) did propose a model of self-forgiveness. The first phase (*Uncovering Phase*) consists of eight units and involves acknowledging that a harm has occurred, exploring the negative feelings that have arisen as a result of the transgression (dislike toward self, lack of self-acceptance, self-criticism, low self-esteem, guilt, shame. sadness). Individuals also learn that guilt and shame can be consuming and exhausting and explore whether that has manifested for them. In addition, they address any intrusive rumination and comparison thinking that may be occurring (e.g., comparing the hurt self to the self before the harm occurred). The second phase (*Decision Phase*) consists of three units and involves a willingness to consider and commit to self-forgiveness as an option.

The third phase (*Work Phase*) consists of four units and involves responsible

parties actively attempting to decrease the pain that has resulted from the transgression by examining the motives behind their behaviour and developing compassion for themselves. The fourth and final phase (*Outcome Phase*) consists of five units and involves responsible parties finding meaning in their suffering, recognizing that they are not unique in having offended, recognizing a new purpose in life, and forgiving themselves.

Enright's model of self-forgiveness, although quite thorough, does not specifically address developing empathy for the person harmed, nor taking responsibility for one's actions.

1.8 Present Study

The purpose of the present study is to address the knowledge deficit about self-forgiveness. More specifically, the aim of this study is to determine whether the general population defines forgiveness in the same way as researchers and counsellors, and to develop a process model of self-forgiveness.

1.8.1 Rourke's Model of Self-Forgiveness and Healing

As a basis for the creation of a process model of self-forgiveness, a few important considerations were taken into account. First, many researchers allude to the essence of self-forgiveness as lying in the acceptance of responsibility without making excuses (DiBlasio, 1998; Dillon, 2001; Hall & Fincham, 2005; Holmgren, 2002; Mills, 1995; Tangney et al., 2005; Wohl et al., 2008; Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c). According to some, the ability to accept full responsibility involves many steps, which include feeling remorse (Wohl et al., 2008), understanding why the behaviour/action was wrong (Holmgren, 2002), and developing empathy for the person harmed (DiBlasio, 1998).

Second, the current model should include cognitive (accept own limitations, change standards by which you evaluate yourself, take responsibility for your actions), behavioural (make reparations if appropriate, engage in more compassionate and loving behaviors toward yourself), and emotional (experience relief from negative emotions, self-acceptance) elements (e.g., Enright & the HSDG, 1996; Ingersoll-Dayton & Krause, 2005).

Third, because Rangganadhan and Todorov's (2010) predictive model of self-forgiveness included guilt, shame, and personal distress empathy, these should be included in the current process model.

Fourth, the six models of self-forgiveness and forgiveness-seeking mentioned in the previous section were explored for similarities. Any topic relating to self-forgiveness (as opposed to forgiveness-seeking from another) that was an element in more than one of the models was included in the current model. Specifically, all of the above models (Enright, 2001; Enright & the HSDG, 1996; Holmgren, 1998, 2002; North, 1998; Tipping, 2011; Worthington, 2006) included a stage in which responsible parties faced the negative emotions that resulted from their harmful behaviour (e.g., guilt, shame, remorse, anger). In addition, five of the six (Enright & the HSDG, 1996; Holmgren, 1998, 2002; North, 1998; Tipping, 2011; Worthington, 2006) mentioned a stage aimed at responsible parties letting go of their self-hate, and increasing their self-love, self-respect, self-esteem, and self-acceptance; the avenue through which this was achieved was empathy for the self (achieved through perspective-taking and compassion for the self).

Half of the models (Enright, 2001; Enright & the HSDG, 1996; Tipping, 2011) suggested that responsible parties explore how their lives were changed for the better as a

result of the transgression and self-forgiveness. Three models (Enright & the HDSG, 1996; North, 1998; Tipping, 2011) advised responsible parties to explore the attitudes, beliefs, motives, and context that led to their harmful behaviour, and two models (Tipping, 2011; Worthington, 2006) recommended that responsible parties have a chance to tell their story so as to have a voice and feel heard. Although only one model (Holmgren, 1998, 2002) specifically mentioned that responsible parties need to take full responsibility for their actions before engaging in self-forgiveness, four of the models (Enright, 2001; Enright & the HSDG, 1996; North, 1998; Worthington, 2006) indirectly referenced this by indicating that the responsible party need to recognize and admit that a wrong has occurred.

1.8.2 Proposed Model

In accordance with the above considerations, the following process model of self-forgiveness is proposed (See Table 1): The first phase suggests that individuals requiring self-forgiveness must identify the transgression and process the negative emotions surrounding it. Unit 1 (Acknowledge What Happened) centres on individuals acknowledging that a transgression has occurred, that they had a role in it, and reflecting on whether or not their actions were harmful/hurtful to another.

In Unit 2 (Negative Emotions), individuals become aware of and identify the negative emotions they have been experiencing as a result of the transgression (e.g., anger, self-blame, shame, guilt). In Unit 3 (Intrusive Rumination), individuals recognize that not only are they experiencing negative emotions about the event, but that they may also be consciously or unconsciously thinking about the event and feeling these negative emotions repeatedly, in an intrusive form (i.e., ruminating). In Unit 4 (Consequences of

Table 1

Rourke's Model of Self-Forgiveness and Healing

Phases	Units Within Each Phase
Phase 1: Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination	Unit 1: Acknowledge What Happened (Enright, 2001; Enright & the HSDG, 1996; Holmgren, 1998, 2002; North, 1998; Worthington, 2006)
	Unit 2: Negative Emotions (Enright, 2001; Enright & the HSDG, 1996; Holmgren, 1998, 2002; North, 1998; Rangganadhan & Todorov, 2010; Tipping, 2011; Wohl et al., 2008; Worthington, 2006)
	Unit 3: Intrusive Rumination (Enright & the HSDG, 1996)
	Unit 4: Consequences of Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination (Enright, 2001; Enright & the HSDG, 1996; Holmgren, 1998, 2002)
	Unit 5: Commitment (Enright, 2001; Enright & the HSDG, 1996; Worthington, 2006)
Phase 2: The Person I Harmed	Unit 6: Empathy for the Person Harmed (DiBlasio, 1998; Enright, 2001; Enright & the HSDG, 1996; Holmgren, 1998, 2002)
	Unit 7: Helping the Person Harmed (Enright 2001; Holmgren, 1998, 2002; North, 1998)
Phase 3: Motives and Responsibility	Unit 8: Empathy for Self (Enright & the HSDG, 1996; Holmgren, 1998, 2002; Tipping, 2011; Worthington, 2006)
	Unit 9: Motives (Enright & the HSDG, 1996; Holmgren, 1998, 2002; North, 1998; Worthington, 2006)

Table 1, Continued.

Phases	Units Within Each Phase
	Unit 10: Responsibility (DiBlasio, 1998; Dillon, 2001; Enright, 2001; Enright & the HSDG, 1996; Hall & Fincham, 2005; Holmgren, 1998, 2002; Mills, 1995; North, 1998; Tangney et al., 2005; Wohl et al., 2008; Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c)
Phase 4: Compassion, Self-Respect, Self-Forgiveness	Unit 11: Deservingness (Enright & the HSDG, 1996; Holmgren, 1998, 2002; North, 1998; Worthington, 2006)
	Unit 12: Positive Sense of Self (Enright & the HSDG, 1996; Holmgren, 1998, 2002; North, 1998; Tipping, 2011; Worthington, 2006)
	Unit 13: Journey to Self-Forgiveness (Enright, 2001; Enright & the HSDG, 1996; North, 1998; Tipping, 2011)

Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination), individuals realize that this event and the resulting negative emotions and intrusive rumination are having a negative impact on their life (mentally, emotionally, or physically). Finally, in Unit 5 (Commitment), individuals realize that they desire self-forgiveness and make the commitment to try forgiving themselves.

Phase 2 of this model suggests that individuals then move into a state of focusing on the person harmed. In Unit 6 (Empathy for the Person Harmed), they develop empathy by reflecting on how that person has been harmed by their behaviour. Unit 7 (Helping the Person Harmed) takes into consideration that for some, feeling badly about hurting another may lead them to contemplate engaging in reparative behaviour, such as an apology or another way of making up for their harmful action. This stage is about contemplation and may include the individual engaging in reparative action.

Phase 3 of this model suggests that individuals then explore the motives they had for committing the harmful action, leading them to a place of being able to accept full responsibility for their actions. In Unit 8 (Empathy for Self), they examine the context in which the transgression took place, for instance, by reflecting on what else was going on in their life at that time and develop compassion for themselves. Following this, in Unit 9 (Motives), they try and come to an understanding of why they did what they did by exploring what they were trying to gain by behaving this way. In Unit 10 (Responsibility), individuals, having come to a deeper understanding of their behaviour, acknowledge that they were fully responsible for their actions and that despite what was going on in their life at the time, they had choices and made a bad choice.

Phase 4 suggests that after taking responsibility for their actions, individuals

discover compassion and respect for themselves, which leads them to be able to grant and accept self-forgiveness. In Unit 11 (Deservingness), they recognize that they are deserving of self-forgiveness because they are human and flawed like others. Following this, in Unit 12 (Positive Sense of Self), individuals develop a positive sense of self (and a sense of respect for themselves) by reflecting on their positive strengths and attributes. In Unit 13 (Journey to Self-Forgiveness), they reflect on how they have changed and grown as a person since the negative event and acknowledge that the negative thoughts and emotions have left them and that they have forgiven themselves.

1.8.3 Hypotheses

Given the paucity of research into the process of self-forgiveness, this is, at its core, an exploratory study. As noted earlier, when researchers began querying the general population about how they defined forgiveness of others, they were surprised; laypersons did not define forgiveness in the same way as researchers. Given that this occurred twenty years into the study of the topic, this had a profound effect on the interpretation of results from previously published studies.

To date, researchers have not asked the general population how they define self-forgiveness. Given the findings discussed above, I hypothesize that laypersons will also not define self-forgiveness in the same way as researchers. Specifically, I am curious whether they also define self-forgiveness as a letting go of negative thoughts, emotions, and behaviours followed by the adoption of positive thoughts, emotions, and behaviours toward the self. Do their mental models include the components developing compassion, benevolence, and respect for the self, loving the self, and ceasing to engage in self-punishment? Do they view accepting responsibility for one's actions as integral to the

process? Through this study, I will explore how laypersons define self-forgiveness and whether their definitions are consistent with those espoused by researchers.

In addition to exploring conceptualizations of self-forgiveness, I am interested in investigating the validity of my proposed process model. Do individuals in the general population agree that these are the steps involved in the process? Do they believe that they occur in a specific order? If yes, is it the same as the order that I have proposed in my model? I hypothesize that individuals who are not ready to engage in the process of self-forgiveness, those in the process of forgiving themselves, and those who have succeeded in forgiving themselves will differ in the steps they identify as those involved in self-forgiveness, or at the very least, will differ in the way in which they order these steps.

Studies that assess the usefulness of a self-forgiveness intervention have yet to be conducted, but this is a topic likely to be broached by clients and their counsellors or psychologists. I am interested to know whether counsellor and psychologist definitions of self-forgiveness as well as the beliefs about the steps involved in the process and the ordering of these steps differ from those proposed by researchers and whether they differ from those of students and the general population. If the goal is to achieve self-forgiveness, then discrepancies between client and counsellor/psychologist definitions, steps, and ordering of steps could have a significant impact on the effectiveness of the client's progress.

CHAPTER II

Study 1: Establishing Items and Testing the Model in a Student Sample

Study 1 began with a pilot study of the items used to represent the hypothesized units of self-forgiveness; it was important to confirm that each item represented the unit I believed it to represent. Following the establishment of the items, the validity of the model was tested in a sample of convenience – university students.

2.1 Pilot Study

2.1.1 Pilot Study Methodology

Two independent raters (graduate research assistants who were naïve to the study as well as existing forgiveness research) were given a table containing a brief description of the units of the proposed model of self-forgiveness as well as a list of items thought to represent each of the units (see Appendix A). Each unit was represented by three items (presented in random order). In addition, five filler items that were not relevant to the units were included. The raters were asked to identify which of the units they thought each item belonged to and to indicate any items they thought did not belong to any unit. They were not told how many phrases belonged in each unit, nor were they told how many filler phrases, if any, to expect.

2.1.2 Pilot Study Results

To assess interrater reliability, Cohen's (1988) kappa was calculated. This calculation indicated that the free-marginal kappa[5] was $\kappa = 0.83$. This was interpreted as adequate inter-rater agreement because a kappa of $\kappa = .70$ or above generally indicates

[5] Researchers should use free-marginal kappa, as opposed to fixed-marginal kappa whenever raters are not required to assign a given number of cases to each category (Brennan & Prediger, 1981).

sufficient agreement between raters (Randolph, 2008). Six items were removed from the list because both raters placed them into categories that did not match the model (see Appendix A). One additional item was added (see Appendix A) to compensate for the category that had lost more than one item. Both raters then placed this new item into the predicted category.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 Participants

Following the pilot study, participants for Study 1 were recruited from the University of Victoria through the Psychology Department's on-line participant pool. Participants were undergraduate students, and upon logging onto the on-line participant pool, read a brief synopsis of the study (see Appendix B). If interested in participating, students signed up for one of the offered time slots and on that given date and time, came to a privately-booked computer lab on campus and completed the study on-line.

One-hundred twenty-one participants (85 women and 36 men) were run in small groups. To ensure privacy, at least one empty seat was left on either side of each participant. The age range was 17 - 43 years. The mean age was 19.93 (*SD* = 2.80) and the median age was 19 years; one participant failed to declare age. Participants ranged from being in their 1st to 5th year of their undergraduate degree; mean year was 2.26 (*SD* = 1.15) with 39 in their first year, 32 in their second, 24 in their third, 20 in their fourth, two in their fifth, and four not declaring. Participants were given one half-hour participation credit to apply as a bonus credit in one of their classes; no student dropped out of the study and all submitted fully completed surveys.

2.2.2. Instruments and Procedure

Upon arriving in the computer lab, participants were directed to the survey page and immediately presented with a consent form (see Appendix C). By clicking "Continue" participants indicated that they had read and understood the terms presented in the consent form and desired to continue with the study. They then answered some demographic questions (age; sex; year in university; whether or not they had ever felt the need to forgive themselves, wanted to forgive themselves but had not begun, were in the process of forgiving themselves, or had fully forgiven themselves; if they had ever felt the need to forgive themselves, how long ago the event for which they desired self-forgiveness had taken place). They were then asked to indicate on a continuous scale of 0 - 10 (by moving a cursor onto an image that resembled a car speedometer), how far along they were in the process of self-forgiveness (*0 = not applicable, have never felt the need to forgive myself* to *10 = have fully forgiven myself*). Following this, participants were asked, in an open-question format, how they defined self-forgiveness.

Next, participants were presented with one of four randomly generated lists of descriptions of the 13 proposed units of self-forgiveness and asked to move them around until they reflected the order in which they believed self-forgiveness occurs (see Appendix D for an example). The benefit of being able to physically drag and drop the units into the desired sequence location was that participants were then able to examine their final product and make any changes they deemed necessary.

The next two questions were open-ended, asking participants if they believed any of the steps presented were irrelevant to the process, or if they believed any steps were missing from those presented to them. Finally, participants were thanked for their time,

and in an open-ended format asked if there was anything else they would like to add. They were then presented with a debriefing form, explaining the purpose of the study (see Appendix E).

2.3 Results

2.3.1 Data Cleaning

First, all of the survey items were examined for missing data. One participant did not declare age, four participants did not declare which year of their undergraduate degree they were currently completing and two did not provide a definition of self-forgiveness. These participants were still included in analyses. No other data were missing.

Next, to confirm that the survey items had been fully completed, the steps representing the participants' ordering of the units of self-forgiveness were examined to see if none or only the first few had been re-ordered; all participants fully answered the questions. To make the data easier to analyze, each step was re-coded to reflect the theoretical ordering. For instance, if the unit *Motives* was the second unit presented to participants, when imported into the SPSS data analysis program, wherever they placed it in their representation of self-forgiveness, this unit was represented by the number *2*. However, due to the random ordering of presentation of the steps to participants, for another participant, the number *2* might have represented the unit *Acknowledgment of the Harm*. For the former, the number 2 was recoded to the number *9* (as *Motives* was the 9th unit in the proposed model) and for the latter, the number *2* was recoded as the number *1* (as *Acknowledgment of the Harm* was the 1st unit in the proposed model). Re-coding the units to match the theoretical ordering made it possible to correlate participants' ordering

with the proposed ordering of the units.

2.3.2 Length of Time Since Transgression

Participants were asked how long ago the event for which they wished to forgive themselves had occurred, with answers ranging from *1 = not applicable/never felt the need to forgive myself* to *7 = more than three years ago* (M = 4.62, SD = 2.10). Table 2 shows length of time since transgression, as indicated by participants. For just under half of the sample (45.4%), the transgression had occurred at least one year prior to completing this survey. No significant gender difference was found between men (M = 4.69, SD = 2.20) and women (M = 4.59, SD = 2.01), $t(119) = .26$, $p = .80$.

2.3.3 How Far Along Are You in the Process of Forgiving Yourself?

Participants were also asked where they were in the process of forgiving themselves *(1 = Not applicable/I have never felt the need to forgive myself* to *4 = I have done something I regret and have fully forgiven myself).* Table 3 shows the number and percent of participants within each subgroup. The mean was 2.93 (SD = 0.96) with the majority of participants (43%) in the process of forgiving themselves and another 30% having already fully forgiven themselves. There was no significant association between gender and level of forgiveness, χ^2 (3) = 1.07, $p = .78$.

Participants were also asked to indicate, on a continuous scale, how far along they were in the process of forgiving themselves (*0 = I have never felt the need to forgive myself/I have not yet begun to forgive myself* to *10 = I have fully forgiven myself*). The mean for the total sample was 5.63 (SD = 3.23) and as with the categorical question, no significant gender differences were found between men (M = 5.58, SD = 3.44) and women (M = 5.64, SD = 3.15), $t(119) = -.10$, $p = .92$. Table 4 displays where in the

Table 2

Length of Time Since Transgression

Time Since Transgression	Number (%) of Participants
1 - Not applicable (never felt the need to forgive myself)	14 (11.6%)
2 - Less than 1 month ago	13 (10.7%)
3 - 1-3 months ago	11 (9.1%)
4 - 4-6 months ago	14 (11.6%)
5 - 7-12 months ago	14 (11.6%)
6 - 1-2 years ago	27 (22.3%)
7 - 3 or more years ago	28 (23.1%)

N = 121

Table 3

Frequencies of Participants in "Stages" of Self-Forgiveness

Where are you in the self-forgiveness process?	Men (*N* = 36)	Women (*N* = 85)	Total Participants (*N* = 121)
1 - Have never felt the need to forgive myself	5 (13.9%)	9 (10.6%)	14 (11.6%)
2 - Would like to forgive myself but have not yet begun the process	4 (11.1%)	14 (16.5%)	18 (14.9%)
3 - Am in the process of forgiving myself	17 (47.2%)	35 (41.2%)	52 (43.0%)
4 - Have fully forgiven myself	10 (27.8%)	27 (31.8%)	37 (30.6%)

process the 52 participants whom were currently forgiving themselves (on the categorical question) placed themselves. The majority of these participants (77%) viewed themselves as at least halfway through the process.

Of the 121 participants, 18 indicated in the categorical question that they wanted to forgive themselves but had not begun the process; therefore, their answer to the same question on the continuous scale should have been *0*. Interestingly, this was not the case (M = 2.9, SD = 1.7); only one of these participants answered this question with a *0* while the remaining participants' answers ranged from *1* to *6*, with *5* being the only answer not given as a response. This indicates that although participants may not feel like they have been purposefully engaging in steps that will bring them closer to self-forgiveness, clearly something is occurring that allows them to believe that some gains have been made.

Similarly, of the 121 participants, 37 indicated in the categorical question that they had fully forgiven themselves; therefore, their answer to the same question on the continuous scale should have been *10*, yet only ten participants indicated a *10* on the scale (M = 8.43, SD = 1.86). Another 15 indicated a *9* and, although this is arguably close to a *10*, the answers for the remaining 12 participants ranged from *2* to *8*, with *4* being the only number not given as a response. This suggests that although participants feel comfortable stating that in general they have forgiven themselves, this does not always translate into complete self-forgiveness.

2.3.4 Relation Between Time Since Transgression and Level of Self-Forgiveness

To explore whether there existed a relation between length of time since the transgression and level of self-forgiveness, a one-way ANOVA was conducted using

Table 4

How Far Along Participants Currently Forgiving Themselves were in the Process

Where are you in the Process?	Number of Participants (*N* = 52)
1	2 (3.8%)
2	1 (1.9%)
3	3 (5.8%)
4	6 (11.5%)
5	5 (9.6%)
6	11 (21.2%)
7	9 (17.3%)
8	11 (21.2%)
9	4 (7.7%)
10 (*Have fully forgiven myself*)	0

length of time as the dependent variable and level of self-forgiveness as the independent variable. Only three of the four levels of self-forgiveness were used (w*ould like to forgive myself but have not yet begun*; *am in the process of forgiving myself*; *have fully forgiven myself*) were included. The category *have never felt the need to forgive myself* was not included because for these individuals, no transgression had occurred.

Results revealed a significant effect of level of self-forgiveness on length of time since the transgression: *have not begun to forgive myself* (M = 4.11, SD = .39), *am in the process of forgiving myself* (M = 5.08, SD = .23), and *have fully forgiven myself* (M = 5.54, SD = .27), $F(2, 104) = 4.46$, $p < .02$, $\omega = .24$. Post hoc analyses (Bonferroni post hoc test) revealed that those who had fully forgiven themselves were more likely than

those who had not begun the process of self-forgiveness, to indicate that more time had passed since the transgression occurred (M_{diff} = 1.43, p <.02). Figure 1 shows this relation.

2.3.5 Definitions of Self-Forgiveness: Content Analysis

In an open-ended question, participants were asked to define self-forgiveness. Two undergraduate research assistants examined all of the definitions, searching for themes which could become coding categories. In an effort to ensure that the themes of self-forgiveness would be extrapolated from the data rather than existing theory, both raters were blind to the study hypotheses and unfamiliar with existing self-forgiveness research. After individually creating a list of theme categories, they met to discuss their findings.

Although the raters used a slightly different number of categories, upon closer inspection, many of the categories could be merged. For example, one rater created the category *Self-Acceptance* while the other created the categories *Self-Acceptance* and *Self-Love*. Upon discussion, they agreed that *Self-Acceptance*, when viewed as a continuum, would also encompass *Self-Love* and that the raters had actually created the same seven categories. Following agreement of the categories, the raters individually examined each definition of self-forgiveness and coded it into a category (see Table 5).

The raters were told that they could code a definition into more than one category if they believed that it contained more than one theme. For example, one participant stated, "I define self-forgiveness as allowing yourself to let go of what you did in the past. Self-forgiveness requires you to acknowledge what you did wrong or regret, take actions to make it right, and allow yourself to move on past the event." This was coded into three theme categories: *Moving On/Switching Focus*, *Growth and Responsibility*, and *Making*

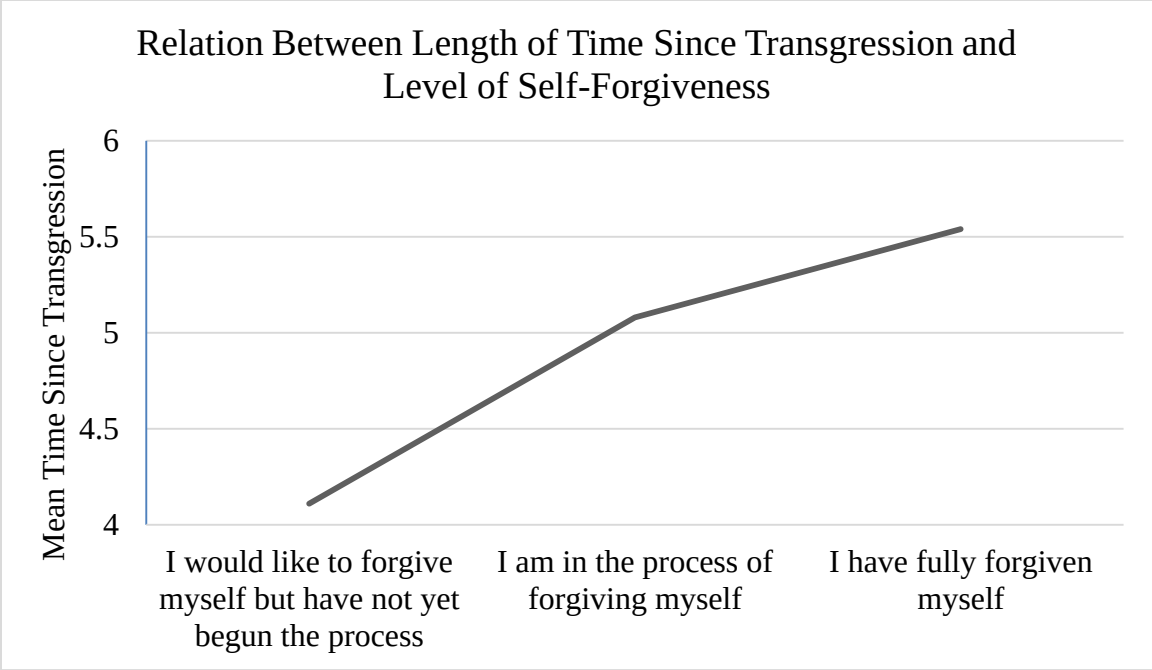

Figure 1. Relation between length of time since occurrence of the transgression and level of self-forgiveness. Note: time since the transgression, *4 = 4-6 months ago*; *5 = 7-12 months ago*; *6 = 1-2 years ago*.

Amends/Asking for Forgiveness.

After a first round of coding, the raters met, discussed discrepancies in their coding and re-coded the definitions. To assess inter-rater reliability, Cohen's (1988) kappa was calculated for each category theme (kappa was calculated for each category theme rather than for the all of the categories together because one of the assumptions of this calculation is that each category is mutually exclusive; Randolph, 2008). Inter-rater reliability was quite high, ranging from $\kappa = .87 - .98$. Table 6 lists the kappa for each category theme and well as the number of definitions coded into each category theme.

Although not an official category, one individual stated that self-forgiveness is achieved through the forgiveness of others, "It is a way that helps myself accept the mistakes and forgive myself to reduce negative emotion. Forgiving others is also a way to

forgive myself." In addition, five of the definitions did not fall into any of the category themes. Three of these merely stated that self-forgiveness is forgiving yourself, another simply said "acceptance" but offered no further elaboration and one was simply unclear in its meaning, "Being able to look myself in the eye in the mirror and fall asleep at night."

2.3.6 Ordering of the Units Involved in Self-Forgiveness

To determine whether participant ordering of the units thought to be involved in self-forgiveness matched the hypothesized ordering, a Spearman's rho correlation was calculated for each subject (assessing the correlation of their derived ordering of the units with the hypothesized ordering). Spearman's rho correlations varied considerably, ranging from -.68 to .72 (M = -.01, SD = .28). The range for the subgroups was as follows: *never felt the need to forgive myself*: -.23 to .63 (M = .11, SD = .26), w*ant to forgive myself but have not yet begun*: -.41 to .46 (M = -.05, SD = .23), *in the process of forgiving myself*: -.68 to .70 (M = .01, SD = .26), *have fully forgiven myself*: -.52 to .72 (M = -.09, SD = .30).

Table 7 lists the means and standard deviations for each unit and each subgroup. The means were in the mid-to-upper range (4.93 - 10.06) and the ordering of each step had considerable variance; the standard deviations ranged from 1.74 - 5.01. To obtain an understanding of exactly how participants placed each of the units, the frequency distributions of each unit were examined (see Table 8, Appendix F).

I expected that *Acknowledgment* of the harmful event would be one of the first things individuals would engage in when beginning to self-forgive, but instead it was most frequently (34%) placed near the end of the process, as Unit 10. Although the second-most common placement was more toward the beginning of the process, it was

Table 5

Categories for Participant Self-Forgiveness Definitions

Self-Forgiveness Is...
1. Letting Go of Negative Emotions (e.g., guilt, shame, anger)
2. Moving On/Switching Focus (moving forward from the event; focusing on other things in your life)
3. Self-Acceptance/Positive Sense of Self (coming to a place of acceptance about my behaviour; thinking positively about myself despite having committed this transgression)
4. Growth and Responsibility (acknowledging and accepting responsibility for my actions; understanding the motives behind my actions; learning and growing from this experience)
5. Punishment/Struggling (punishing myself and feeling negatively toward myself)
6. Forgetting/Excusing/Denying (acting as if the transgression did not occur; denying my part in the transgression; rationalizing my behaviour)
7. Making Amends/Asking for Forgiveness (apologizing, making amends, asking the affected party for forgiveness)

still three units away from the expected placement. Interestingly, those who had never felt the need to forgive themselves most commonly (36%) placed it at Unit 2, only one unit away from what was predicted.

I also expected that experiencing *Negative Emotions* about the event would occur at the very beginning of the process, but as with *Acknowledgement* of the harmful event, this unit was most typically (24%) placed near the end of the process. Individuals who wanted to forgive themselves but had not yet begun and those in the process of forgiving themselves differed in that they were most likely to place it near the middle of the process.

Intrusive Rumination was predicted to be the third unit. Just over 25% of

Table 6

Inter-rater Reliability and Number of Definitions in Each Category

Category Theme	Cohen's Kappa	Number of Definitions Mentioning Category
Letting Go of Negative Emotions	.87	33 (27.7%)
Moving On/Switching Focus	.97	55 (46.2%)
Self-Acceptance/Positive Sense of Self	.88	48 (40.3%)
Growth and Responsibility	.90	36 (30.3%)
Punishment/Struggling	.95	3 (2.5%)
Forgetting/Excusing/Denying	.98	9 (7.6%)
Making Amends/Asking for Forgiveness	.95	5 (4.2%)

N = 119

participants seemed to be in agreement, with its most common placement being as Unit 2, only one unit away from the expected placement. This pattern was mirrored in each of the subgroups, however, although approximately 25% of those who had fully forgiven themselves placed it as occurring second in the process, their most common placement of this unit was as Unit 7 (32%).

In the expected sequence, I hypothesized that after recognizing the negative emotions and the intrusive rumination occurring as a result of the event, individuals would begin identifying the negative ways in which the experience of these was affecting their lives (Unit 4) and would feel ready to commit to trying to forgive themselves (Unit 5). Instead, the theorized Unit 4 was most frequently placed in the middle (18%) of the process. This was echoed in the subgroups with the exception of those who had never felt

Table 7

Means and Standard Deviations for Participant Ordering of the Units

Proposed Order	Total Mean *(SD)*	Subgroups	Means *(SD)*
1: Acknowledgement	8.12 *(3.17)*	Have never felt the need to forgive myself	6.86 *(3.74)*
		Would like to forgive myself but have not yet begun	7.94 *(2.71)*
		Am in the process of forgiving myself	8.19 *(3.14)*
		Have fully forgiven myself	8.57 *(3.12)*
2: Negative Emotions	7.68 *(4.88)*	Have never felt the need to forgive myself	5.86 *(5.59)*
		Would like to forgive myself but have not yet begun	7.56 *(5.13)*
		Am in the process of forgiving myself	7.83 *(4.85)*
		Have fully forgiven myself	8.22 *(4.55)*
3: Intrusive Rumination	6.55 *(3.69)*	Have never felt the need to forgive myself	6.36 *(3.84)*
		Would like to forgive myself but have not yet begun	7.44 *(3.65)*
		Am in the process of forgiving myself	5.83 *(3.77)*
		Have fully forgiven myself	7.19 *(3.46)*

Table 7, Continued.

Proposed Order	Total Mean *(SD)*	Subgroups	Means *(SD)*
4: Consequences of Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination	7.50 *(4.77)*	Have never felt the need to forgive myself	7.64 *(4.68)*
		Would like to forgive myself but have not yet begun	8.28 *(4.90)*
		Am in the process of forgiving myself	6.67 *(4.76)*
		Have fully forgiven myself	8.24 *(4.74)*
5: Commitment	6.40 *(3.26)*	Have never felt the need to forgive myself	6.86 *(3.13)*
		Would like to forgive myself but have not yet begun	5.72 *(3.18)*
		Am in the process of forgiving myself	6.37 *(3.02)*
		Have fully forgiven myself	6.59 *(3.73)*
6: Empathy for Person Harmed	6.13 *(2.93)*	Have never felt the need to forgive myself	5.43 *(3.41)*
		Would like to forgive myself but have not yet begun	5.72 *(3.20)*
		Am in the process of forgiving myself	6.37 *(3.02)*
		Have fully forgiven myself	6.27 *(2.51)*

Table 7, Continued.

Proposed Order	Total Mean *(SD)*	Subgroups	Means *(SD)*
7: Helping Person Harmed	7.02 *(3.38)*	Have never felt the need to forgive myself	8.57 *(1.74)*
		Would like to forgive myself but have not yet begun	7.33 *(3.60)*
		Am in the process of forgiving myself	7.54 *(3.38)*
		Have fully forgiven myself	5.57 *(3.35)*
8: Empathy for Self	6.70 *(3.47)*	Have never felt the need to forgive myself	8.14 *(3.59)*
		Would like to forgive myself but have not yet begun	6.78 *(3.61)*
		Am in the process of forgiving myself	6.44 *(3.39)*
		Have fully forgiven myself	6.49 *(3.48)*
9: Motives	6.04 *(3.22)*	Have never felt the need to forgive myself	4.93 *(3.36)*
		Would like to forgive myself but have not yet begun	6.44 *(2.30)*
		Am in the process of forgiving myself	6.63 *(3.24)*
		Have fully forgiven myself	5.43 *(3.42)*
10: Responsibility	6.09 *(4.86)*	Have never felt the need to forgive myself	4.93 *(3.36)*

Table 7, Continued.

Proposed Order	Total Mean *(SD)*	Subgroups	Means *(SD)*
		Would like to forgive myself but have not yet begun	5.94 *(5.01)*
		Am in the process of forgiving myself	6.71 *(4.95)*
		Have fully forgiven myself	5.38 *(4.90)*
11: Deservingness	6.44 *(3.38)*	Have never felt the need to forgive myself	8.14 *(3.35)*
		Would like to forgive myself but have not yet begun	4.94 *(3.26)*
		Am in the process of forgiving myself	6.15 *(3.26)*
		Have fully forgiven myself	6.92 *(3.37)*
12: Positive Sense of Self	8.74 *(2.80)*	Have never felt the need to forgive myself	8.57 *(3.20)*
		Would like to forgive myself but have not yet begun	10.06 *(2.51)*
		Am in the process of forgiving myself	8.85 (*2.89)*
		Have fully forgiven myself	8.03 *(2.50)*
13: Journey to Self-Forgiveness	7.59 *(2.93)*	Have never felt the need to forgive myself	7.79 (2.19)

Table 7, Continued.

Proposed Order	Total Mean *(SD)*	Subgroups	Means *(SD)*
		Would like to forgive myself but have not yet begun	6.83 *(2.38)*
		Am in the process of forgiving myself	7.42 *(3.26)*
		Have fully forgiven myself	8.11 *(2.93)*

N = 121

the need to forgive themselves; their placing of this unit was quite varied. Placement of Unit 5 was also quite varied; although its most common placement was also in the middle of the process, only 17% of participants believed it occurred there.

In the predicted sequence, turning one's attention to the affected party was expected to occur in Units 6 (*Empathy for the Person Harmed*) and 7 (*Helping the Person Harmed*). For feeling empathy for the affected party, participants most frequently (20%) placed this in Unit 5, only one unit away from the expected placement. However, two of the subgroups quite obviously disagreed. Those who had never felt the need to forgive themselves were split: 21% believed empathy for the person harmed is something that should occur immediately (Unit 1) while another 21% believed that instead, it should occur at the end of the process. Those who wanted to forgive themselves but had not yet begun also believed it should occur at the end of the process, with almost 40% placing it as the final unit in the self-forgiveness process.

For actually offering help to the person harmed (Unit 7), the most frequent placement was at the end of the process (Unit 12) with almost half of all participants placing it there. However, the second most common placement was at the very beginning of the process, with 34% of participants placing it there. When examined at the subgroup level this same split in beliefs was observed: Those who had never felt the need to forgive themselves as well as those who had fully forgiven themselves were most likely to place it at the very end of the process while those who wanted to forgive themselves as well as those in the process of forgiving themselves were most likely to place it at the very beginning, although, their second-most common placement was at the end of the process.

Unit 8 was predicted to be *Empathy for the Self*. This unit was most frequently (22%) placed in Unit 9, only 1 unit away from the expected placement. Those who had never felt the need to forgive themselves were more split on the placement of this unit, however, it was most frequently placed in the middle of the process (Units 5, 7, and the predicted 8). Those who had fully forgiven themselves also most frequently kept it placed in the middle of the process.

Understanding the *Motives* of one's harmful behaviour was hypothesized to be the next step (Unit 9). This unit was most commonly (27%) placed two units earlier than expected. The exception in the subgroups were those who wanted to forgive themselves but had not yet begun, they most commonly (28%) placed it much earlier in the process, as Unit 3. Similarly, Unit 10 (*Responsibility*) was also most commonly (17%) placed two units earlier than expected. However, the pattern within the subgroups varied a bit more than with the previous unit, with some placing it somewhat earlier and some placing at the very end of the process.

Participants' most common (26%) placement of the predicted Unit 11 (*Deservingness*) was much earlier in the process (Unit 3) than expected, although its second-most common placement (as Unit 8) was closer to the expected placement. Within the subgroups, the exception was those who had never felt the need to forgive themselves. These individuals seemed split, with equal numbers (21%) placing it as Unit 4 and Unit 8.

Although participants placed *Deservingness* as occurring early in the process, the actual experience of feeling a *Positive Sense of Self* was placed much later in the process (although its second-most common placement was at the very start of the process). As

expected, the majority of participants (37%) believed this unit should occur as the Unit 12. This pattern was mirrored in all of the subgroups with the exception of those who had fully forgiven themselves. Most of those individuals (35%) placed this unit as Unit 1, while another 22% placed it as Unit 5, and another 22% placed it as the predicted Unit 12.

The final unit was expected to be *Journey to Self-Forgiveness*, when all negative emotions have been relinquished, a positive sense of self has been established, and full self-forgiveness has occurred. That none of the subgroups placed this unit as most commonly occurring past Unit 4 is puzzling. Instead, placement of this unit was most commonly as Units 2 (36%) and 4 (30%), a pattern that was echoed in the subgroups.

2.3.7 Cluster Analysis on Placement of Units

The data are clear that participants had differing ideas about the placement of units in the self-forgiveness process. To explore whether coherent groups of people exist who order the units in the same sequence, a cluster analysis was performed. This analysis revealed too many clusters from which to support any meaningful interpretation, suggesting that self-forgiveness is a highly individualized process.

2.3.8 Ordering of the Phases

Because the ordering of the individual units was so varied, I thought it would be interesting to explore if they were at least placed into the phases in which they were hypothesized to occur. Although participants were not directly asked to rank-order the four hypothesized phases of self-forgiveness, this was inferred by re-coding each unit into its corresponding phase (the hypothesized Units *1* to *5* were recoded to *1* because they were assigned to Phase 1; the hypothesized Units *6* and *7* were recoded to *2* because they were assigned to Phase 2; the hypothesized Units *8* to *10* were recoded to *3* because

they were assigned to Phase 3; the hypothesized Units *11* to *13* were recoded to *4* because they were assigned to Phase 4). For each participant, the first five units in their proposed ordering were summed then averaged, giving them an average score for Phase 1 (if participants' ordering matched the hypothesized ordering, then their average score for Phase 1 would have been *1*: (1 + 1+ 1+ 1+ 1)/5). The same was repeated for Units *6* and *7* (Phase 2), Units *8-10* (Phase 3) and Units *11-13* (Phase 4).

To determine whether participant ordering of the phases involved in self-forgiveness matched the hypothesized ordering, a Spearman's rho correlation was calculated for each subject (assessing the correlation of their derived ordering of the phases with the hypothesized ordering).

Once again, the Spearman's rho correlations varied considerably, ranging from -1.0 to 1.0 (M = .05, SD = .55). The range for the subgroups was as follows: *never felt the need to forgive myself*: -.40 to .89 (M = .25, SD = .38), *want to forgive myself but have not yet begun*: -.80 to .95 (M = -.02, SD = .54), *in the process of forgiving myself*: -1.00 to 1.00 (M = .07, SD = .57), *have fully forgiven myself*: -.95 to 1.00 (M = -.02, SD = .58). Table 9 lists the means and standard deviations for each unit and each subgroup. The means were fairly close, ranging from 2.12 - 2.45 (SD_{range} = .46 - .72). To obtain an understanding of exactly how participants ordered the units into the proposed phases, the frequency distributions of the percent of participants who placed each unit into each phase were examined (see Table 10, Appendix G).

Acknowledgement, *Negative Emotions*, *Intrusive Rumination*, *Consequences of Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination*, as well as *Commitment* were all theorized to occur in Phase 1 of the self-forgiveness process. For *Acknowledgement*, participants

Table 9

Means and Standard Deviations for Participant Ordering of the Phases

Phases in Theoretical Order	Total Mean *(SD)*	Subgroups	Means *(SD)*
1: Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination	2.39 *(.46)*	Have never felt the need to forgive myself	2.23 *(.48)*
		Would like to forgive myself but have not yet begun	2.41 *(.39)*
		Am in the process of forgiving myself	2.31 *(.41)*
		Have fully forgiven myself	2.54 *(.52)*
2: The Person I Harmed	2.17 *(.72)*	Have never felt the need to forgive myself	2.25 *(.77)*
		Would like to forgive myself but have not yet begun	2.17 *(.88)*
		Am in the process of forgiving myself	2.29 *(.70)*
		Have fully forgiven myself	1.99 *(.64)*
3: Motives and Responsibility	2.13 *(.64)*	Have never felt the need to forgive myself	2.12 *(.61)*
		Would like to forgive myself but have not yet begun	2.19 *(.61)*
		Am in the process of forgiving myself	2.20 *(.64)*
		Have fully forgiven myself	1.98 *(.67)*

Table 9, Continued.

Phases in Theoretical Order	Total Mean *(SD)*	Subgroups	Means *(SD)*
4: Compassion, Self-Respect, Self-Forgiveness	2.45 *(.53)*	Have never felt the need to forgive myself	2.62 *(.49)*
		Would like to forgive myself but have not yet begun	2.35 *(.50)*
		Am in the process of forgiving myself	2.43 *(.57)*
		Have fully forgiven myself	2.46 *(.52)*

agreed and most-frequently (45%) placed this unit in Phase 1. However, only a slightly smaller number of participants (40%) placed it in Phase 3. When examined by subgroup, both those who wanted to forgive themselves but had not yet begun and those who had fully forgiven themselves most often placed it in Phase 3 (although their second-most common placements were in the expected phase).

For the experience of *Negative Emotions*, the second-most common placement (26%) was in the expected Phase 1, however, its most common placement was later in the process, in Phase 3. This pattern emerged for two of the subgroups, however, those who wanted to forgive themselves but had not yet begun were more likely to place it earlier in the process (Phases 1 and 2) whereas those in the process of forgiving themselves were most likely to place it even later in the process, as Phase 4. It may be that participants were placing this unit where in the process they believed they would finally be able to fully let go of the negative emotions rather than where they would begin to address them.

The most-common placement (60%) of *Intrusive Rumination* was in alignment with the theoretical order. This pattern held when the separate subgroups were examined. The most common placement of *Consequences of Negative Emotions* was also in alignment with the predicted ordering (30%), but only a slightly lower percentage of people believed that it occurred in Phase 3 (27%) and Phase 2 (26%). This closely split pattern was also observed in the subgroups. The most-common placement of *Commitment* was, as expected, in Phase 1 (36%), a pattern that also emerged in all of the subgroups.

Phase 2 was predicted to include two units: *Empathy for the Person Harmed* and *Helping the Person Harmed*. Participants did not agree. Both seemed to be units that

participants believe occur either at the end or at the start of the process. The most common placement of *Empathy for the Person Harmed* was in Phase 4 (36%) and following closely in numbers, its second-most common placement was in Phase 1 (31%). Within the subgroups, those who had fully forgiven themselves reversed this pattern, with their most common placement of this unit in Phase 1 and their second-most common placement in Phase 4. Similarly, for *Helping the Person Harmed*, participants most commonly placed it in Phase 4 (61%) with the second-most common placement in Phase 1 (37%). This pattern was observed in all subgroups.

Phase 3 was expected to contain *Empathy for the Self, Motives,* and *Responsibility.* Participants agreed with the hypothesized placement of *Empathy for the Self* (31%), although only slightly fewer participants most commonly placed it as occurring in Phase 4 (26%) and Phase 2 (25%). Two of the subgroups also most commonly placed it in Phase 3, however, those who had never felt the need to forgive themselves were more diverse in their ordering, with equal numbers placing it as occurring in Phases 1, 2, and 3. Those who had fully forgiven themselves were most likely to place it as occurring at the end of the process, in Phase 4.

Participant placement of the *Motives* unit did not match the hypothesized ordering; participants most often (46%) placed it in Phase 1, a pattern that emerged in all of the subgroups as well. Participants somewhat agreed the hypothesized assignment of *Responsibility* in Phase 3; although its most common placement was in Phase 4 (31%), only one participant fewer placed it as occurring in the expected Phase 3. Placement of this unit within the subgroups was a bit more diverse, with some most commonly placing it in Phase 2, some in Phase 3, and some in Phase 4.

Phase 4 was predicted to contain *Deservingness, Positive Sense of Self,* and *Journey to Self-Forgiveness*. Participants believed the opposite for the ordering of *Deservingness* and most commonly (46%) placed it in Phase 1. The same pattern emerged in all of the subgroups. *Positive Sense of Self* on the other hand, was most frequently placed, as expected, in Phase 4 (55%), and the second-most common placement was in Phase 1 (37%). The exception to this in the subgroups were those who had fully forgiven themselves. They most frequently placed this unit as occurring in Phase 1 (57%) although their second-most common placement was in the expected Phase 4 (41%).

The final phase, *Journey to Self-Forgiveness,* was most-often placed in Phase 1 (72%) and very few actually placed in the expected Phase 4 (3%), a pattern that also emerged in the subgroups.

2.3.9 Do Subgroups Differ in Their Ordering of the Units and Phases?

To explore whether there existed a relation between participant agreement with the theoretical ordering of the units and level of self-forgiveness, a one-way ANOVA was conducted using level of agreement (Spearman's rho correlations) with the predicted ordering of the units as the dependent variable and all four levels of self-forgiveness as the independent variable. Because Spearman's rho is derived from the same non-normal distribution as Pearson's *r*, all of the Spearman rho correlations were transformed using the Fisher's *r* to *z* transformation (Field, 2009).

Analyses did not reveal a significant difference in degree of agreement from the theorized ordering based on level of self-forgiveness $F(3, 117) = 1.92$, $p = .13$. Similar results were found when the same analysis was performed on the level of agreement with

the ordering of the phases (once again the Spearman correlations were transformed using the Fisher's *r* to *z* transformation), $F(3, 117) = 2.56$, $p = .87$.

To explore whether there existed a relation between level of self-forgiveness and the way in which participants ordered the units, a MANOVA was conducted using the raw rankings of each of the 13 units as the dependent variables and the four levels of self-forgiveness as the independent variable. Results revealed (according to Roy's largest root statistic) a significant effect of level of self-forgiveness on the ordering of the 13 units, $F(12, 108) = 1.87$, $p = .046$, $\eta^2_{partial} = .17$.

Further exploration determined that individuals differed significantly in their placement of Unit 7 (*Helping the Person Harmed*) $F(3, 117) = 3.99$, $p = .009$, $\eta^2_{partial} = .09$, as well as their placement of Unit 11 (*Deservingness*) $F(3, 117) = 2.86$, $p = .04$, $\eta^2_{partial} = .068$. Differences in the placement of Unit 12 (*Positive Sense of Self*), approached significance $F(3, 117) = 2.23$, $p = .089$, $\eta^2_{partial} = .05$.

Pairwise comparisons revealed that those who had never felt the need to forgive themselves ($M = 8.57$, $SE = .87$) were more likely than those who had fully forgiven themselves ($M = 5.57$, $SE = .54$) to place the unit *Helping the Person Harmed* later in the process $M_{diff} = 3.00$, $p = .004$. For that same unit, those who were wanting to forgive themselves but had not yet begun ($M = 7.33$, $SE = .77$) were also more likely than those who had fully forgiven themselves to place it later in the process (the results were marginally significant), $M_{diff} = 1.77$, $p = .06$. Finally, for that same unit, those in the process of forgiving themselves were also more likely than those who had fully forgiven themselves to place it later in the process, $M_{diff} = 1.97$, $p = .006$.

Pairwise comparisons also revealed that for *Deservingness*, those who had never

felt the need to forgive themselves (M = 8.14, SE = .88) were more likely than those who were wanting to forgive themselves but had not yet begun (M = 4.94, SE = .78) to place the unit later in the process, M_{diff} = 3.20, p = .008. They were also more likely than those who were currently in the process of forgiving themselves (M = 6.15, SE = .46) to place the unit later in the process M_{diff} = 1.99, p = .048. Furthermore, those who wanted to forgive themselves but had not yet begun were more likely than those who had fully forgiven themselves (M = 6.92, SE = .54) to place this unit earlier in the process, M_{diff} = 1.97, p = .04.

For *Positive Sense of Self*, individuals who were wanting to forgive themselves but had not yet begun (M = 8.57, SE = .74) were more likely than those who had fully forgiven themselves (M = 8.03, SE = .45) to place this unit as occurring later in the process, M_{diff} = 2.03, p = .012.

To explore whether there existed a relation between level of self-forgiveness and the way in which participants ordered the units into the phases, a MANOVA was conducted using of the raw rankings of the four phases (as calculated by summing the rankings of each step assigned to each phase and then taking the average) as the dependent variables and the four levels of self-forgiveness as the independent variable. The results were not significant $F(9, 351) = 1.29$, p = .241. This could be a result of the way the ordering of the phases was estimated.

2.3.10 Irrelevant Units

Following their ordering of the units, participants were asked if they believed any of the proposed units to be irrelevant to the self-forgiveness process. Eighty-nine (73.6%) stated that they believed all of the proposed units to be relevant. Of those participants, 11

(9%) stated that although in general they believed all of the units to be relevant, they may not always be relevant to every person. Five individuals who made this statement specifically mentioned that the units *Empathy for the Person Harmed* and *Helping the Person Harmed* would not be relevant if the person you had harmed was yourself. Table 11 lists the units that the remaining 32 participants believed to be irrelevant.

About rumination, one participant stated,

> It's possible that rumination is more detrimental than beneficial in terms of the steps of the process of self-forgiveness…rumination reinforces negative thought patterns, and this seems to be at odds with the goal of self-forgiveness. However, on the other hand, it may also let us know that we are unhappy with a certain event from our past and therefore may act as a motivational force toward changing our behaviour for the better.

Explaining why *Commitment* may not be relevant to the process, one participant stated,

> I feel as though the commitment aspect of self-forgiveness is too idealistic. It's not a matter of suddenly realizing that you need to commit to self-forgiveness but rather a gradual process of acceptance and understanding. I certainly don't think to myself that I need to commit to forgiving myself. I would immerse myself in the positive and negative consequences and realize that life happens and slowly self-forgiveness occurs through the acceptance of this experience. You are reminded to forgive yourself through your loved ones around you, and realizing that you're not the one to fully blame, and if you are then you move forward and use that as

> learning to be a better person. I don't believe that this commitment to self-forgiveness is a conscience thought.

And as to why *Helping the Person Harmed* may be irrelevant, one participant wrote,

> Helping the person I hurt is not relevant to the process of self-forgiveness in my opinion. It is irrelevant because the person may have brought my actions upon themselves…so why should I have these feelings of guilt when the person is perfectly fine?

However, another person who also listed, *Helping the Person Harmed* as irrelevant did so because of concern and respect for that person,

> While I do believe that it is good to help the people that one has hurt, I don't think it is necessary. In fact, I think that after hurting a person, it can be more respectful to maintain distance from the person and recognize that you cannot help them.

For *Positive Sense of Self*, one participant wrote, "Positive Sense of Self [is irrelevant]…it's the process of self-forgiveness, not a process of feeling positive towards oneself. I think if you feel positive towards yourself while self-forgiving, you are just excusing what you've done." Similarly, one participant who listed *Deservingness*, *Positive Sense of Self*, and *Journey to Self-Forgiveness* all to be irrelevant stated, "…it is not useful to facilitate positive outcomes."

Of the participants who believed all the proposed units to be relevant, five mentioned that certain categories could possibly be collapsed, for instance, *Empathy for the Person Harmed* and *Helping the Person Harmed*. Although participants were not aware of the four general phases that each unit was theorized to fall under, both of these units were theorized to represent the phase *The Person I Harmed*.

Table 11

Units Believed to be Irrelevant to Self-Forgiveness

Unit	Number Who Believed it to be Irrelevant
Intrusive Rumination	3
Consequences of Negative Emotions and Rumination	2
Commitment	6
Empathy for Person Harmed	1
Helping the Person Harmed	6
Empathy for Self	2
Motives	1
Deservingness	4
Positive Sense of Self	5
Journey to Self-Forgiveness	2

N = 121

The same participant believed that *Empathy for the Self* and *Motives* could be merged. Once again, these two categories fall into a single predicted phase: *Motives and Responsibility*. Yet another participant merged units within the same predicted phase, stating that *Negative Emotions* and *Intrusive Rumination* seemed very similar (Phase: *Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination*).

The remaining three participants mentioned merging units that do not fall into the same expected phase: *Commitment* and *Responsibility*; *Acknowledgement* and *Motives*; *Acknowledgment, Negative Emotions,* and *Empathy for the Person Harmed*. None of the participants elaborated on why these units should be merged.

2.3.11 Missing Units

Participants were also asked if they believed that there were units relevant to self-forgiveness that had not been proposed in the study. Eight of these "missing units" were mentioned. The most common unit mentioned (seven participants) as missing was a unit involving acceptance. This was described as an acceptance that the event had occurred and that it must be dealt with (similar to the existing *Acknowledgement* unit), but also as an acceptance from others, "acceptance from others, maybe it shouldn't be necessary, but it really helps. If you have other people who forgive you, it helps you forgive yourself." One participant, foreseeing that acceptance from others is beyond a person's control stated that it could be at least a "let[ting] go of others' expectations of me."

The next most commonly mentioned missing unit (four participants) was one of a reminder about the commitment made to forgive the self. These participants expected the road to self-forgiveness to be difficult, with negative emotions re-appearing at various points throughout the process, and that this unit would serve as a gentle reminder to not give up, "After "Commitment," if you relapse into negativity, you should not give up but rather "Try again" and make a new set of commitments and praise yourself for having made it this far and continue the process until you finish it." To place such a unit as a fixed step in the process would be difficult because the negative emotions and need for encouragement toward the end goal would occur at various times for different people, but perhaps simply having it as a "floating unit" to insert whenever and wherever needed would be worth consideration.

Four participants suggested a unit involving learning from the experience and freeing the self from negative emotions, however, these items are already encompassed in

the proposed *Journey to Self-Forgiveness*. Two participants suggested a unit that involves having contact with the person harmed. This could conceivably be placed into the already proposed *Helping the Person Harmed*. Another two participants suggested that including a unit in which responsible parties discuss self-forgiveness with others as a means of obtaining some sort of guidance and support might be useful.

> Two further participants suggested a unit that involves forgiving others,
>
> If someone is holding a grudge against another person and has not forgiven THEM for something, they may find it difficult to forgive themselves (e.g., if I am holding a grudge against them, why should I deserve to forgive myself and not them?).

Finally, one participant suggested the unit in which the responsible party prays, "I come from a religious background so maybe I would include praying about it or asking God for forgiveness," and another suggested a unit in which one makes light of the situation, "Maybe as a last step, joke lightly about it, though this might be enveloped into journey to self-forgiveness."

2.4 Discussion

The proposed self-forgiveness model suggests that individuals who have committed a transgression will focus first on the negative aspects of their harmful behaviour and the negative emotions that arise as a result of that behaviour (*Phase 1*), followed by a period of focusing on the consequences of their actions on the affected party (*Phase 2*). This is hypothesized to then evolve toward a desire to understand the motives behind their harmful actions and acknowledge responsibility for the harm (*Phase 3*), leading to positive feelings toward the self, and ultimately, full self-forgiveness

(*Phase 4*).

The results partially support the hypothesized model: Participants agreed that the units proposed are comprehensive of the self-forgiveness process, and they agreed with the proposed ordering of some of the units (e.g., *Positive Sense of Self*). However, they also differed in their agreement for the ordering of some of the units (e.g., *Deservingness*).

In addition, also in support of the hypotheses, individuals in different stages of self-forgiveness differed significantly in their beliefs about the unfolding of the units in the process. Also, although similarities were observed, the way in which participants defined self-forgiveness was, as expected, different than the way researchers define it (for instance, for some participants, self-forgiveness was equated with forgetting or excusing whereas researchers are adamant that this is not the case).

2.4.1 Length of Time Since Transgression and Level of Self-forgiveness

Almost half of the participants had committed their transgression at least one year prior to their participation in the study. However, despite over 12 months having passed since the harmful behaviour of almost half the participants, only 30% claimed to have forgiven themselves, and when asked to represent their degree of self-forgiveness on a numerical scale, less than 10% indicated that they had fully achieved self-forgiveness. Although the more time that had passed since the transgression, the more likely participants were to have forgiven themselves, the above results suggest that forgiveness of the self, just like forgiveness of others, is a lengthy and often onerous process (Enright, 2001).

One positive finding is that individuals who classified themselves as wanting to forgive themselves but not having begun did not score themselves as being in a state of

no self-forgiveness. Although they scored themselves on the lower end of the scale, indicating low self-forgiveness, that they indicated any amount of self-forgiveness is encouraging and suggests that even individuals who are not consciously moving toward self-forgiveness may nevertheless be processing aspects of the harmful event and making some progress toward self-forgiveness. In the context of a self-forgiveness intervention, it could be beneficial for those who believe they have not begun the process at all (which may make ever reaching full self-forgiveness seem like a very daunting task) to rate themselves on a numerical scale — even a slight improvement from 0% self-forgiveness may be encouraging to an individual.

2.4.2 Defining Self-Forgiveness

Consistent with researcher definitions, approximately 30% of participants included in their definition of self-forgiveness the letting go of negative emotions and thoughts toward the self. The remaining 70% who did not mention this may have indirectly indicated it, for instance, by stating that self-forgiveness results in a feeling of being at peace with oneself. On the other hand, some remnants of those negative emotions may remain, even after self-forgiveness occurs: a small twinge of regret that rather than overwhelming the individual, serves as a small reminder that it would be best to refrain from acting that way again. Future research should specifically investigate whether the full release of negative emotions is necessary for self-forgiveness or whether, as Murphy (2003) suggests, retaining a small portion of negative emotions toward the self is beneficial.

Most researcher definitions of self-forgiveness also make reference to adopting positive thoughts and emotions toward the self. Of the 40% of participants who referred

to this, most focused on the adoption of positive thoughts rather than emotions. Specifically, they tended to mention that self-forgiveness is coming to a place of acceptance of the situation and of the self, which can then lead to developing a positive sense of self. Although it would seem that this would then lead to experiencing positive emotions toward the self, this was rarely mentioned.

Rather than the cessation of negatives and adoption of positives, the most commonly (46%) mentioned aspect among the participant self-forgiveness definitions was that of a conscious moving on from the harmful event and its aftermath. This, as well as the common reference to self-acceptance, is most consistent with Woodyatt and Wenzel's (2013a) newly proposed definition of self-forgiveness as a process rooted in the acceptance of, and moving on from, one's misdeeds.

Woodyatt and Wenzel's (2013a) definition postulates that the aforementioned acceptance and moving on is a result of one's taking full responsibility for his or her actions. Most participants did not specifically mention taking responsibility for their actions, but 30% stated that self-forgiveness entails learning and growing from one's actions. Indirectly, this supports the notion of responsibility-taking: To reflect on one's actions, one must identify them and acknowledge that one was the actor of that behaviour. The term *responsibility* may be one that individuals perceive as laden with negative connotations; "I was responsible for that harm" has a less-positive spin than, "I learned from my actions and now I've grown into a better and wiser person."

That only 4% of participants mentioned making amends or asking for forgiveness as integral to the self-forgiveness process suggests, contrary to Murphy (2003) and Snow's (1993) assertions, that it truly is an individual process that does not need to

directly involve the affected party.

Finally, although researchers are firm in their statements that genuine self-forgiveness does not involve forgetting, excusing, denying, or minimizing one's actions, 8% of participants in this study believe otherwise. Future studies should obtain data on personality and the severity of the transgression, because these variables may influence how participants define self-forgiveness. For instance, people who scored high on scales of Honesty-Humility, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness were significantly less likely to attempt to deny and hide their part in a transgression (Rourke, 2007).

2.4.3 The Proposed Model vs. Participant Ordering of the Units

Although participants agreed that the proposed units are indeed a comprehensive representation of the units involved in self-forgiveness, they did not always agree with the proposed ordering of these units. In particular, approximately half of the units were placed quite similarly (at the expected location or only one to two units away from the expected location) to those in the proposed model: *Intrusive Rumination, Empathy for the Person Harmed, Empathy for the Self, Motives, Responsibility,* and *Positive Sense of Self.* In addition, when examined by subgroup, some agreed with the hypothesized ordering of the units not placed in the expected location by participants as a whole. These included the units *Acknowledgement* (those who had never felt the need to forgive themselves) and *Commitment* (those who had never felt the need to forgive themselves as well as those who wanted to forgive themselves but had not yet begun).

A few of the differing placements of the units stood out. For instance, the proposed model places *Acknowledgment* of one's actions as the first unit to occur. Although 46% of participants most commonly placed it as occurring within the

hypothesized first phase of the self-forgiveness process, its most common placement as a stand-alone unit was toward the end of the process (Unit 10).

In the model, *Acknowledgment* was meant to represent an acknowledgment to the self about one's actions, a sort of, "I did this, and it was not a very good thing to do." If one is feeling negatively toward the self, and feeling badly about something he or she has done, then logically, some sort of acknowledgement of one's harmful actions must have occurred. Perhaps participants viewed the term *acknowledgment* as a public event; an admission to others about their harmful actions. This would be a very difficult and humiliating thing to do, and individuals would not likely feel comfortable doing this until they had begun to process the event and perhaps even begun to feel positively toward themselves, making it more likely to occur toward the end of the process.

Although the difference was not significant, those who had never felt the need to forgive themselves and those in the process of forgiving themselves were more likely to place this unit near the beginning of the process. Those in the process of forgiving themselves may have placed it toward the start of the process because they had recently been forced to admit to themselves that they had done something wrong, and so it was fresh in their minds. For those who had fully forgiven themselves, this was a retrospective study, and as mentioned earlier, they may have been thinking about when in the process they felt ready to admit to others that they had transgressed, thus the placement of this unit was later in the process. For those who had not begun to forgive themselves but wanted to, placement of this unit toward the end of the process may reflect a lack of readiness to admit both to themselves and to others the full ramifications of their harmful behaviour.

The unit reflecting the experience of *Negative Emotions* was also placed much later in the process than anticipated. Even the two subgroups (those who wanted to forgive themselves but had not yet begun and those in the process of forgiving themselves) who placed it earlier in the process, placed it in the middle, rather than at the beginning of the process. This is puzzling because individuals are highly unlikely to desire to forgive themselves if they do not feel badly about their behaviour and its consequences. Participants may have placed this unit where in the process they believed they would be beginning to let go of or transform some of their negative emotions toward themselves, rather than where in the process they were simply becoming aware of those negative emotions. Future studies should differentiate more clearly between the two.

Although the unit representing feeling *Empathy for the Person Harmed* was placed by participants only one unit away from its placement in the proposed model, the unit that represents actually *Helping* that person (e.g., by making amends) was placed much later in the process than anticipated. This suggests that although one may be feeling badly for having hurt another (i.e., empathy for that person), this does not translate into an immediate desire to tangibly rectify the situation by making some sort of amends.

However, for this unit, a clear split occurred for many participants. In almost all subgroups, a large number of individuals placed this unit at the very start of the process while another large number placed it toward the end of the process. This suggests, and supports Rourke's (2007) findings, that for some individuals, regardless of where they find themselves in the process, they experience an immediate desire, or even a need, to do something to make amends to the person harmed. For others, the immediate focus is on the self. This is not necessarily a selfish reaction; some may need to fully process and

understand their actions before the affected party can be approached. This would likely lead to what some researchers believe is a more sincere apology, one in which the responsible party has reflected enough to be able to acknowledge the harmful behaviour, the inappropriateness of that behaviour, and demonstrate change in behaviour or character (Govier & Verwoerd, 2002).

In fact, a significant difference occurred in where the unit *Helping the Person Harmed* was placed, depending on which subgroup participants identified themselves as belonging to. More specifically, all of the subgroups were significantly more likely to place the unit later in the process than those who had fully forgiven themselves. Once again, this may be a result of the need to withdraw from the affected party; whether to take the time to reflect upon and understand one's actions or because of a fear of retaliation should the affected party be approached. Those who have fully forgiven themselves, may be less likely to harbour such a fear.

Although participants most commonly placed feeling *Deserving* of self-forgiveness toward the beginning of the process, reaching a point of actually feeling positive about the self (*Positive Sense of Self*) was most commonly placed, as expected, toward the end of the process. Seemingly, although individuals are feeling badly about what they have done, they are still able to see some goodness in themselves, making them worthwhile of the gift of self-forgiveness. However, before they can actually feel good about themselves and believe that they are a good person, they must work through most of the steps in the self-forgiveness process.

Interestingly, one sub-group differed in the placement of *Positive Sense of Self*. Whereas all of the other subgroups most commonly placed it as the second-to-last step in

the process, those who had fully forgiven themselves most commonly placed it as the very first step in the process. Likely, those who had fully forgiven themselves felt better about themselves and their retrospection may have been coloured by this existing positive sense of self, resulting in their minimizing how long they had held a negative view of themselves following their harmful actions.

The placement of *Journey to Self-Forgiveness* was puzzling. As a unit that was described as one in which all negative emotions have been released and self-forgiveness has been achieved, it seemed highly likely that participants would place it, as expected, at the very end of the process. Instead, all participants, regardless of subgroup, most commonly placed it toward the beginning of the process. Was this a case of student participants rushing through the study, seeing the word *journey,* and rather than reading the description, simply assuming that it referred to the beginning of the journey through the process? Although this is possible, that all 121 participants would have done this seems unlikely. Using this same unit, with the same label but in a different sample may shed some light on this odd placement.

2.4.4 The Proposed Model vs. Participant Ordering of the Phases

Although participants did not actually order the four proposed phases, by summing the number of participants who placed each unit within the units theorized to make up each phase, it was possible to get an idea of how the participants might have ordered the phases (although this does present some problems as the dispersion of units within each phase was not equal: Phase 1 contains five units, Phase 2 contains two, and Phases 3 and 4 each contain three).

As expected, participants were most likely to include *Acknowledgment, Intrusive*

Rumination, Consequences of Negative Emotions, and *Commitment* in Phase 1. The unit *Negative Emotions* was instead most likely to be placed as occurring in Phase 3. Three units were added to Phase 1: *Deservingness, Motives* and *Journey to Self-forgiveness*. In the hypothesized ordering, *Deservingness* was placed toward the end of the process. The reasoning behind this was that once responsible parties have developed empathy for themselves, they may then feel deserving of the gift of self-forgiveness and through this, will be able to feel positively about themselves. Although participants agreed that the positive sense of self does not come until the end of the process, perhaps a sense of deservingness is what prompts individuals to begin the process in the first place, and that without it, individuals would not feel ready to begin forgiving themselves.

I had expected that after acknowledging the effects of the negative emotions associated with the harmful event, and after focusing on the effects to the person harmed, responsible parties would then examine the *Motives* for their behaviour, leading them to a place of being able to accept responsibility for their actions. Instead it seems that responsible parties want an immediate answer to the question, *why?*: "Why did I do that?" "What was I thinking?" This may stem from an internal desire to understand their behaviour, but it could also stem from pressure from outside friends and family demanding immediate answers.

Of course, differences were found in the units placed in Phase 1 depending on the subgroup, suggesting there may be benefit to researchers examining participants not as a whole, but within their respective subgroups. For instance, as previously mentioned, *Acknowledgment* was most often placed, as expected, within Phase 1, however, those who wanted to forgive themselves but had not yet begun and those who had fully

forgiven themselves were instead most likely to place it in Phase 3. In addition, for *Negative Emotions*, those who wanted to forgive themselves but had not yet begun most often placed this unit as occurring in both Phases 1 and 2. Likely, these individuals are struggling with beginning the process and overwhelmed by the negative emotions they are feeling, making them more focused on their desire to quickly overcome them.

Interestingly, although Phase 2 was expected to contain *Empathy for the Person Harmed* and *Helping the Person Harmed*, this was not the case, and in fact, no unit was most commonly placed in Phase 2, suggesting that its units are better merged into the three remaining phases.

As expected, *Empathy for the Self* was most often placed in Phase 3. The unit *Negative Emotions* was added to Phase 3, and missing were *Motives* and *Responsibility*. Of note, those who wanted to forgive themselves as well as those who had fully forgiven themselves did most commonly place *Responsibility* in Phase 3. However, taken as a whole, participants were most likely to place it as occurring in the final phase.
This is not altogether surprising; although touted as the most important aspect of genuine self-forgiveness (e.g., Mills, 1995; Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c), taking full responsibility for one's actions is also likely one of the most difficult aspects of forgiving oneself, and therefore, would take a lengthy amount of time. In addition, done too early, taking responsibility for one's actions might seem disingenuous, whereas taking one's time to do so would be more likely to allow for and demonstrate reflection and understanding of one's actions.

As expected, *Positive Sense of Self* was most commonly placed in Phase 4. *Deservingness* and *Journey to Self-Forgiveness* were missing, and *Responsibility*,

Empathy for the Person Harmed and *Helping the Person Harmed* were added. For the latter two units, however, given that their second-most common placements were in Phase 1, it would seem apparently that some individuals are primarily concerned with the person harmed whereas others, although concerned with the person harmed, do not focus on him or her until the end of the process.

The placement of these two units in the final phase of the process may help shed some light on Zechmeister and Romero's (2002) criticism that self-forgiveness is associated with more self-focus and less empathy for the person harmed. Zechmeister and Romero suggest that this is a negative thing and that perhaps self-forgiveness is not a good thing to do. They are correct in that although some immediately try and engage the affected party, most instead, at first, stay self-focused. However, this is not necessarily a negative thing, for in that self-focus these individuals are addressing the harm they have caused: the motives behind their actions and how they feel about those actions. Once they have truly processed everything that has come to pass, they are then able to genuinely accept responsibility for their actions and turn their focus toward the person harmed.

2.4.5 Were the Units Relevant?

Three-quarters of participants believe each of the proposed units is in fact relevant to the self-forgiveness process. Of note, 9% of these individuals stated that certain units, such as *Empathy for the Person Harmed* and *Helping the Person Harmed* may not be relevant to all individuals, for instance, when the person harmed is the self. However, an argument could be made that even when the person harmed is the self, it is possible to have both empathy for oneself as the affected party and empathy for oneself as the responsible party. In fact, as suggested by Wohl et al. (2008), during the third phase of

Enright and the Human Development Study Group's (1996) theoretical model of self-forgiveness, it could even be beneficial to engage in certain actions to make it up to oneself, for example, writing an apology letter to oneself, or doing something nice for oneself.

Of the units that participants indicated as "irrelevant," none were selected by more than 5% of the sample, suggesting that each unit proposed has a role in the process of self-forgiveness. When asked whether any units were missing, the majority of participants were in agreement that the proposed units were comprehensive of the process. However, 6% of participants mentioned that they believed there was lacking a unit reflecting acceptance. For some, this was acceptance from the self (similar to the proposed unit *Acknowledgment*), but for others, this reflected a need for acceptance from others. This latter view could be a risky step for many and should be examined in future research: What happens if some refuse to show acceptance toward the responsible party? How would this affect their progress toward self-forgiveness, their self-esteem, and their mental health?

Reminiscent of Worthington's (2006) *Hold On* stage for the forgiveness of others, one unit proposed by 3% of participants was to remind them about the commitment made to try to forgive themselves. Perhaps such a unit would not be useful as a stand-alone unit, because each person would likely need it at a different point in time during the process, and even at multiple times during the process. In a self-forgiveness intervention, it might be useful during the *Commitment* unit to inform participants that it is likely they will need some reminders, support, and motivation to maintain their goal for forgiving themselves.

2.4.6 Limitations

Among the limitations of this study that need to be addressed include that the sample was one of convenience: including only student participants. It may be that the beliefs of students do not reflect those of the general population. Another limitation was the small number of participants within each subgroup, for instance, only 14 participants were in the subgroup *never felt the need to forgive myself*. Larger and more equal numbers of participants in each subgroup would make for less-biased results. A larger number of participants might also make a cluster analysis more viable.

In addition, no information was gathered about the nature of the participants' transgressions. In the forgiveness literature, some studies indicate that the relationship to the responsible party as well as the severity of the transgression affect the ability of the person harmed to grant forgiveness (e.g., Cota-McKinley, Woody, & Bell, 2001; Rourke-Marcheterre, 2003). The same variables may have an effect on one's ability to self-forgive.

2.4.7 Future Directions

In light of the above limitations, future studies should explore the validity of the model in a non-student sample. In addition, the effects of the responsible party's personality, the severity of the transgression, and the relationship of the responsible party to the person harmed on one's ability to self-forgive should be fruitful to examine: Does the ordering of the units believed to be involved in self-forgiveness differ depending on the responsible party's personality or the severity of the transgression? Does it differ depending on how close of a relationship the responsible party had to the person harmed? Examining the influence of multiple versus single transgressions would also be

interesting: Does the ordering of the steps differ if this is the first time the responsible party has harmed this particular person, versus if there has been multiple incidents of harmful behaviour toward this same person?

In addition, as previously mentioned, it would be important to explore the effects the response of the affected party might have on the responsible party's ability to self-forgive. If the responsible party apologizes or tries to make amends and the harmed party rejects this, does it hinder the responsible party's ability to continue with the self-forgiveness process? If so, does it affect each unit of the process, or some units more than others?

Finally, although almost all researchers state that self-forgiveness is a letting go of negative emotions toward the self (e.g., Enright, 2001), 70% of the current sample did not mention this when defining self-forgiveness. Future research should examine whether there are benefits to not fully letting go of those negative emotions, and whether there is harm in holding on to a portion of those negative emotions. It may be that as in the forgiveness of others, there are different types of self-forgiveness (e.g., Stewart, DeCourville, & Belicki, 2010). In fact, researchers have suggested that one type of forgiveness of others is *Unresolved Forgiveness* in which the affected party has forgiven the responsible party but still harbours some negative feelings toward that person (Stewart et al., 2010).

2.4.8 Conclusion

This was an exploratory study aimed at assessing the validity of a basic model of the steps involved in self-forgiveness, as well as a means to gain an understanding of the way in which those in the general population define self-forgiveness and whether they

match the definitions proposed by researchers in the field.

The definitions of self-forgiveness provided by participants in this study are best reflected by Woodyatt and Wenzel's (2013a) definition of self-forgiveness as a process in which one reaches a point of acceptance about one's self and one's harmful actions. In order to achieve this state of acceptance and, one hopes, to learn and grow from the experience, participants agree (through stating that all of the proposed self-forgiveness units were relevant) that understanding one's motivations and taking responsibility for one's actions is part of the self-forgiveness process. However, in their provided definitions, they rarely made specific reference to this taking of responsibility, instead, focusing on the more positive outcomes, such as growth and learning.

Perhaps an amendment to and a combination of Enright and the Human Development Study Group's (1996), Wohl et al.'s (2008), and Woodyatt and Wenzel's (2013a) definitions would better reflect the frame of mind of those doing the self-forgiving: Self-forgiveness is a process that moves us to a state of self-acceptance through a positive attitudinal shift in feelings, actions, and beliefs about the self. Self-forgiveness involves the acknowledgment of and moving on from our misbehaviour, through the recognition of the consequences of our actions, the exploration of the motives behind our actions, and a state of learning and growing from the experience.

The participants agreed that each of the proposed units has a role in the self-forgiveness process. However, the order in which these units are thought to occur varies. As a whole, participants agreed with the hypothesized ordering of half of the proposed units. However, upon further examination of the placement of each unit, it is noticeable that the ordering of these units sometimes differs across subgroups. This suggests that the

results of studies asking participants about their experience with self-forgiveness may be overlooking important information because those who have never felt the need to forgive themselves, those who want to forgive themselves but have not begun, those in the process of forgiving themselves, and those who have fully forgiven themselves often do not hold the same beliefs about, and experiences with, self-forgiveness. Future studies should continue to differentiate between these subgroups.

As a new proposed ordering of the phases (bearing in mind that this ordering likely changes depending on where in the process one is), based on participants' opinion, it would seem that self-forgiveness is a three-phase process, with Phase 1 being the start of the *Journey to Self-forgiveness,* in which individuals *Acknowledge* their harmful behaviour, recognize that they are *Ruminating* about the event and that this rumination and the negative emotions they are feeling about their behaviour is having adverse *Consequences* for them. In this phase, individuals feel *Deserving* of self-forgiveness and *Commit* to trying to follow through with the journey by beginning to explore the *Motives* behind their harmful behaviour.

In Phase 2, having come to an understanding (not an excusing!) of their behaviour, individuals are able to develop a sense of *Empathy for the Self.* Through this empathy, they are able to process and let go of the *Negative Emotions* such as guilt and shame that they have been harbouring toward themselves.

In Phase 3, having explored the motives behind their behaviour and let go of the negative emotions occupying their focus, individuals are then able to fully accept *Responsibility* for their harmful actions and harness a *Positive Sense of Self*. Feeling like they have come to a place of self-forgiveness, they are then able to tap into their *Empathy*

for the Person Harmed and, if the situation permits, offer *Help to the Person Harmed*, whether tangible, or intangible such as in the case of a sincere and heartfelt apology.

Study 2 will be conducted to further explore the validity of the proposed model and to address the limitation that the current study was conducted with only student participants. Study 2 was conducted as an exact replication of Study 1, but all of the participants were recruited from the community.

CHAPTER III

Study 2: Testing the Model in a Community Sample

Study 2 was conducted to explore the validity of the proposed model of self-forgiveness and to address concerns about the use of a sample of convenience (undergraduate students) in Study 1. Therefore, Study 1 was replicated using a community sample.

3.1 Methodology

3.1.1 Participants

Participants for Study 2 were recruited from communities across Canada via e-mails distributed by colleagues (see Appendix H) and posters (see Appendix I) hung in various locations such as coffee shops, recreation centres, libraries, grocery stores, and doctors' offices. The posters and emails directed interested individuals to a website where they could complete the study and indicated that as a thank you for their participation, they could submit their name for a draw for $50. Two-hundred and forty-seven individuals participated (177 women, 70 men). The age range was 16 - 92 years; mean age was 48.27 (*SD* = 7.25); four participants failed to declare their age. The majority of participants (91.5%) had completed some form of post-secondary education (one participant failed to declare level of education) and 61.5% were either married, common-law, or in a relationship and living with their partner.

Fifty-eight (23.5%) of the 247 participants stopped completing the survey before ordering the units. Of those, 21 (36.2%) did not provide a definition of self-forgiveness. For the 58 who did not fully complete the survey (42 women, 16 men), the age range was 16 - 92 years; mean age was 49.66 years (*SD* = 18.64); two participants failed to declare

their age. For the 189 who did fully participate (135 women, 54 men), the age range was 20 - 92 years. The mean age was 47.86 years (*SD* = 16.84) and the median age was 49 years; two participants failed to declare their age. The final sample size (participants who fully completed the survey) was 189. Please refer to section 3.2.1 for the results of analyses comparing the participants who did and did not fully complete the survey.

3.1.2. Instruments and Procedure

The participants completed the survey individually, on their own time, at their own desired location. Interested participants were directed to the survey page via the community recruitment posters and emails. The process was the same as that described in Study 1 (see Appendix J for the Study 2 consent form) except that some of the demographic questions differed: participants in Study 2 were asked to indicate their level of education completed as well as their current relationship status.

The survey was followed by a debriefing form (see Appendix K). As a reward, participants were offered the opportunity to enter their names into a draw for $50. In order to keep the data anonymous, if participants indicated a desire to enter their name into this draw, they were directed to a separate website.

3.2 Results

3.2.1 Data Cleaning

All the items were examined for missing data. Four participants did not declare age, one did not declare level of education, and 58 did not fully complete the survey (37 participants had missing data for the ordering of the units and 21 had missing data for the ordering the units as well as for providing a definition of self-forgiveness). The 58 participants who did not complete the survey were not used in any of the analyses, with

the exception of the 37 who provided a definition of self-forgiveness (but did not order the units): Their definitions were included in the list of definitions coded by the research assistants. This was the only analysis in which any of their data were used. The final sample size of participants who fully completed the survey was 189 and of these, seven did not provide a definition of self-forgiveness. These participants were still included in analyses. No other data were missing.

To examine whether gender had an effect on whether participants did or did not fully complete the survey, a chi square test was conducted. There was no significant association between gender and degree of survey completion, χ^2 (1) = .02, p = .88.

Chi square tests also revealed that there was no association between survey completion and relationship status, χ^2 (6) = 5.8, p = .52, and level of self-forgiveness, χ^2 (3) = 3.54, p = .32. A t-test also revealed that those who fully completed the survey did not differ from those who did not fully complete it on length of time since the transgression, t(240) = .09, p = .93.

To make the data easier to analyze, as in Study 1, the participants' ordering of each proposed unit of self-forgiveness was re-coded to reflect the theoretical ordering.

3.2.2 Length of Time Since Transgression

Participants were asked how long ago the event for which they wished to forgive themselves had occurred, with answers ranging from *1 = not applicable/never felt the need to forgive myself* to *7 = more than three years ago* (M = 5.75, SD = 2.11). Table 12 shows length of time since transgression, as indicated by participants. For two-thirds of the participants, the transgression had occurred at least three years prior to completing this survey. No significant gender differences were found between men (M = 5.70, SD =

2.33) and women (*M* = 5.76, *SD* = 2.03), *t*(187) = -.17, *p* = .86.

3.2.3 How Far Along Are You in the Process of Forgiving Yourself?

Participants were also asked where they were in the process of forgiving themselves *(1 = not applicable/I have never felt the need to forgive myself* to *4 = I have done something I regret and have fully forgiven myself).* Table 13 shows the number and percent of participants within each subgroup. The mean was 3.1 (*SD* = .95) with the majority of participants (42%) having fully forgiven themselves and another 35% in the process of forgiving themselves. No significant gender difference was found between men (*M* = 2.98, *SD* = 1.12) and women (*M* = 3.15, *SD* = .88), *t*(80.1) = -.98, *p* = .33.

Participants were also asked to indicate, on a continuous scale, how far along they were in the process of forgiving themselves (*0 = I have never felt the need to forgive myself/I have not yet begun to forgive myself* to *10 = I have fully forgiven myself*). The mean for the total sample was 6.50 (*SD* = 3.26) and as with the categorical question, no significant gender difference was found between men (*M* = 5.89, *SD* = 3.66) and women (*M* = 6.74, *SD* = 3.06), *t*(84.24) = -1.51, *p* = .13. Table 14 displays where in the process the 67 participants whom were currently forgiving themselves (on the categorical question) placed themselves.

The majority of these participants (85%) viewed themselves as at least halfway through the process. As in Study 1, of the 189 participants, 26 indicated in the categorical question that they wanted to forgive themselves but had not begun the process; therefore, their answer to the same question on the continuous scale should have been "0." This was not the case (*M* = 3.85, *SD* = 2.72), in fact, none of these participants indicated "0" on the continuous scale. Instead, 81% of individuals answered *5* or below, which left another 19%

Table 12

Length of Time Since Transgression

Time Since Transgression	Number (%) of Participants
1 - Not applicable (never felt the need to forgive myself)	17 (9%)
2 - Less than 1 month ago	13 (6.9%)
3 - 1-3 months ago	8 (4.2%)
4 - 4-6 months ago	4 (2.1%)
5 - 7-12 months ago	4 (2.1%)
6 - 1-2 years ago	18 (9.5%)
7 - 3 or more years ago	125 (66.1%)

N = 189

Table 13

Frequencies of Participants in "Stages" of Self-Forgiveness

Where are you in the self-forgiveness process?	Men (*N* = 54)	Women (*N* = 135)	Total Participants (*N* = 189)
1 - Have never felt the need to forgive myself	9 (16.7%)	8 (5.9%)	17 (9%)
2 - Would like to forgive myself but have not yet begun the process	7 (13%)	19 (14.1%)	26 (13.8%)
3 - Am in the process of forgiving myself	14 (25.9%)	53 (39.3%)	67 (35.4%)
4 - Have fully forgiven myself	24 (44.4%)	55 (40.7%)	79 (41.8%)

Table 14

How Far along Participants Currently Forgiving Themselves Were in the Process

Where are you in the Process?	Number of Participants (*N* = 67)
1	0
2	1 (1.5%)
3	4 (6%)
4	5 (7.5%)
5	14 (20.9%)
6	12 (17.9%)
7	6 (9%)
8	16 (23.9%)
9	9 (13.4%)
10 (*Have fully forgiven myself*)	0

answering *6* or above, with two individuals indicating a *10* which signified full forgiveness of the self.

Once again, these findings lend support to the idea although participants may not feel like they have been purposefully engaging in steps that will bring them closer to self-forgiveness, some gains toward self-forgiveness have been made. Presumably the two individuals who placed themselves at a *10* but earlier indicated that they would like to forgive themselves but had not yet begun misunderstood one of the two questions.

Also as in Study 1, of the 189 participants, 79 indicated in the categorical question that they had fully forgiven themselves; therefore, their answer to the same question on the continuous scale should have been *10,* yet just under half (49%) indicated a *10* on the

scale (M = 8.87, SD = 1.73). Although another 27% indicated a close *9*, the answers for the remaining 24% ranged from *1* to *8* with *2* and *3* being the only numbers not given as a response. These results lend further support to the idea that although participants feel comfortable stating that in general they have forgiven themselves, this does not always translate into complete self-forgiveness. This may be indicative of the existence of different types or levels of self-forgiveness, a research question that certainly bears further probing.

3.2.4 Do Student and Community Participants Differ?

To examine whether there was a significant age difference between student and community participants, a t-test was conducted. Results revealed that the two samples did differ significantly in age, with the community sample (M_{age} = 48.40 years, SD = 17.55) being significantly older than the student sample (M_{age} = 20.59 years, SD = 7.71), $t(278.75) = -.19.09$, $p < .001$.

To explore whether the length of time since the transgression and level of self-forgiveness differed for student participants (Study 1) and community participants, a MANOVA was conducted with length of time since the transgression and level of self-forgiveness as the dependent variables and type of participants (student or community) as the independent variable. Indeed, participants from Studies 1 and 2 did differ significantly in their responses, $F(3, 306) = 8.27$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_{partial} = .08$. Specifically, participants in the two studies differed significantly on level of self-forgiveness, $F(1, 308) = 5.30$, $p = .02$, $\eta^2_{partial} = .02$ and on the length of time since their transgression, $F(1, 308) = 21.87$, $p = <.001$, $\eta^2_{partial} = .07$.

Pairwise comparisons revealed that participants in the community sample (M =

6.5, *SD* = .24) were more likely than student participants (*M* = 5.63, *SD* = .30) to rate themselves closer to full self-forgiveness, M_{diff} = .87, *p* = .02. Also, community participants (*M* = 5.75, *SD* = .15) were more likely than student participants (*M* = 4.6, *SD* = .19) to indicate that more time had passed since their transgression, M_{diff} = 1.14, *p* < .001.

It is possible that the above findings were due to the previously mentioned significant age difference between participants (community participants were significantly older than student participants).

3.2.5 Relation Between Time Since Transgression and Level of Self-Forgiveness

Although the trend was linear (as in Study 1), a one-way ANOVA did not reveal a significant effect on length of time since the transgression (independent variable) and level of self-forgiveness (dependent variable) $F(2, 169) = .71$, $p = .50$. This may be due to skewed data: The majority of participants stated that they had already forgiven themselves and that the transgression had occurred three or more years ago.

3.2.6 Definitions of Self-Forgiveness: Content Analysis

The same two undergraduate research assistants from Study 1 examined participants' definitions of self-forgiveness, searching for themes which could become coding categories; the same seven categories as in Study 1 emerged. The raters followed the same coding procedure as in Study 1.

Inter-rater reliability was quite high, ranging from $\kappa = .84$ - .97. Table 15 lists the kappa for each category theme and well as the number of definitions coded into each category theme.

Nine of the definitions did not fall into any of the category themes. Three of these

Table 15

Inter-Rater Reliability and Number of Definitions in Each Category

Category Theme	Cohen's Kappa	Number of Definitions Mentioning Category
Letting Go of Negative Emotions	.88	70 (31.8%)
Moving On/Switching Focus	.89	62 (28.2%)
Self-Acceptance/Positive Sense of Self	.84	105 (47.7%)
Growth and Responsibility	.93	71 (32.3%)
Punishment/Struggling	.97	4 (1.8%)
Forgetting/Excusing/Denying	.94	19 (8.6%)
Making Amends/Asking for Forgiveness	.96	16 (7.3%)

N = 219

merely stated that self-forgiveness is forgiving yourself, one gave the answer, "Don't know," three others gave answers that were unclear, for example, explaining that self-forgiveness occurs at different times, in different places, and in different ways, to different people, but never actually defining it, and two stated that self-forgiveness is unnecessary or does not exist, "There is no such thing. Forgiveness is given to us by those we have harmed. We do not have the ability to "self" forgive any more than we have the ability to wish away guilt."

In addition, although not classified as a definition theme category, four participants indicated that self-forgiveness requires forgiveness from the person harmed, for example, "When the person that you've [hurt] has forgiven you." In addition, seven individuals mentioned that for some, self-forgiveness might entail a religious or spiritual aspect, for example, "…For me, I think self-forgiveness is tied to faith. Realizing that I

am imperfect before God. Realizing that God's love is always greater, God is always ready with open arms to accept me back."

3.2.7 Ordering of the Units Involved in Self-Forgiveness

To determine whether participant ordering of the units thought to be involved in self-forgiveness matched the hypothesized ordering, a Spearman's rho correlation was calculated for each subject (assessing the correlation of their derived ordering of the units with the hypothesized ordering). Spearman's rho correlations varied considerably, ranging from -.84 to .92 (M = -.01, SD = .28). The range for the subgroups was as follows: *never felt the need to forgive myself*: -.46 to .58 (M = .10, SD = .28), w*ant to forgive myself but have not yet begun*: -.52 to .62 (M = .07, SD = .32), *in the process of forgiving myself*: -.75 to .92 (M = .07, SD = .32), *have fully forgiven myself*: -.84 to .91 (M = .05, SD = .38). Table 16 lists the mean and standard deviation for each unit and each subgroup. As in Study 1, the means were in the mid-to-upper range (5.35 - 10.71) and the ordering of each step had considerable variance; the standard deviations ranged from 2.67 - 4.39. To obtain an understanding of exactly how participants placed each of the units, the frequency distributions of each unit were examined (see Table 17, Appendix L).

As in Study 1, *Acknowledgment* of the harmful event was not, as expected, most commonly placed as the first unit in the self-forgiveness process, but rather, it was most commonly placed near the end (11.1%) and in the middle (11.1%) of the process. Although these were the most common areas of placement for this unit, these percentages are quite low, indicating that participants varied in their beliefs about where in the process acknowledgment of the event occurs.

Whereas Study 1 participants who had never felt the need to forgive themselves

Table 16

Means and Standard Deviations for Participant Ordering of the Units

Proposed Order	Total Mean *(SD)*	Subgroups	Means *(SD)*
1: Acknowledgement	6.43 *(3.73)*	Have never felt the need to forgive myself	7.29 *(3.60)*
		Would like to forgive myself but have not yet begun	6.54 *(4.12)*
		Am in the process of forgiving myself	5.87 *(3.71)*
		Have fully forgiven myself	6.70 *(3.64)*
2: Negative Emotions	7.06 *(3.75)*	Have never felt the need to forgive myself	6.12 *(3.50)*
		Would like to forgive myself but have not yet begun	7.38 *(3.53)*
		Am in the process of forgiving myself	7.48 *(3.34)*
		Have fully forgiven myself	6.80 *(4.18)*
3: Intrusive Rumination	6.98 *(3.81)*	Have never felt the need to forgive myself	6.53 *(4.14)*
		Would like to forgive myself but have not yet begun	7.42 *(4.15)*
		Am in the process of forgiving myself	6.93 *(3.96)*
		Have fully forgiven myself	6.99 *(3.56)*

Table 16, Continued.

Proposed Order	Total Mean *(SD)*	Subgroups	Means *(SD)*
4: Consequences of Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination	7.60 *(4.01)*	Have never felt the need to forgive myself	8.12 *(3.87)*
		Would like to forgive myself but have not yet begun	6.54 *(4.39)*
		Am in the process of forgiving myself	7.67 *(3.94)*
		Have fully forgiven myself	7.77 *(3.98)*
5: Commitment	6.78 *(3.50)*	Have never felt the need to forgive myself	6.00 *(2.81)*
		Would like to forgive myself but have not yet begun	6.96 *(3.66)*
		Am in the process of forgiving myself	6.69 *(3.35)*
		Have fully forgiven myself	6.96 *(3.74)*
6: Empathy for the Person Harmed	6.25 *(2.96)*	Have never felt the need to forgive myself	5.35 *(2.67)*
		Would like to forgive myself but have not yet begun	6.31 *(3.15)*
		Am in the process of forgiving myself	6.72 *(2.87)*
		Have fully forgiven myself	6.03 *(3.01)*
7: Helping the Person Harmed	6.70 *(3.65)*	Have never felt the need to forgive myself	7.00 *(3.82)*

Table 16, Continued.

Proposed Order	Total Mean *(SD)*	Subgroups	Means *(SD)*
		Would like to forgive myself but have not yet begun	5.50 *(3.68)*
		Am in the process of forgiving myself	6.99 *(3.92)*
		Have fully forgiven myself	6.78 *(3.35)*
8: Empathy for Self	6.82 *(3.73)*	Have never felt the need to forgive myself	8.18 *(3.89)*
		Would like to forgive myself but have not yet begun	6.96 *(3.34)*
		Am in the process of forgiving myself	6.55 *(3.87)*
		Have fully forgiven myself	6.71 *(3.69)*
9: Motives	6.55 *(3.67)*	Have never felt the need to forgive myself	7.18 *(4.14)*
		Would like to forgive myself but have not yet begun	7.31 *(4.07)*
		Am in the process of forgiving myself	5.84 *(3.56)*
		Have fully forgiven myself	6.77 *(3.49)*
10: Responsibility	7.12 *(4.06)*	Have never felt the need to forgive myself	6.94 *(3.56)*
		Would like to forgive myself but have not yet begun	6.81 *(3.77)*

Table 16, Continued.

Proposed Order	Total Mean *(SD)*	Subgroups	Means *(SD)*
		Am in the process of forgiving myself	7.66 *(4.01)*
		Have fully forgiven myself	6.80 *(4.31)*
11: Deservingness	7.21 *(3.57)*	Have never felt the need to forgive myself	5.94 *(3.67)*
		Would like to forgive myself but have not yet begun	8.15 *(3.30)*
		Am in the process of forgiving myself	7.16 *(3.73)*
		Have fully forgiven myself	7.20 *(3.47)*
12: Positive Sense of Self	7.28 *(3.83)*	Have never felt the need to forgive myself	5.65 *(3.84)*
		Would like to forgive myself but have not yet begun	7.62 *(3.42)*
		Am in the process of forgiving myself	7.16 (*3.94)*
		Have fully forgiven myself	7.62 *(3.83)*
13: Journey to Self-Forgiveness	8.23 *(3.93)*	Have never felt the need to forgive myself	10.71 (2.76)
		Would like to forgive myself but have not yet begun	7.50 *(4.02)*
		Am in the process of forgiving myself	8.30 *(3.85)*

Table 16, Continued.

Proposed Order	Total Mean *(SD)*	Subgroups	Means *(SD)*
		Have fully forgiven myself	7.87 *(4.04)*

N = 189

were most likely to place this unit toward the beginning, in Study 2, it was participants who were wanting to forgive themselves but had not yet begun who more commonly placed it near the start of the process.

Experiencing *Negative Emotions* about the event was, as expected, most commonly (18%) placed at the start of the process, only one unit from its hypothesized placement. This is in stark contrast to its placement by participants in Study 1, who most commonly placed it near the end of the process. Interestingly, two of the subgroups in Study 2 did not most commonly place this unit at the beginning of the process. Those who had never felt the need to forgive themselves most typically placed it in the middle of the process and those who had fully forgiven themselves most commonly placed it as the very last unit in the process (although, there was only a one-person difference between the number who placed it as the very last unit and the number who placed it at the very start).

Intrusive rumination was predicted to be the third unit, and in contrast to the findings in Study 1, participants in Study 2 clearly did not agree. Instead, they most typically (20%) placed this unit near the end of the process (Unit 9). This placement was mirrored in all of the subgroups.

In the expected sequence, the next unit (4) in the process was one in which individuals would begin to identify the negative ways their emotions and rumination were affecting their lives. Whereas in Study 1 participants most often placed this unit toward the middle of the process, in Study 2 participants seemed to agree more with the hypothesized ordering of this unit, placing it on average only one unit away from its expected location. One exception to this was those who wanted to forgive themselves but

had not yet begun, they most typically (27%) placed it in the middle of the process.

Commitment to trying to forgive oneself was expected to follow. Once again (and again in contrast to Study 1), participants in Study 2 seemed to agree with this placement, a sentiment echoed in all of the subgroups; they most commonly (18%) placed this unit as Unit 6, only one unit away from its hypothesized placement. Those who never had felt the need to forgive themselves and those in the process of forgiving themselves placed it in its expected location as Unit 5.

Next, the model predicted that individuals would turn their attention toward the affected party (Unit 6: *Empathy for the Person Harmed* and Unit 7 *Helping the Person Harmed*). In Study 1, participants most commonly placed *Empathy for the Person Harmed* as occurring near its expected location. In Study 2, participants instead most commonly (19%) placed it at the beginning of the process (in Study 1 the second-most common placement of this unit was also at the start of the process), although those who had fully forgiven themselves were most likely to place it in the middle of the process.

Similarly, participants in the two studies differed in their placement of Unit 7, *Helping the Person Harmed*: those in Study 2 most frequently (18%) placed it at the start of the process, whereas those in Study 1 most frequently placed it at the end of the process. However, those who had never forgiven themselves were most likely to place it in the middle of the process (24%) and those who wanted to forgive themselves but had not yet begun were most likely to place it at the end of the process (31%).

Unit 8 was predicted to be *Empathy for the Self*. As in Study 1, participants in Study 2 seemed to agree, most commonly placing it only one unit away from its hypothesized location. Examination of the subgroups revealed that those who wanted to

forgive themselves but had not yet begun placed it later in the process (19%) whereas those who had never felt the need to forgive themselves varied considerably in their placement, most commonly ordering it as Units 1, 5, 8, 10, 11, and 13 (11.8% in each).

Differing from participants in Study 1, participants in Study 2 more commonly placed the *Motives* unit near the beginning of the process. Once again, opinions seemed to vary, with the most common placement representing less than 15% of the participants. As in Study 1, participants in Study 2 placed taking *Responsibility* for one's actions only one unit away from its expected placement. However, once again, the most common ordering represented a small amount of the total participants' beliefs (less than 15%).

As in Study 1, in Study 2 participants' most common (14%, once again a low representation) placement of the predicted Unit 11 (*Deservingness*) was much earlier in the process than expected, although those who had never felt the need to forgive themselves placed it later in the process, with 24% of them placing it only two units earlier than its expected placement. Once again in line with results from Study 1, although participants in Study 2 placed *Deservingness* as occurring early in the process, the actual experience of feeling a *Positive Sense of Self* was placed much later in the process, in its expected location (16%). However, those who wanted to forgive themselves but had not yet begun were most likely to place it at the start of the process.

The final unit was expected to be *Journey to Self-Forgiveness*, and unlike participants in Study 1, participants in Study 2 agreed with the predicted ordering and most frequently (27%) placed it as the last unit in the process.

3.2.8 Cluster Analysis on Placement of Units

As in Study 1, the data in Study 2 are clear that participants had differing ideas

about the placement of units in the self-forgiveness process. To explore whether coherent groups of people exist who order the units in the same sequence, a cluster analysis was performed. This analysis revealed too many clusters from which to support any meaningful interpretation, once again suggesting that self-forgiveness is a highly individualized process.

3.2.9 Ordering of the Phases

Using the same method as in Study 1, participant ordering of the four phases was inferred and a Spearman's rho correlation was calculated for each subject (assessing the correlation of their derived ordering of the phases with the hypothesized ordering). Once again, the Spearman's rho correlations varied considerably, ranging from -1.0 to 1.0 (*M* = .11, *SD* = .58). The range for the subgroups was as follows: *never felt the need to forgive myself*: -.80 to .95 (*M* = .25, *SD* = .49), *want to forgive myself but have not yet begun*: -.80 to 1.0 (*M* = .17, *SD* = .61), *in the process of forgiving myself*: -1.00 to 1.00 (*M* = .04, *SD* = .57), *have fully forgiven myself*: -1.0 to 1.00 (*M* = .12, *SD* = .61). Table 18 lists the mean and standard deviation for each phase and each subgroup. The means had a narrow range, from 1.94 - 2.50 (SD_{range} = .44 - .82). To obtain an understanding of exactly how participants ordered the units into the proposed phases, the frequency distributions of the percent of participants who placed each unit into each phase were examined (see Table 19, Appendix M).

Acknowledgement, *Experience of Negative Emotions*, *Consequences of Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination*, as well as *Commitment* were all theorized to occur in Phase 1 of the self-forgiveness process. As in Study 1, participants agreed; most commonly (42%) they placed *Acknowledgment* in Phase 1.

Table 18

Means and Standard Deviations for Participant Ordering of the Phases

Phases in Theoretical Order	Total Mean *(SD)*	Subgroups	Means *(SD)*
1: Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination	3.60 *(.56)*	Have never felt the need to forgive myself	2.19 *(.47)*
		Would like to forgive myself but have not yet begun	2.35 *(.59)*
		Am in the process of forgiving myself	2.27 *(.52)*
		Have fully forgiven myself	2.33 *(.56)*
2: The Person I Harmed	2.04 *(.79)*	Have never felt the need to forgive myself	2.09 *(.80)*
		Would like to forgive myself but have not yet begun	1.94 *(.82)*
		Am in the process of forgiving myself	2.24 *(.80)*
		Have fully forgiven myself	2.04 *(.79)*
3: Motives and Responsibility	2.27 *(.64)*	Have never felt the need to forgive myself	2.47 *(.44)*
		Would like to forgive myself but have not yet begun	2.29 *(.73)*
		Am in the process of forgiving myself	2.24 *(.69)*
		Have fully forgiven myself	2.27 *(.64)*

Table 18, Continued.

Phases in Theoretical Order	Total Mean *(SD)*	Subgroups	Means *(SD)*
4: Compassion, Self-Respect, Self-Forgiveness	2.48 *(.78)*	Have never felt the need to forgive myself	2.49 *(.50)*
		Would like to forgive myself but have not yet begun	2.50 *(.53)*
		Am in the process of forgiving myself	2.47 *(.63)*
		Have fully forgiven myself	2.48 *(.78)*

N = 189

Negative Emotions was most commonly placed where expected (its second-most common location in Study 1), in Phase 1. However, those who had never felt the need to forgive themselves were most likely to place it in Phase 2. The second-most common placement of this unit occurred near the end of the process, closer to where participants in Study 1 most frequently placed it.

Participants in Study 2 did not agree with the hypothesized placement of *Intrusive Rumination*, instead, they most commonly (42%) placed it in Phase 3; this was the second-most common placement of this unit in Study 1. Interestingly, in Study 1, this unit was most commonly placed in the expected Phase 1, which in Study 2, emerged as the second-most frequent placement of it.

As in Study 1, participants in the current study agreed with the hypothesized ordering of *Consequences of Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination* (49%) as well as *Commitment* (37%) in Phase 1.

Phase 2 was predicted to include two units: *Empathy for the Person Harmed* and *Helping the Person Harmed*. As in Study 1, participants in Study 2 did not agree. However, whereas in Study 1 both of these units were most commonly placed in Phase 4, in Study 2, both were most frequently placed in Phase 1. Of note, in Study 1, the second-most common placement for both of these units was in Phase 1, and in Study 2, the second-most common placement of *Helping the Person Harmed* was in Phase 4 (for those who had fully forgiven themselves Phase 4 was the most common placement, although only one fewer person placed it in Phase 1).

Phase 3 was expected to contain *Empathy for the Self, Motives,* and *Responsibility*. As in Study 1, participants agreed with the hypothesized placement of *Empathy for the*

Self (40%). As in Study 1, those who had never felt the need to forgive themselves were divided in their beliefs about where in the process this unit occurs, with equal numbers placing it in Phases 1, 3, and 4.

Also in line with the findings of Study 1, participants in Study 2 most commonly (49%) placed *Motives* in Phase 1. However, whereas in Study 1 *Responsibility* was most commonly placed in Phase 4, participants in Study 2 agreed with the hypothesized ordering of this unit, and most frequently (32%) placed it in the expected Phase 3 (of note, in Study 1, only one fewer person placed *Responsibility* in its in the expected Phase 3 as compared to its most frequent placement in Phase 4). As in Study 1, placement of this unit within the subgroups in Study 2 was somewhat diverse: some placed it most commonly in Phase 1, some in Phase 3, and some in Phase 4.

Finally, Phase 4 was predicted to contain *Deservingness*, *Positive Sense of Self,* and *Journey to Self-Forgiveness.* As in Study 1, participants in Study 2 believed the opposite for the ordering of *Deservingness*: they most commonly (42%) placed it in Phase 1, although those who had never felt the need to forgive themselves were fairly even in their distribution of this unit across all four phases.

In Study 1, *Positive Sense of Self* was most frequently placed, as expected, in Phase 4, and the second-most common placement was in Phase 1. In Study 2, however, participants believed the opposite: they most commonly (40%) placed it in Phase 1, although placement in Phase 4 was the second-most common ordering. The exception was those who had never felt the need to forgive themselves; they most frequently placed it in Phase 3.

In Study 1, I found a slightly puzzling result. The final phase, *Journey to Self-*

Forgiveness, most often placed in Phase 1. The same result was obtained in Study 2, and the second-most common placement was in the expected Phase 4 (those who had never felt the need to forgive themselves as well as those in the process of forgiving themselves were most likely to place it in Phase 4, but, their next-most common placement was in Phase 1).

3.2.10 Do Subgroups Differ in Their Ordering of the Units and Phases?

To determine whether level of agreement (Spearman's rho correlations) with the predicted ordering of the units and phases differed for level of self-forgiveness, two one-way ANOVAs were conducted using level of agreement (Spearman's rho correlations) with the predicted ordering of the units or phases as the dependent variable and all four levels of self-forgiveness as the independent variable. As in Study 1, all of the Spearman rho correlations in Study 2 were transformed using the Fisher's *r* to *z* transformation (Field, 2009) and no significant effect was found for the ordering of the units $F(3, 185) = .08$, $p = .97$ nor the phases, $F(3, 184) = .44$, $p = .73$.

To explore whether there existed a relation between the level of self-forgiveness and the way in which participants ordered the units, a MANOVA was conducted using the raw rankings of each of the 13 units as the dependent variables and the four levels of self-forgiveness as the independent variable. Results revealed (according to Roy's largest root statistic) a significant effect of level of self-forgiveness on the ordering of the 13 units, $F(12, 176) = 1.91$, $p = .29$, $\eta^2_{partial} = .03$. Further exploration determined that individuals differed significantly in their placement of Unit 13 (*Journey to Self-Forgiveness) F*$(3, 185) = .29$, $p = .04$, $\eta^2_{partial} = .04$.

Pairwise comparisons revealed that those who had never felt the need to forgive

themselves differed from all other subgroups, in their placement of this unit. Specifically, those who had never felt the need to forgive themselves (M = 10.71, SE = .94) were more likely to place this unit as occurring later in the process than those who wanted to forgive themselves but had not yet begun (M = 7.5, SE = .76) M_{diff} = 3.21, p = .009, those who were in the process of forgiving themselves (M = 8.30, SE = .47) M_{diff} = 2.41, p = .02, and those who had fully forgiven themselves (M = 7.87, SE = .44) M_{diff} = 2.83, p = .007.

Because this is an exploratory study, and because it speaks to the need for future researchers to differentiate between subgroups, it seems worth mentioning some of the results that did not have a significant main effect but did produce pairwise comparisons that were either significant or approached significance; these results are displayed in Table 20.

To explore whether there existed a relation between level of self-forgiveness and the way in which participants ordered the units into the phases, a MANOVA was conducted using of the raw rankings of the four phases (as calculated by summing the rankings of each step assigned to each phase and then taking the average) as the dependent variables and the four levels of self-forgiveness as the independent variable. The results were not significant $F(3, 185) = 1.16$, p = .33. The same non-significant results were obtained in Study 1; this could be a result of the way the ordering of the phases was estimated.

3.2.11 Do Student and Community Participants Differ in their Ordering?

To determine whether level of agreement (Spearman's rho correlations) with the predicted ordering of the units and phases differed for student and community participants, as well as for level of self-forgiveness, two two-way ANOVAs were

Table 20

Unit Placement: Differences Between Subgroups

Unit	Subgroup	Mean *(SE)*	p-value
6 – Empathy for the Person Harmed	In process of forgiving self	6.72 *(.36)*	.09
	Never felt need to forgive self	5.35 *(.72)*	
7 – Helping the Person Harmed	In process of forgiving self	6.77 *(.31)*	.08
	Want to forgive self, have not begun	5.50 *(.72)*	
9 – Motives	Want to forgive self, have not begun	7.31 *(.72)*	.08
	In process of forgiving self	5.84 *(.45)*	
11 – Deservingness	Want to forgive self, have not begun	8.15 *(.70)*	.05
	Never felt need to forgive self	5.94 *(.86)*	
12 – Positive Sense of Self	Fully forgiven self	7.60 *(.43)*	.06
	Never felt need to forgive self	5.60 *(.93)*	

N (Never felt need to forgive self) = 17; N (Want to forgive self, have not begun) = 26; N (In process of forgiving self) = 67; N (Fully forgiven self) = 79

conducted using level of agreement (Spearman's rho correlations) with the predicted ordering of the units or phases as the dependent variable and type of participant (student or community) as well as all four levels of self-forgiveness as the independent variables. Once again, all of the Spearman rho correlations were transformed using the Fisher's *r* to *z* transformation (Field, 2009). Analyses did not reveal a significant effect for type of participant $F(1, 302) = 2.54$, $p = .11$ nor for level of self-forgiveness, $F(1, 302) = 1.15$ $p = .33$.

To explore whether there existed a relation between type of participant (student

and community), level of self-forgiveness, and the way in which participants ordered the units, a MANOVA was conducted using the raw rankings of each of the 13 units as the dependent variables and type of participant and the four levels of self-forgiveness as the independent variables. A significant main effect was found for type of participant, $F(12, 291) = 3.25$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_{partial} = .02$, and a marginally significant main effect was found for level of self-forgiveness, $F(12, 293) = 1.68$, $p = .07$, $\eta^2_{partial} = .06$, as well as for an interaction effect, $F(12, 293) = 1.62$, $p = .08$, $\eta^2_{partial} = .06$. These results suggest that how the units were ordered depended on which type of participant (student or community) was doing the ordering as well as the subgroup in which participants placed themselves (where in the process they were). Moreover, students in certain subgroups seem to order the units differently than community participants in those same subgroups.

Further exploration revealed multiple significant and marginally significant effects; these results are displayed in Table 21. Pairwise comparisons revealed that individuals in different subgroups differed in their placement of Unit 7 (*Helping the Person Harmed) F*(3, 302) = 2.72, $p = .045$, $\eta^2_{partial} = .03$, with those currently in the process of forgiving themselves more likely than those who had fully forgiven themselves to place this unit later in the process, $M_{diff} = 1.09$, $p = .02$. Those who had never felt the need to forgive themselves were also more likely than those who had fully forgiven themselves to place this unit later in the process, $M_{diff} = 1.61$, $p = .03$.

An interaction between type of participant and level of self-forgiveness was also revealed to have occurred for Unit 7 (*Helping the Person Harmed*), $F(3, 302) = 2.63$, $p = .05$, $\eta^2_{partial} = .03$, Unit 9 (*Motives*), $F(3, 302) = 2.53$, $p = .058$, $\eta^2_{partial} = .02$, and Unit 11 (*Deservingness*) $F(3, 302) = 3.86$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2_{partial} = .04$.

Table 21

Unit Placement: Differences Between Student and Community Samples

Unit	F (*df* = *1, 302*)	p-value ($\eta^2_{partial}$)	Student Mean *(SE)*	Community Mean *(SE)*
1 – Acknowledgement	7.23	.008 *(.02)*	7.99 *(.37)*	6.60 *(.31)*
9 – Motives	3.69	.056 *(.01)*	5.86 *(.36)*	6.77 *(.31)*
10 – Responsibility	3.21	.07 *(.01)*	5.97 *(.46)*	7.05 *(.39)*
12 – Positive Sense of Self	15.69	<.001 *(.05)*	8.88 *(.36)*	7.01 *(.30)*
13 – Journey to Self-Forgiveness	4.78	.03 *(.02)*	7.54 *(.37)*	8.59 *(.31)*

N (Student) = 121; N (Community) = 189

Specifically, for *Helping the Person Harmed*, students were more likely than community participants to place this unit later in the process, except for those who had fully forgiven themselves; the community participants in this subgroup were more likely to place it later in the process than the students.

For *Motives*, students were more likely than community participants to place the unit earlier in the process, except for those in the process of forgiving themselves; community participants in this subgroup were more likely to place it earlier than students in that subgroup.

For *Deservingness*, students were more likely than community participants to place the unit earlier in the process, except for those who had never felt the need to forgive themselves; community participants in this subgroup were more likely to place it earlier than students in that subgroup (see Table 22 for means and standard errors).

To explore whether there existed a relation between level of self-forgiveness,

Table 22

Means and Standard Errors for Interaction Effects

Unit	Subgroup	Student Mean *(SE)*	Community Mean *(SE)*
7 – Helping the Person Harmed	Never felt need to forgive self	8.57 *(.94)*	7.00 *(.85)*
	Want to forgive self, have not begun	7.33 *(.83)*	5.50 *(.69)*
	In process of forgiving self	7.54 *(.49)*	7.00 *(.43)*
	Fully forgiven self	5.57 *(.58)*	6.80 *(.39)*
9 – Motives	Never felt need to forgive self	4.93 *(.93)*	7.18 *(.85)*
	Want to forgive self, have not begun	6.44 *(.82)*	7.31 *(.68)*
	In process of forgiving self	6.64 *(.48)*	5.84 *(.43)*
	Fully forgiven self	5.43 *(.57)*	6.77 *(.39)*
11 – Deservingness	Never felt need to forgive self	8.14 *(.93)*	5.94 *(.84)*
	Want to forgive self, have not begun	4.94 *(.82)*	8.15 *(.68)*
	In process of forgiving self	6.15 *(.48)*	7.16 *(.42)*
	Fully forgiven self	6.92 *(.57)*	7.20 *(.39)*

N (Never felt need to forgive self) = 17; N (Want to forgive self, have not begun) = 26; N (In process of forgiving self) = 67; N (Fully forgiven self) = 79

participant type, and the way in which participants ordered the units into the phases, a MANOVA was conducted using of the raw rankings of the four phases (as calculated by summing the rankings of each step assigned to each phase and then taking the average) as the dependent variables and the four levels of self-forgiveness and participant type as the independent variables. The results were not significant for participant type $F(3, 300) =$

1.56, $p = .20$ nor for subgroup $F(9, 906) = 1.36$, $p = .20$. This could be a result of the way the ordering of the phases was estimated.

3.2.12 Irrelevant Units

Following their ordering of the units, participants were asked if they believed any of the proposed units to be irrelevant to the self-forgiveness process. One hundred-sixty-one participants (85.2%) stated that they believed all of the proposed units to be relevant. Of these, 42 participants stated that although they believed all the units to be relevant, they may occur in different orders depending on the individual and the situation, and that some units may not be relevant in all situations. Thirty-four of these individuals specifically mentioned that it was the units *Empathy for the Person Harmed* and *Helping the Person Harmed* that would not be relevant if the person you had harmed was yourself, or if the person harmed were deceased. Arguably, an individual could develop compassionate attitudes and behaviours toward him or herself (e.g., Wohl et al., 2008), thus making these units relevant even when the person harmed is the self.

Some also mentioned that trying to make amends to the person harmed may be detrimental. As one participant explained, "Helping the person you hurt is not necessarily important, in fact it can sometimes do more harm by causing the past action to become alive and active again. Sometimes it's best to let bygones be bygones." In addition, four participants believed all or most of the units to be irrelevant, because self-forgiveness is selfish, unnecessary, or because "we are all LOVE" and if there is conflict, it is only something we are seeing in our own minds. Table 23 lists the units that the remaining 24 participants believed to be irrelevant (some believed more than one unit to be irrelevant).

For *Acknowledgment* the one participant who listed it as irrelevant simply stated,

Table 23

Units Believed to Be Irrelevant to Self-Forgiveness

Unit	Number Who Believed it to be Irrelevant
Acknowledgment	1
Intrusive Rumination	3
Consequences of Negative Emotions and Rumination	1
Commitment	5
Empathy for Person Harmed	5
Helping the Person Harmed	7
Empathy for Self	3
Motives	2
Responsibility	4
Deservingness	5
Positive Sense of Self	4
Journey to Self-Forgiveness	3

N = 189

"[We have] all moved on from who we have hurt and are now accepting we need self-forgiveness and working towards that." I am not entirely sure what the participant meant by this.

About *Rumination*, participants stated such things as, "How a person can feel badly about an event without ruminating over it?", and, "Living in the past does not do one good." This is similar to the statement made by one of the student participants, although how this is irrelevant to self-forgiveness is a bit baffling, because forgiving

oneself would likely allow a struggling individual to let go of the past.

Only one participant believed that *Consequences of Negative Emotions and Rumination* was irrelevant to the process explaining that, "'Intrusive Rumination' without consequences may be enough for someone to decide that they need to say sorry, make amends, and move on."

In explaining why *Commitment* may not be relevant to the process, participants in Study 2, much like those in Study 1, tended to state that self-forgiveness is not necessarily a conscious choice. For instance, one participant wrote, "Commitment - This seems like more of a "silent" rather than an overt step since it is something that just happens on the journey once you realize you deserve to let go and forgive yourself."

For those who believed that *Empathy for the Person Harmed* is irrelevant to self-forgiveness, the reasoning seemed to be that self-forgiveness is a process for the self that should not involve anyone else, "Empathy for the person hurt [is irrelevant], I don't think it will help very much on the process of self-forgiveness if you start thinking about the others." One wonders why an individual would feel the need for self-forgiveness (i.e., feel negative emotions such as guilt) if empathy for the person harmed was not experienced, at least to some degree.

Another participant believed *Empathy for the Person Harmed* is irrelevant because people tend to deny their actions, or at least their negative consequences and therefore would never even think to feel empathy for the person harmed,

> Is it not possible that some do not feel empathy for the person they hurt, or responsibility for their actions, yet by denying any fault or blaming the other person, easily forgive themselves? I seem to see people acting this way all the

> time, hurting and feeling no guilt at all… It seems rich countries behave the same way toward the poorer ones, exploiting them shamelessly or destroying land, killing people in large numbers and inventing reasons it had to be done and ignoring the harm...e.g., referring to native people killed as collateral damage.

The above description, although passionate and describing very unfortunate situations, does not seem to actually be referring to genuine self-forgiveness because if an individual felt no guilt, remorse, or sense of responsibility about his or her actions, there would be no need for self-forgiveness.

As to why *Helping the Person Harmed* may be irrelevant, one participant wrote, "…One's own healing shouldn't be based on helping the other in order to feel better about yourself. It's about making amends with yourself." However, as in Study 1, some participants in Study 2 felt that this unit was irrelevant out of a concern and respect for the person harmed, and that approaching this person could cause him or her harm. In contrast, one participant who believed in the relevance of this unit suggested, "The impact of trying to help and/or apologize [is] critical/important on the steps that follow…actually doing something seems to me to be a key step."

For *Empathy for the Self*, the reason for its irrelevance seemed to centre on the notion that this was "wasteful," however, none of the participants elaborated on why this might be the case. Similarly, participants did not elaborate very much on why *Motives* might be irrelevant, except to suggest that this unit would allow responsible parties to find a way to excuse their actions.

For *Responsibility*, only one participant elaborated on why it is irrelevant to self-forgiveness, stating, "Sometimes people feel regret over situations that were not at all

their fault such as in situations of sexual assault. Having this in here, and worded this way, could reinforce the idea that the event was their fault." This participant raises a complex issue and this scenario may relate more to acceptance and forgiveness of others (for instance, the decision to forgive or not forgive the person who committed the sexual assault).

For *Deservingness*, most participants who listed it as irrelevant believed that feeling deserving of something such as forgiveness is selfish and should not be considered part of the process. For *Positive Sense of Self*, only two of the participants gave a reason for believing it was irrelevant, stating that just because individuals commit a wrong and feel badly about it does not mean that they view themselves negatively. Similarly, not many participants gave a reason for including *Journey to Self-Forgiveness* as an irrelevant unit except to say that it is an automatic by-product of self-forgiveness, rather than a step in the actual process of forgiving oneself.

Of the participants who believed that all of the proposed units are relevant, three mentioned that certain categories could possibly be collapsed. One was *Motivation* and *Intrusive Rumination* because, according to the participant, they tend to occur at the same time.

Another participant suggested the merging of *Empathy for the Self* and *Journey to Self-Forgiveness* because, according to the participant, they are redundant. Without the participant having elaborated further, I have difficulty ascertaining why feeling a sense of understanding and compassion toward the self is equivalent to forgiving the self, and learning and growing from the experience.

The final participant to suggest a merging of units stated that *Empathy for the Self*

and *Motives* should be the same, because one naturally leads to the other. Although participants were not aware of the four general phases that each unit was theorized to fall under, both of these units are theorized to represent the phase *Motives and Responsibility*.

3.2.13 Missing Units

Participants were also asked if they believe that there were units relevant to self-forgiveness that had not been proposed in the study. As in Study 1, participants in Study 2 mentioned eight of these "missing units;" two were mentioned most often (eight participants each). The first, was about discussing self-forgiveness with others to obtain guidance and support, and was also mentioned by participants in Study 1 (two participants). Participants in Study 2 suggested this could come from friends, family, a counsellor, or a spiritual/religious advisor. One even suggested that if responsible parties did not feel comfortable speaking to others, they could instead write about it in a journal or create a piece of art work. In this instance, they would not receive support or guidance, but may benefit from the external expression of their guilt or shame.

The second unit suggested most commonly was one in which responsible parties reflect and take steps to try and ensure that the harmful behaviour does not occur again (i.e., change). The notion of reflection, change, and growth are already encompassed in the existing *Journey to Self-Forgiveness*.

The next unit most commonly suggested (six participants) in Study 2 was also suggested in Study 1 (two participants). It involves contacting the person harmed to explain why the behaviour occurred or to ask for forgiveness. This could arguably be encompassed into the already existing unit of *Helping the Person Harmed,* but could harm rather than help the relationship if the explanation is perceived as an excuse.

Four participants in Study 2 suggested a unit likewise identified as missing in Study 1 (seven participants): *Acceptance*. This was described as a unit in which responsible parties learn to accept themselves and accept that they have behaved in a harmful manner. This could fall into the already existing final unit, *Journey to Self-Forgiveness*. Upon reflecting back and recognizing where one has grown, there can come a feeling of acceptance for the self as human and flawed.

Four participants also suggested a unit much like the *Praying* unit suggested by a participant in Study 1, involving some sort of spiritual or religious aspect; a sense of forgiveness from a Higher Self.

Three participants suggested a unit of *Moving On/Letting go* in which responsible parties could look back at the harmful incident without having a strong emotional reaction. Ultimately, what these three individuals were describing is encompassed in the already existing *Journey to Self-Forgiveness*. Three participants also suggested a unit in which individuals act compassionately toward themselves by stopping the negative self-talk and judgments that they are directing toward their own self. This would likely occur through the already existing units that consist of working through the negative emotions, feeling empathy and compassion toward the self, and achieving a positive sense of self.

Two participants suggested that in addition to *Helping the Person Harmed*, responsible parties should do something to help others who are suffering, or volunteer and give back to others in general. This could conceivably fall under the existing *Journey to Self-Forgiveness.*

Two participants suggested a unit in which participants expect the negative emotions to return and understand that this is normal and does not mean they are failing

to forgive themselves. One participant explained it in the following way,

> Life improves for a while, I start thinking positively and proactively doing things to move on with life. However, times of stress or something that triggers a past memory, could send me spiralling down to what feels like square one (a relapse). It's like 10 steps forward, and then 8 steps back. Then I'll bounce back – and things will improve again.

This proposed unit is similar to the unit suggested by four of the participants in Study 1, and could be incorporated into the *Commitment* unit: a reminder to remain committed in the face of doubt.

Finally, one participant in Study 2 suggested a fast-track end unit "I think there is a whole other process of forgiving [the] self by denying responsibility." As previously stated, many researchers are adamant that such a denial, or any type of excusing of behaviour does not constitute genuine self-forgiveness (e.g., Hall & Fincham, 2008).

3.3 Discussion

The purpose of Study 2 was to explore, in a community sample, the merits of a proposed self-forgiveness model and to see how results compare to results from a study with a student sample (Study 1).

The theoretical model is the same as outlined in Study 1. As in Study 1, the results for Study 2 partially support the hypothesized model: Participants agreed that the units proposed are comprehensive of the self-forgiveness process, and they agreed with the proposed ordering of some of the units (e.g., *Commitment*). However, they also differed in their agreement for the ordering of some of the units (e.g., *Motives*).

In addition, also in support of the hypotheses, individuals at different levels of

self-forgiveness differed significantly in their beliefs about the unfolding of the units in the process. Also, although participants from Study 1 and Study 2 ordered some of the units in similar ways, there were some significant differences in their beliefs about the unfolding of the units. In addition, as in Study 1, and as hypothesized, the way in which participants in Study 2 defined self-forgiveness differed somewhat from researcher definitions.

3.3.1 Length of Time Since Transgression and Level of Self-Forgiveness

In Study 2, three-quarters of the participants had committed their transgression at least one year prior to their participation in the study. In fact, two-thirds of those participants were at least three years past the harmful incident. Although Study 1 also included a large number of participants who had committed their transgression at least one year prior, the total was 30% less than the number in Study 2, and only 23% (in Study 1) had committed their transgression at least three years prior.

In Study 2, despite over 12 months having passed since the harmful behaviour of three-quarters of the community participants, only 42% claimed to have forgiven themselves. When asked to represent their degree of self-forgiveness on a numerical scale, only 21% indicated that they had indeed fully achieved self-forgiveness. This supports the assertion made by numerous researchers that self-forgiveness is a long and arduous process (e.g., Enright, 2001; Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013a; Worthington, 2006).

The results of Study 2 suggest that the more time that had passed since the transgression, the more likely participants were to have forgiven themselves. This supports the suggestion made in Study 1 that forgiveness of the self is a lengthy and difficult process. As one participant in Study 2 stated, “The road to self-forgiveness…was

much longer and more challenging than I had anticipated. No matter if it's a loved one, an employer, a friend or stranger, disappointing anyone is difficult to deal with."

One encouraging finding in Study 2, which echoed findings from Study 1, was that individuals who classified themselves as wanting to forgive themselves but not having begun to do so did not report being in a state of no self-forgiveness. Instead, they scored themselves on the lower end of the scale. Although this indicates low self-forgiveness, it suggests that with the passage of time, individuals who may not believe that they have started to forgive themselves are indeed making some progress toward that goal. Future research should explore what aspects of the process individuals seem to be able to make progress on even though they have not have purposefully attempted to do so.

3.3.2 Defining Self-Forgiveness

Overall, participants in Studies 1 and 2 defined self-forgiveness in much the same way. For example, the same definition categories found in Study 1 emerged in Study 2. Consistent with researcher definitions, and almost identical to the results in Study 1, 32% of the participants in Study 2 included in their definition of self-forgiveness the letting go of negative emotions and thoughts toward the self. However, given that this letting go of negative emotions is a common thread in all the researcher definitions, that more participants did not mention this aspect is slightly puzzling. As in Study 1, individuals in Study 2 seemed to indirectly make reference to it, by stating such things as, "self-forgiveness results in a feeling of being at peace with oneself." On the other hand, as previously suggested, responsible parties may agree with Murphy's (2003) suggestion that in order to learn and grow from the experience, and more importantly, to ensure that it does not occur again, completely letting go of the negative feelings harboured toward

the self is inadvisable.

Most researcher definitions of self-forgiveness also make reference to adopting positive thoughts and emotions toward the self. As in Study 1, a similar number of participants in Study 2 (48%) included this in their definition. However, whereas the participants in Study 1 tended to describe more the adoption of positive thoughts than emotions, participants in Study 2 described both, including acceptance of the self, compassion, and for a small number of participants, a love for the self.

Approximately 30% of participants in Study 2 echoed the beliefs of Woodyatt and Wenzel (2013a) that self-forgiveness is the letting go of, and moving on from, the past. This was 15% less than the number (45%) who stated this belief in Study 1. Whereas many definitions of self-forgiveness focus on the release of negative thoughts and emotions and the adoption of positive thoughts and emotions, results from both Studies 1 and 2 lend support to the idea that for many, an important component of forgiving oneself involves either a conscious cutting of the invisible cord that ties one to a past misdeed, or, a moving on into a new relationship with one's past.

Although Woodyatt and Wenzel's (2013a) definition describes self-forgiveness as a moving on from the harmful behaviour, it also describes the process as one in which transgressors take responsibility for their misdeed(s). As in Study 1, few participants in Study 2 (only five) specifically mentioned taking responsibility for their actions as a fundamental component of self-forgiveness. However, as in Study 1, 32% of participants in Study 2 alluded to this notion of taking responsibility in stating that self-forgiveness involves acknowledging and understanding the harmful behaviour, learning and growing from it, and doing everything within one's power to ensure that it does not happen again.

For instance, one participant described self-forgiveness as,

> The ability to realize that what you did was wrong, that it hurt someone, and that you feel horrible for doing the act that caused the hurt - in turn you give yourself understanding and compassion for why you may have acted in that way, and that although you can't change what's happened, you commit to not cause yourself any further sadness over what happened.

As in Study 1, only a small number of participants in Study 2 (7%) mentioned making amends or asking for forgiveness as integral to the self-forgiveness process. This is interesting given that 67% stated they believed the unit *Helping the Person Harmed* to be one of the steps involved in forgiving oneself. As previously mentioned, Murphy (2003) and Snow (1993) are adamant that self-forgiveness should involve the affected party (through making amends or asking for forgiveness); however, researchers have found self-forgiveness and other-forgiveness to be independent of each other (e.g., Macaskill, 2012). Perhaps, as suggested by many of the participants in this study, this step is important to the process only when it is relevant. For some, especially when there was a previously existing relationship that they would like to reconcile, this might be an important aspect. However, caution is warranted. Should individuals refrain from forgiving themselves if an affected party refuses to have contact with them (whether because they are too traumatized, too angry, or simply vindictive)? Allowing the decision as to whether or not to be able to forgive oneself rest in the hands of another could be very disempowering.

Finally, although researchers affirm that genuine self-forgiveness is different from forgetting, excusing, denying, or minimizing one’s actions, 9% of participants in Study 2

(almost identical to the percentage in Study 1) believed otherwise. Associating self-forgiveness with these is directly opposed to the assertion that to self-forgive means to accept responsibility for one's actions. Making excuses or denying one's culpability suggests a minimal amount of reflection on the motives behind and consequences of one's harmful behaviour. In this instance, it is highly unlikely that anything would be learned from the experience or that any growth would take place; ultimately, the odds of the harmful behaviour occurring again in the future would be high.

3.3.3 The Proposed Model vs. Participant Ordering of the Units

As in Study 1, although participants in Study 2 agreed that the proposed units were a comprehensive representation of the units involved in self-forgiveness, they did not always agree with the proposed ordering of these units. In particular, in Study 2, seven of the 13 units were placed quite similarly (at the expected location or only one to two units away from the expected location) to those in the proposed model: *Negative Emotions, Consequences of Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination, Commitment, Empathy for the Self, Responsibility, Positive Sense of Self,* and *Journey to Self-Forgiveness.* Participants in Study 1 placed a similar number of units in the expected location, but only half of those matched the above units. The units that both sets of participants (Studies 1 and 2) placed in the expected location were: *Empathy for the Self*, *Responsibility*, and *Positive Sense of Self.*

In Study 2, when examined by subgroup, some agreed with the hypothesized ordering of the units although they had not been placed in the expected location by participants as a whole. These included the units *Empathy for the Person Harmed* (those who had fully forgiven themselves), *Helping the Person Harmed* (those who had never

felt the need to forgive themselves), *Motives* (those who had never felt the need to forgive themselves as well as those who had fully forgiven themselves), and *Deservingness* (those who had never felt the need to forgive themselves). This, as well as similar findings in Study 1 suggest that individuals at different levels of self-forgiveness have differing beliefs about what that process entails. Lumping all participants together may produce results that do not reflect the beliefs of subsets of the population.

In Study 2, a few of the differing placements of the units stood out. For instance, although the proposed model places *Acknowledgment* of one's actions as the first unit to occur, participants in Study 2 as well as those in Study 1 placed it much later in the process (although students (Study 1) were significantly more likely to place it later). As was suggested in Study 1, perhaps, instead of viewing this unit as a time to acknowledge to themselves what they have done, participants placed it where in the process they may have felt ready to acknowledge their actions to others. This begs the question, in order to forgive yourself, must you allow others the knowledge of your transgression? Unless one is specifically seeking forgiveness from another, there is no research, to my knowledge, suggesting that one must inform others of his or her transgression in order to achieve self-forgiveness.

Another explanation is that responsible parties may not be ready to acknowledge even to themselves the full extent of their harmful behaviour until late in the process. Feeling guilty or ashamed of their behaviour may be enough for them to know in general terms that they have done wrong and prompt them to begin the process of forgiving themselves, but in order to completely understand all of the ramifications of their actions (i.e., to be able to fully acknowledge the scope of their transgression), they may first need

to pass through some of the other units.

Whereas in Study 1 the unit *Negative Emotions* was placed much later in the process than anticipated, participants in Study 2 placed it at the start of the process, only one unit away from its hypothesized location. The opposite was true for the unit *Intrusive Rumination*: Participants in Study 1 placed it close to the beginning of the process, near its hypothesized location, whereas participants in Study 2 placed it near the end of the process. Participants in Study 2 may have placed *Intrusive Rumination* where in the process they believed they would finally be free of it, rather than where in the process they were simply acknowledging that it was occurring and disrupting their lives.

The above suggests that older individuals might have more difficulty overcoming rumination than younger ones. Research does support this: late adolescents, ruminate less than adults (Garnefski & Kraaij, 2006). Thus, individuals of differing ages may struggle more with different aspects of the process. Although it would be difficult, in a group-intervention setting to cater to the individual needs of each participant, it would at least be helpful for the leader of the intervention to keep in mind that different individuals may need more time than others on certain topics.

In Study 2, the units *Empathy for the Person Harmed* and *Helping the Person Harmed* were both placed by participants earlier in the process than expected, and earlier than participants in Study 1 had placed them. Apparently participants in Study 2 believe that immediate concern for and attention paid to the person harmed should occur. That students (Study 1) would place these units later in the process and first maintain a focus on themselves is not altogether surprising. Young adults and adolescents exhibit similar levels of egocentrism and when compared to older adults, the older adults display lower

levels (Frankenberger, 2000).

One question that must be addressed is, in a circumstance where harm has been caused to another, could an immediate focus on that person, rather than the self, create more damage? Of course, demonstrating remorse and offering some sort of aid and compassion toward the person harmed is likely better than completely ignoring that person and the consequences of one's harmful behaviour. However, offering an immediate apology may seem rushed and insincere. Would there have been enough time to reflect upon and learn from the behaviour so as to be able to offer a genuine apology? This would entail acknowledging all of the harm caused, that the behaviour was wrong and the person did not deserve to be treated this way, and demonstrating behavioural change so as to affirm that it is highly unlikely this behaviour will occur again (Govier & Verwoerd, 2002). Or, are there certain situations in which an immediate apology is perfectly acceptable and even warranted?

Congruent with results from Study 1, participants in Study 2 most commonly placed feeling *Deserving* of self-forgiveness near the beginning of the process, but when it came to actually feeling a *Positive Sense of Self*, this was most commonly placed, as expected, at the end of the process (although students (Study 1) were significantly more likely to place it later in the process). As suggested in Study 1, feeling an early sense of deserving self-forgiveness may be the prompt that responsible parties need to immerse themselves in the process. However, coming to a point of not just feeling deserving of something, but actually embodying that and feeling good about the self takes more time and effort.

In Study 2, the placement of *Journey to Self-Forgiveness* was as expected, most

often placed at the end of the process. This was in direct opposition to the results found in Study 1. Whereas student participants may have believed this unit to represent the start of the journey, community participants seem to have read the description correctly and understood it to be the end point, in which the goal of self-forgiveness has been reached. Of note, in Study 2, those who had never forgiven themselves were significantly more likely to place this unit at the end of the process than all of the other subgroups, suggesting that even though participants most commonly placed it at the end, not all agreed that it should be there. Further reflection on this topic can be found in the following section.

3.3.4 The Proposed Model vs. Participant Ordering of the Phases

Although participants in both studies did not actually order the four proposed phases, by summing the number of participants who placed each unit within the units theorized to make up each phase, an attempt was made to discern how the participants might have ordered the phases (although as previously mentioned, this does present some problems as the dispersion of units within each phase was not equal.

As expected, participants in Study 2 were most likely to include *Acknowledgment, Experience of Negative Emotions, Consequences of Negative Emotions*, and *Commitment* in Phase 1. *Intrusive Rumination* was missing; participants were instead most likely to place it in Phase 3. The units *Empathy for the Person Harmed, Helping the Person Harmed*, *Motives, Deservingness*, *Positive Sense of Self* and *Journey to Self-forgiveness* were all added to Phase 1. Clearly, the way participants in Study 2 ordered the units was top-heavy; they placed 10 of the 13 units into the first phase. In general, participants from Study 2 were quite varied in their placement of all the units, with even the most common

placement of units often representing less than 20% of the participants' beliefs. Students (Study 1) on the other hand were more cohesive in their beliefs and spread the units more evenly across the phases.

Why did the community participants tend to group almost all of the units into the first phase? Perhaps this occurred because two-thirds of them had experienced their transgression three or more years before participating; they retrospectively recalled the steps they had already taken as an integrated group rather than distinct units. In addition, perhaps a sample of adults has experienced a wider variety of transgressions as well as a greater number of severe transgressions.

Without having information about the type of transgression participants were thinking of when answering my questionnaire, I cannot know whether the transgressions community participants in Study 2 were referring to were of greater severity than those from Study 1, and whether or not the severity of the incident impacts the way in which one approaches self-forgiveness. Although participants were not asked to describe the harmful incident they had played a part in, one participant from Study 2 did, at the very end of the questionnaire (in the *additional comments* section), describe the transgression, indicating that at least for some, the transgressions were severe, "My experience was that I chose to drink and drive when I was 17 and crashed my car. My boyfriend who was a passenger in the car died."

In the student sample (Study 1), the units *Motives* and *Deservingness* were also added to Phase 1. That both samples included these units in the first phase suggests, as previously mentioned, that before the process can truly begin people need to feel deserving of the end goal. In addition, an immediate need to understand why the

behaviour occurred must be present. Multiple reasons for this may exist, for instance, others demanding an explanation, or needing an explanation for oneself to either feel reassured that the behaviour was not merely a callous act, or, to develop empathy for the self. This latter explanation is similar to the value of excuse-apologies, which are apologies to an affected party that offer an explanation from the transgressor's perspective. As long as responsibility for one's actions is still acknowledged, these excuse apologies are effective, likely because they evoke empathy in the person harmed toward the responsible party (Belicki et al., 2008). In much the same way, reflecting upon and coming to an understanding of the reasoning behind one's behaviour as a transgressor may help develop empathy for the self.

Interestingly, in Study 2, although the most common placement of both *Positive Sense of Self* and *Journey to Self-Forgiveness* as individual units was at the end of the process (as hypothesized), when the units were grouped into their proposed phases, more participants placed both of these units in the first phase (i.e., the first five units) rather than the last (i.e., the last three units). However, the second-most common placement for both units was in the expected final phase. In Study 1, participants also placed *Journey to Self-Forgiveness* in Phase 1 and I suggested that they may have done so because they interpreted the words *journey to* to signify the start of the process. In support of this, one participant from Study 2 stated, "I was unsure where to place "Journey to Self-Forgiveness" because I feel it is the title of the entire process."

When participants in Study 2 were examined by subgroup, those who had never felt the need to forgive themselves most commonly placed *Positive Sense of Self* in the third phase, and both those who had never felt the need to forgive themselves and those

in the process of forgiving themselves were most likely to place *Journey to Self-Forgiveness* in the expected final phase. Once again, this speaks to the need for future researchers to take into consideration where in the process of self-forgiveness an individual finds him or herself.

Phase 2 was expected to contain *Empathy for the Person Harmed* and *Helping the Person Harmed*, however, in Study 2, both of these units were instead most often placed in Phase 1 (in fact, as in Study 1, no units were most-commonly placed in Phase 2). As previously mentioned, in Study 1, both of the above units were most frequently placed in Phase 4; this may have to do with the tendency for younger individuals to be more egocentric. However, student and community participants do not hold completely opposing views: the second-most common placement for these units in Study 1 was in Phase 1 and in Study 2, the second-most common placement for *Helping the Person Harmed* was in Phase 4. Perhaps both are correct; when an apology should occur is different for everyone and for every situation. As suggested above, a responsible party may experience an immediate feeling of empathy for the person harmed and make some sort of offer of compassion which includes an apology, whereas for others, the offer of amends, at least for certain transgressions, will come after a lengthy passage of time, when reflection, understanding, growth, and change have taken place.

The type of individual who committed the harm may also have a strong influence on where in the process the above units should occur. Some individuals may feel very driven to immediately do something for the person harmed, whereas others need to first withdraw into themselves to make sense of the chaos in their minds. For instance, immediately following a transgression, extraverted transgressors tend to approach the

affected party whereas introverted transgressors tend to avoid them. However, this difference disappears in the case of high-severity transgressions (vs. low and moderate severity), when both extraverts and introverts avoiding the affected party (Rourke-Marcheterre, 2003). This suggests the importance of including, in addition to where in the process responsible parties find themselves, factors such as personality and degree of severity of the transgression.

As expected, in Study 2, *Empathy for the Self* and *Responsibility* were most often placed in Phase 3. Students (Study 1) placed *Empathy for the Self* in a similar location and *Responsibility* into the nearby following phase. Given that participants in Study 2 placed almost all of the units into Phase 1, the placement of the two above units into Phase 3, and the finding that this is similar to their placement by students in Study 1, supports my hypothesis that these units do indeed occur near the end of the process. In Study 2, no units were most commonly placed into Phase 4 (because they were all placed into Phase 1).

3.3.5 Were the Units Relevant?

Eighty-five percent of participants in Study 2 stated that they believed each of the proposed units was in fact relevant to the self-forgiveness process. However, 26% of these individuals stated that certain units, such as *Empathy for the Person Harmed* and *Helping the Person Harmed* may not be relevant to all individuals, for instance, when the person harmed is deceased.

As in Study 1, of the units that participants in Study 2 indicated as "irrelevant," none were selected by more than 5% of the sample, suggesting that each unit proposed has a role in the process of self-forgiveness. When asked whether any units were missing,

the majority of participants in Study 2 agreed that the proposed units were relevant to the process. However, 4% of participants in Study 2 mentioned that they believed there was lacking a unit reflecting a discussion with others about the transgression – for guidance and support. If a person feels comfortable, getting feedback from a friend or counsellor could be beneficial. However, not all will want others to know about their misdeed(s) and including such a step could cause great anxiety for these individuals. That being said, in the context of a group intervention, an individual would be learning about the self-forgiveness process while in a supportive environment with a compassionate leader and other individuals who can offer first-hand insight. Rather than being a separate step, this support and guidance would be a common thread throughout the journey.

Another unit identified as missing in Study 2 (by 1%), and also identified in Study 1, was one similar to Worthington's (2006) *Hold On* stage, where responsible parties come to the understanding that simply because one has forgiven does not mean the negative emotions or thoughts will never return, but that if they do return, they shall pass. As previously suggested, rather than a unit of its own, in the context of a self-forgiveness intervention, during the *Commitment* unit, participants could be informed that some negative emotions may return, and that they may need some reminders, support, and motivation to maintain their goal for forgiving themselves.

3.3.6 Limitations

The limitations of Study 2 are similar to those of Study 1 and include the uneven distribution of participants within each subgroup. Larger and more equal numbers of participants in each subgroup would be preferable. In addition, no information was gathered about the nature of the participants' transgression: the severity, the relationship

to the harmed party, and whether or not this was a one-time or repeated offence.

Another limitation of Study 2, which also applies to Study 1, is that this was a study done on-line. As such, there was no control over the type of environment in which participants completed the survey. In addition, because no researcher was there to watch over the session, participants may have felt less compelled to answer truthfully (Gosling, Vazire, Srivastava, & John, 2004). However, participants of web-based studies may be more representative of the population; they have been found to be even more diverse (e.g., gender and age) than samples from traditional lab-based studies. In addition, results from web-based studies have been found to be consistent with the results obtained in traditional lab-based studies (Gosling et al., 2004).

Another limitation of Study 2 (and also applicable to Study 1) was the labels used to identify each unit: some participants may have read the label without closely reading the description of the unit and this may have led to some misunderstandings (e.g., *Journey to Self-Forgiveness*). Rather than presenting labels to the participants, simply providing them with a description of each unit may be better.

3.3.7 Future Directions

The results of Study 2 indicate that student (Study 1) and community (Study 2) participants do not always agree on how self-forgiveness should unfold. Future research needs to understand why. Are these results due to an age difference? A significant age difference between the two samples was found and research on the forgiveness of others suggests that middle and older adults are more forgiving than younger adults (Toussaint, Williams, Musick, & Everson, 2001). Perhaps age also has an effect on one's tendency to forgive the self; different units may be of more relevance to individuals of certain ages,

and as such, they may believe that those units occur at different points in the process.

In addition, exploring the effects of factors such as severity of the transgression, relationship to the affected party, and personality of the responsible party will likely shed some light on why individuals within each sample varied in their placement of the units. In research on the forgiveness of others, each of the above factors has been found to have some bearing on an individual's willingness or ability to forgive. For instance, adults who were abused as children are more likely to forgive the neglectful parent versus the abusive parent (Chagigiorgis & Paivio, 2008). This reflects two factors at play: the neglectful acts were most often committed by the mother whereas the abuse was most often committed by the father (relationship factor), and the neglectful act (i.e., not putting a stop to the abuse) was seen as less severe than the abuse itself (severity factor).

Another factor that the results of Studies 1 and 2 suggest has an effect on self-forgiveness is the stage at which an individual places oneself in the process. In both studies, significant differences were found for placement of the units for individuals who had never felt the need to forgive themselves, those who wanted to forgive themselves but had not yet begun, those in the process of forgiving themselves, and those who had fully forgiven themselves. To my knowledge, no other study has differentiated between these groups when analyzing data pertaining to self-forgiveness, yet the results clearly suggest that the process is experienced, or at the very least, perceived, differently for individuals in these groups.

Finally, one interesting finding from both Studies 1 and 2 was that individuals who placed themselves in the group of wanting to forgive themselves but not having begun did not, on a scale of *0-10,* rate themselves at *0* (*no self-forgiveness*). Future

research should explore which units these individuals have resolved, without, it seems, putting in any conscious effort. Is the progress they have made toward self-forgiveness reflective of genuine self-forgiveness or pseudo-self-forgiveness (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013a)? Similarly, many of those who placed themselves in the group of having fully forgiven themselves did not, on the scale of *0-10*, rate themselves at *10* (*full self-forgiveness*). What do they believe still needs to occur before they can claim full self-forgiveness? Or do they believe that they will never reach a state of full-self-forgiveness?

3.3.8 Conclusion

Study 2 was an exploratory study aimed at gaining an understanding of the way in which those in the general population define self-forgiveness and whether they match the definitions proposed by researchers in the field, assessing the validity of a basic model of the steps involved in self-forgiveness, and ascertaining whether or not students (Study 1) and members of the general community (Study 2) view self-forgiveness in the same way.

The definitions of self-forgiveness provided by students in Study 1 and members of the general community in Study 2 were very similar. Although both embody elements of definitions put forth by other researchers, they are most reflect Woodyatt and Wenzel's (2013a) process-oriented definition of self-forgiveness as a journey of acceptance, understanding, and growth. Woodyatt and Wenzel (2013a) as well as others emphasize the importance of taking responsibility for one's actions. Although not often directly stated in their offered definitions, participants did agree that taking responsibility is an important unit in the process, and referred to it indirectly in their definitions.

Given the parallels between the definitions in Study 1 and Study 2, the definition proposed in Study 1 remains appropriate: Self-forgiveness is a process that moves us to a

state of self-acceptance through a positive attitudinal shift in feelings, actions, and beliefs about the self. Self-forgiveness involves the acknowledgment of and moving on from our misbehaviour, through the recognition of the consequences of our actions, the exploration of the motives behind our actions, and a state of learning and growing from the experience.

The participants in Study 2 agreed that each of the proposed units has a role in the self-forgiveness process. This is encouraging as the same results were obtained in Study 1. However, in both studies, the order in which these units were thought to occur varied. As a whole, participants agreed with the hypothesized ordering of approximately half of the proposed units (six units in Study 1 and seven units in Study 2). However, upon further examination of the placement of each unit, I noticed that the ordering of these units sometimes differed across subgroups and across the two samples.

This supports the notion that the results of studies that ask participants about their experience with self-forgiveness might overlook important information because where in the process individuals place themselves affects their beliefs about, and experiences with, self-forgiveness. In addition, by examining samples of convenience, such as students, researchers may be doing the field a disservice when they generalize the results to the rest of the population – students and community participants varied on a number of their unit placements. For example, in general, students were more likely to place *Helping the Person Harmed* later in the process than community participants. When this was further explored, I found that this was most true of students who were in the process of forgiving themselves: They were significantly more likely to place this unit later than community participants in the process of forgiving themselves.

In Study 1, I suggested a slightly revised ordering of the phases of self-forgiveness. However, participants in the current study were more diversified in their view points, and also seemed to want to engage in almost all of the steps involved in self-forgiveness all at once. The notion of doing it all at once and all right away (in Phase 1) is more idealistic than realistic. Self-forgiveness takes time and should not be rushed.

By examining the ordering of the units individually, a new proposed ordering of the process of self-forgiveness, based on the results from Study 2 might be (bearing in mind that this might change depending on where in the process one finds him or herself) that self-forgiveness begins with the experience of *Negative Emotions,* followed by *Empathy for the Person Harmed* and a desire to *Help the Person Harmed* by making amends. This would be followed by an examination of one's *Motives* for having acted in that way, accompanied by a feeling of *Deserving* self-forgiveness and an acknowledgment of the *Consequences of the Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination* on one's life. Next would be a *Commitment* to try to forgive the self. This would prompt an *Acknowledgment* of and an acceptance of *Responsibility* of the full extent of the harm that was caused, a development of *Empathy for the Self,* and an ability to finally begin to let go of the *Intrusive Rumination*. Finally, individuals would be able to experience a *Positive Sense of Self* and reflect on their *Journey to Self-Forgiveness* and the learning and growth they have accomplished as a result.

In a group self-forgiveness intervention, the leader would need to present a single model that one hopes would apply to all those in attendance. A comparison to the new proposed ordering in Study 1 and an attempt to create a model that includes participants in both studies seems fruitful. In Study 1, the first phase was proposed to be one in which

individuals begin the start of the *Journey to Self-forgiveness*, by *Acknowledging* their harmful behaviour, recognizing that they are *Ruminating* about the event and that it is having adverse *Consequences* for them, feeling *Deserving* of self-forgiveness and *Committing* to trying to follow through with the journey by beginning to explore the *Motives* behind their harmful behaviour.

For *Journey to Self-Forgiveness*, as previously suggested, although community participants (Study 2) most commonly placed it as the final unit, a number of participants in both samples seemed to believe this unit occurs at the beginning, likely because of the words *journey to*. Although the process may be referred to as *Journey to Self-Forgiveness*, the essence of that unit is one in which individuals have let go of the negative emotions, reflected on their journey to self-forgiveness, and also reflected on how they have changed for the better. A more fitting title for this unit might be *Reflections on Self-Forgiveness Journey*, and its place would be at the end of the process.

For *Acknowledgment*, although many participants in both samples placed it near the start of the process, many also placed it near the end. As previously suggested, some participants may have interpreted this as a unit in which they feel ready to acknowledge to others what they have done. This unit was instead meant to be a moment in which individuals acknowledge to themselves the harm they have caused…what it is exactly they wish to forgive themselves for doing. Once again, a re-naming of this unit, perhaps as *Identifying the Harm* might make it clearer and more likely to be placed at the start of the process. For those who believe they need to acknowledge their actions to others, this aspect could become part of the unit *Responsibility* (part of taking responsibility could entail admitting one's culpability to others) and thus occur near the end.

Participants in Study 2 identified *Rumination* as occurring in Phase 3, but *Negative Emotions* as occurring much earlier in the process. The opposite was true for student participants. Again, more clarity, and perhaps a merging of the two units would be useful. For instance a unit labelled as *Identifying Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination* in which individuals reflect on whether they have been experiencing certain negative emotions and whether they have been ruminating could occur at the start of the process, whereas a second unit, *Letting go of Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination,* could occur near the end. Seemingly, these two units would then meet the needs of both samples.

Deservingness, Consequences of Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination, *Commitment*, and *Motives* were placed by both samples of participants as occurring near the start of the process, therefore, having them in Phase 1 would seem to adequately address the beliefs of all. Of note, all but one of the units seems reminiscent of Enright and the Human Development Study Group's (1996), first two Phases: *Uncovering* and *Decision* in which responsible parties uncover all the ways in which the harmful event has been affecting them and decide to commit to forgiving themselves. The *Motives* unit is slightly out of place in that it seems better suited to what Enright and the Human Development Study Group refer to as the *Work Phase*. Perhaps a slight adjustment could be made, moving *Motives* to Phase 2. This would place it with other similar "work" units but still place it close to the start of the process.

In Study 1, Phase 2, became developing a sense of *Empathy for the Self,* and letting go of the *Negative Emotions* such as guilt and shame. Participants in Study 1 and Study 2 were similar in their placing of *Empathy for the Self*, and as aforementioned, at

this stage both would be appeased by the inclusion of a unit labelled *Letting go of Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination*. With the addition of the *Motives* phase, as discussed above, these units could constitute a phase that embodies aspects of Enright and the Human Development Study Group's (1996) Work Phase.

In Study 1, Phase 3 was proposed to be when individuals fully accept *Responsibility* for their harmful actions, achieve a *Positive Sense of Self*, tap into their *Empathy for the Person Harmed* and, if the situation permits, offer *Help to the Person Harmed*. Participants in Study 2 also placed *Responsibility* and *Positive Sense of Self* near the end of the process; however, *Responsibility* was placed somewhat earlier in the process than where it was placed by students. *Responsibility* seems like it would fit in nicely with other "work" units, so perhaps it could be put near the end of Phase 2, as this would keep it close to the placement beliefs of both samples.

The big difference in the two samples' placement was their focus on the person harmed; those in Study 2 were much more likely to place it at the very start. However, as previously discussed, in certain situations, immediately *Helping the Person Harmed*, for instance, by apologizing, may come across as insincere; there may be value in keeping it at the end of the process, and indeed, this was the second-most common placement of this unit for those in Study 2. However, perhaps feeling *Empathy for the Person Harmed* can occur beforehand, in the uncovering phase, when one uncovers the ways in which the event may have affected the person harmed (and indeed, this was the second-most common placement for those in Study 1).

In sum, a proposed new model that incorporates the needs and beliefs of both samples is the following: Phase 1 – *Identifying the Harm, Empathy for the Person*

Harmed, *Identifying Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination*, *Consequences of Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination*, *Deservingness,* and *Commitment*; Phase 2 – *Motives, Empathy for the Self, Responsibility,* and *Letting go of Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination;* Phase 3 – *Positive Sense of Self, Helping the Person Harmed, Reflections on Self-Forgiveness Journey*.

When responsible parties want to forgive themselves, but feel overwhelmed, they may choose to visit a counsellor or psychologist for support and guidance. Indeed, some participants suggested that this be a unit in the model. But do counsellors and their clients view self-forgiveness in the same way? Do they believe the same steps to be integral to the process? Do they have similar views about the order in which these steps should occur? When a counsellor says to a client, "Would you like to work on forgiving yourself?" and the client answers in the affirmative, do they have the same idea of what it is they will be working toward? Study 3 will replicate Studies 1 and 2 but be conducted with counsellors and psychologists in an attempt to answer this question.

CHAPTER IV

Study 3: Testing the Model in a Sample of Counsellors and Psychologists

Study 3 was conducted to explore the validity of the proposed model of self-forgiveness and to ascertain whether counsellors and psychologists hold the same understanding of self-forgiveness as their potential clients. Therefore, sections of Study 1 and Study 2 were replicated using a sample of counsellors and psychologists.

4.1 Methodology

4.1.1 Participants

Participants for Study 3 were recruited across Canada via emails sent to counsellors and psychologists. In order to obtain counsellor and psychologist email addresses, the words "counsellor," "psychologist", and the name of each province and territory in Canada was typed into Google. Email addresses were obtained by clicking on the names of the counsellors and psychologists and accessing their websites. The invitation email (see Appendix N) sent to them encouraged them to forward the invitation to colleagues. Some counsellors and psychologists also found out about the study via the posters distributed for Study 2. As a thank you for their participation, they could submit their name for a draw for $50.

In total, 814 emails were sent to counsellors and psychologists across Canada. However, a number of these were to general receptionist emails rather than the actual counsellor or psychologist's email and I could not be sure whether the email was forwarded to the practitioner. Many counsellors and psychologists wrote back stating that they were very intrigued by topic of the study but simply did not have the time to participate; one wrote back saying that self-forgiveness was a worthless topic to research.

One-hundred and twenty-one counsellors and psychologists participated. Forty-one (34%) of the participants stopped completing the survey before ordering the units. Of those, 16 (39%) did not provide a definition of self-forgiveness. Of the 41 who did not fully complete the survey, nine (22%) listed themselves as a Registered Clinical Counsellor, nine (22%) as a psychologist, 13 (31.7%) as a counsellor, five (12.2%) as a therapist, and five (12.2%) as "other". The length of time that they had been practicing in their profession ranged from 3 - 37 years (M = 14.5 years, SD = 9.99).

When describing their approach, 18 (43.9%) indicated that they adhered to an eclectic approach, nine (22%) to "other", six (14.6%) to Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, four (9.8%) to Rogerian/humanistic therapy, two (4.9%) to feminist theory, and one (2.4%) to psychodynamic therapy. All but one of these participants stated that they had previously had a client who needed to forgive themselves and that they believed they would have future clients with the same need. The one participant who deviated from the norm explained that although he or she had encountered clients riddled with guilt and self-loathing, none had ever presented themselves with the specific goal of self-forgiveness.

The final number of participants who fully completed the survey was 80. Of those 80 participants, 24 (30%) listed themselves as a Registered Clinical Counsellor, 23 (28.7%) as a psychologist, 15 (18.8%) as a counsellor, 13 (16.3%) as a therapist, and five (6.3%) as "other". The length of time that they had been practicing in their profession ranged from 3 - 36 years (M = 15.18 years, SD = 10.61). When describing their approach, 53 (66.3%) indicated that they adhered to an eclectic approach, nine (11.3%) to "other", five (6.3%) to Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, five (6.3%) to Family Systems Model,

five (6.3%) to psychodynamic therapy, two (2.5%) to feminist theory, and two (2.5%) to Rogerian/humanistic therapy; one participant failed to declare their approach. For simplicity, all participants in this study will hereafter be referred to as "counsellors." All of these participants stated that they had previously had a client who needed to forgive themselves and that they believed they would have future clients with the same need. Please refer to section 4.2.2 for the results of analyses comparing the participants who did and did not fully complete the survey.

4.1.2. Instruments and Procedure

The participants completed the survey individually, on their own time, at their own desired location. Interested participants were directed to the survey page via the recruitment email. As with participants in Studies 1 and 2, upon going to the website, they were immediately presented with a consent form (see Appendix J) and indicated their consent by clicking on "Continue." They then answered some demographic questions (type of practitioner, therapeutic approach, length of time in profession, if they had previously had a client needing self-forgiveness, and if they anticipated having a future client needing self-forgiveness). The remaining questions and procedure were identical to that of Study 2.

4.2 Results

4.2.1 Data Cleaning

All the items were examined for missing data. One participant did not declare his or her therapeutic approach and one participant did not answer the question, *Do you believe that as a professional you view self-forgiveness differently than your clients?* As previously mentioned, 41 did not fully complete the survey (25 participants had missing

data for the ordering of the units and 16 had missing data for the ordering of the units as well as for providing a definition of self-forgiveness). The 41 participants who did not complete the survey were not used in any of the analyses, with the exception of the 25 who provided a definition of self-forgiveness: Their definitions were included in the list of definitions coded by the research assistants. These 25 participants also all answered the question about whether they believe they view self-forgiveness differently than their clients so their data were used when analyzing the data for that question. Their data were not used in any other analyses. The final sample size for participants who fully completed the survey was 80 participants. No other data were missing.

To examine whether type of profession (e.g., Registered Clinical Counsellor, therapist, psychologist, etc.) was independent of degree of survey completion, a chi-square test was conducted. Results indicated that the two variables were independent, χ^2 (4) = 4.54, p = .34.

It was not possible to run a chi square test on therapeutic approach (e.g., Family Systems Model, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, etc.) to see if it was independent of survey completion because nine (64.3%) of the cells had expected counts of less than five (Field, 2009).

A t-test revealed that those who did not fully complete the survey and those who did fully complete it did not significantly differ in the number of years practicing their profession, t(119) = -.34, p = .74.

To make the data easier to analyze, as in Studies 1 and 2 the participants' ordering of each proposed unit of self-forgiveness was re-coded to reflect the theoretical ordering.

4.2.2 Definitions of Self-Forgiveness: Content Analysis

The same two undergraduate research assistants from Studies 1 and 2 examined participants' definitions of self-forgiveness, searching for themes that could become coding categories. Similar categories as in Studies 1 and 2 emerged; however, the categories of *Punishment/Struggling* and *Forgetting/Excusing/Denying* were absent. The same procedure as in Studies 1 and 2 was followed. Inter-rater reliability was quite high, ranging from κ =.79 - .99. Table 24 lists the kappa for each category theme as well as the number and percentage of definitions coded into each category theme.

Eight of the definitions did not fall into any of the category themes. Four of these mentioned client experience but did not provide a definition, three merely stated that self-forgiveness is "forgiving yourself, " and one gave the answer that self-forgiveness is, "Not necessary" (there was no elaboration as to why).

4.2.3 Do Practitioners Believe They Differ From Their Clients?

The participants were asked whether they believed that they defined self-forgiveness differently than their clients. Eighty-six (81.9%) responded that yes, in comparison to at least some of their clients, they had a different view of self-forgiveness. Many stated that this was because a number of their clients associate self-forgiveness with forgetting. For instance, one practitioner wrote, "Yes, I think so. I have one client, for instance, who insists that he will never forgive himself for some of his past interpersonal transgressions, because he believes that forgiveness will lead to forgetting, and then to re-offending."

Three practitioners mentioned that their views differ from their clients' because some of their clients associate self-forgiveness with a religious component and they do

Table 24

Inter-rater Reliability and Number of Definitions in Each Category

Category Theme	Cohen's Kappa	Number of Definitions Mentioning Category
Letting go of Negative Emotions	.79	35 (33.3%)
Moving On/Switching Focus	.89	22 (21.0%)
Self-Acceptance/Positive Sense of Self	.83	69 (65.7%)
Growth and Responsibility	.89	43 (41.0%)
Making Amends/Asking for Forgiveness	.99	6 (5.7%)

N = 105

not. Others who answered in the affirmative to this question mentioned that they hold differing views because many of their clients believe self-forgiveness to be an impossibility, believe that they are undeserving of it, or, are overwhelmed by the thought of forgiving themselves and have no idea of the steps to take in order to begin the process. One practitioner, in elaborating on his or her views and why they are different as compared to clients' stated, "Yes: I believe many don't have the right to forgive themselves."

Twelve (11.4%) of the practitioners stated that they do not believe they hold a different view of self-forgiveness than their clients because often clients have a very good and sometimes an even better grasp than they do, on what it means to forgive oneself. Two practitioners stated that we all share the same experiences so one does not have more knowledge about self-forgiveness than the other, "I am not sure I understand your question. Self-forgiveness is the same for me as a professional as it is for my clients. We are all human." Six (5.7%) practitioners stated that they did not know if they held

differing views than their clients and one practitioner failed to respond to the question.

4.2.4 Ordering of the Units Involved in Self-Forgiveness

To determine whether participant ordering of the units thought to be involved in self-forgiveness matched the hypothesized ordering, a Spearman's rho correlation was calculated for each subject (assessing the correlation of their derived ordering of the units with the hypothesized ordering). Spearman's rho correlations varied considerably, ranging from -.75 to .67 (M = -.04, SD = .30). Table 25 lists the means and standard deviations for each unit.

In Studies 1 and 2, the means were in the mid-to-upper range whereas in the current study they hovered more in the mid-range (5.19 - 8.39). As in Studies 1 and 2, in the current study, the ordering of each step had considerable variance; the standard deviations ranged from 2.96 - 4.39. To obtain an understanding of exactly how participants placed each of the units, the frequency distributions of each unit were examined (see Table 26, Appendix O).

In Study 3, as in Studies 1 and 2, *Acknowledgment* was not, as expected, most commonly placed as the first unit in the self-forgiveness process, but rather it was most commonly placed near the late-middle of the process (22.5%).

In Study 3, experiencing *Negative Emotions* about the event was, as expected, most commonly (20%) placed at the start of the process, only one unit from its hypothesized placement, and in the same location as most commonly placed in Study 2. This is in contrast to participants in Study 1 who most commonly placed it near the end of the process.

Intrusive Rumination was predicted to be the third unit, as in Study 2, but in

Table 25

Means and Standard Deviations for Participant Ordering of the Units

Proposed Order	Total Mean *(SD)*
1: Acknowledgement	6.65 *(3.29)*
2: Negative Emotions	7.51 *(3.57)*
3: Intrusive Rumination	6.97 *(3.75)*
4: Consequences of Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination	8.39 *(4.21)*
5: Commitment	7.50 *(3.56)*
6: Empathy for the Person Harmed	6.25 *(2.96)*
7: Helping the Person Harmed	7.81 *(3.58)*
8: Empathy for Self	5.19 *(3.62)*
9: Motives	6.51 *(3.92)*
10: Responsibility	7.41 *(4.39)*
11: Deservingness	6.96 *(3.16)*
12: Positive Sense of Self	6.73 *(3.61)*
13: Journey to Self-Forgiveness	7.00 *(3.79)*

N = 80

contrast to the findings in Study 1, participants in Study 3 were not in agreement. Instead, they most typically (19%) placed this unit near the end of the process, in the identical location that it was most commonly placed in Study 2.

In the expected sequence, the next unit in the process was *Consequences of Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination*. In Study 3, as in Study 2, participants seemed to agree with the hypothesized ordering, and placed it only one unit away from its

expected location. Those in Study 1 were most likely to place it further along in the process.

Following this unit was expected to be *Commitment* to trying to forgive oneself. Once again (and in contrast to results from Study 1), participants in Study 3 most commonly (15%) placed this unit in the same location as did those in Study 2, only one unit away from its expected placement. However, this placement represented less than 20% of the Study 3 participants' opinions and the same number of participants also placed this unit as one of the last units in the process.

Next, I predicted that individuals would turn their attention toward the affected party. For *Empathy for the Person Harmed,* participants in Study 3 again seemed to agree with those from Study 2 and most commonly (15%) placed it at the beginning of the process. However, Study 3 participants' second-most common placement (13%) was at the end of the process, which matched the results from Study 1 (although in the current study, the same amount also placed it as occurring in the middle of the process).

For *Helping the Person Harmed*, participants in Study 3 instead seemed to agree with participants in Study 1 and most commonly placed it at the end of the process (21%). Interestingly, the second-most common placement (19%) for participants in Study 3 was at the start of the process, which matched the results from Study 2.

Unit 8 was predicted to be *Empathy for the Self*. As in Studies 1 and 2, participants in Study 3 seemed to agree and most commonly placed it only one unit away from its hypothesized location. For Unit 9, *Motives*, participants in Study 3 differed from those in Study 2 and instead agreed with the participants in Study 1; they most commonly (20%) placed it only two units away from its hypothesized location.

As in Studies 1 and 2, participants in Study 3 most commonly (14%) placed *Responsibility* for one's actions in its hypothesized location. However, the same amount of participants also placed it three units earlier (Unit 7). Also as in Studies 1 and 2, in Study 3, participants' most common (24%) placement of the predicted Unit 11 (*Deservingness*) was much earlier in the process than expected. Contrary to the results from Studies 1 and 2, however, participants in Study 3 most commonly placed *Positive Sense of Self* as occurring much earlier in the process than expected (14%).

Journey to Self-Forgiveness, which was expected to be the final unit in the process, was instead most commonly (23%) placed, by participants in Study 3, near the beginning (as in Study 1). However, the second-most common placement of participants in Study 3 was more near the end of the process (as in Study 2).

4.2.5 Cluster Analysis on Placement of Units

As in the previous two studies, the data are clear that participants had differing ideas about the placement of units in the self-forgiveness process. To explore whether coherent groups of people exist who order the units in the same sequence, a cluster analysis was performed. This analysis revealed too many clusters, suggesting that self-forgiveness is a highly individualized process.

4.2.6 Ordering of the Phases

Using the same method as in Studies 1 and 2, ordering of the phases for participants in Study 3 was inferred and a Spearman's rho correlation was calculated for each subject (assessing the correlation of their derived ordering of the phases with the hypothesized ordering). Once again, the Spearman's rho correlations varied considerably, ranging from -.86 to .71 (M = -.07, SD = .31). Table 27 lists the means and standard

deviations for each phase.

To obtain an understanding of exactly how participants ordered the units into the proposed phases, the frequency distributions of the percent of participants who placed each unit into each phase were examined (see Table 28, Appendix P).

Acknowledgement, Negative Emotions, Consequences of Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination, as well as *Commitment* were all theorized to occur in Phase 1 of the self-forgiveness process. Unlike participants in Studies 1 and 2, participants in Study 3 did not agree with the hypothesized ordering of *Acknowledgement* and instead, most commonly (48%) placed this unit in Phase 3.

Participants in Study 3 also did not agree with the hypothesized placement of *Intrusive Rumination*, and instead most commonly (35%) placed it, as did those in Study 2, in Phase 3. In Study 3, its expected placement in Phase 1 emerged as the second-most frequent placement. As in Studies 1 and 2, participants in Study 3 agreed with the hypothesized ordering of *Consequences of Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination* (48%) as well as *Commitment* (38%) in Phase 1.

Phase 2 was hypothesized to include *Empathy for the Person Harmed* and *Helping the Person Harmed*. As in Studies 1 and 2, participants in Study 3 did not agree. However, whereas in Study 1, both of these unit were most commonly placed in Phase 4, in the current study and in Study 2, both of these were most frequently placed in Phase 1 (41% and 43% respectively). However, the second-most common placement of both these units was in Phase 4.

Phase 3 was predicted to contain *Empathy for the Self, Motives,* and *Responsibility*. As in Studies 1 and 2, participants agreed with the hypothesized

Table 27

Means and Standard Deviations for Participant Ordering of Phases

Phases in Theoretical Order	Mean *(SD)*
1: Negative Thoughts and Intrusive Rumination	2.42 *(.45)*
2: The Person I Harmed	2.32 *(.80)*
3: Motives and Responsibility	2.15 *(.60)*
4: Compassion, Respect, Self-Forgiveness	2.26 *(.62)*

N = 80

placement of *Empathy for the Self* (36%). Also in line with results from Studies 1 and 2, participants in Study 3 most commonly (43%) placed *Motives* in Phase 1. However, whereas in Studies 1 and 2 *Responsibility* was most commonly placed in Phase 3 and Phase 4, participants in Study 3 disagreed with the hypothesized ordering of this unit and most frequently (30%) placed it in Phase 1. Of note, the next most common placement of this unit was in Phases 3 and 4.

The last phase (4) was predicted to contain *Deservingness, Positive Sense of Self,* and *Journey to Self-Forgiveness.* As in Studies 1 and 2, participants in Study 3 believed the opposite for the ordering of *Deservingness* and most commonly (53%) placed in Phase 1. However, whereas in Study 1, *Positive Sense of Self* was most frequently placed in the expected Phase 4, participants in Study 2 and in Study 3 believed the opposite and most commonly (45%) placed it in Phase 1. For both of these studies, the end of the process was the second-most common placement.

Once again, in Study 3, as in both of the previous studies, *Journey to Self-Forgiveness,* which was expected to be the very last unit of the entire process was instead most often placed in Phase 1.

4.2.7 Do Students, Community, and Counsellor Participants Differ in their Ordering?

To determine whether level of agreement (Spearman's rho correlations) with the predicted ordering of the units differed for type of participant (student, community, and counsellor) a one-way ANOVA was conducted using level of agreement (Spearman's rho correlations) with the predicted ordering of the units as the dependent variable and type of participant as the independent variable. Once again, all of the Spearman rho correlations were transformed using the Fisher's *r* to *z* transformation (Field, 2009).

Analyses revealed a significant effect of type of participant on degree of agreement with the theorized ordering of the units $F(2, 387) = 4.03$, $p = .02$, $\eta^2_{partial} = .02$. Further exploration (LSD post hoc test) revealed that the community sample ($M = .07$, $SE = .03$) agreed more with the predicted ordering of the units than the student sample ($M = -.01$, $SE = .03$) $M_{diff} = .09$, $p = .04$ and the counsellor sample ($M = -.05$, $SE = .04$) $M_{diff} = .12$, $p = .01$.

To determine whether level of agreement (Spearman's rho correlations) with the predicted ordering of the phases differed for the student, community, and counsellor participants, a one-way ANOVA was conducted with the predicted ordering of the phases as the dependent variable and type of participant as the independent variable. Once again, all of the Spearman rho correlations were transformed using the Fisher's *r* to *z* transformation (Field, 2009).

Analyses revealed a marginally significant difference on degree of agreement with the theorized ordering of the units into phases for type of participant $F(2, 387) = 2.55$, $p = .08$, $\eta^2_{partial} = .01$. Further exploration (LSD post hoc test) revealed that the community sample ($M = .22$, $SE = .07$) was more likely than the counsellor sample ($M =$

-.08, *SE* = .11) to agree with the predicted ordering of the phases, M_{diff} = .30, p = .03. Although the difference was not significant, the trend observed was that the student sample (*M* = .13, *SE* = .09) was also more likely than the counsellor sample to agree with the predicted ordering of the phases.

To explore whether there existed a relation between type of participant and the way in which participants ordered the units, a MANOVA was conducted with the raw rankings of each of the 13 units as the dependent variables and type of participant as the independent variable. A significant main effect was found, $F(24, 754) = 3.33$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_{partial} = .10$. Pairwise comparisons determined that participants differed significantly and marginally significantly on their placement for multiple units; these results are displayed in Table 29.

To explore whether there existed a relation between type of participant and the way in which they ordered the units into the phases, a MANOVA was conducted with the raw rankings of the four phases (as calculated by summing the rankings of each step assigned to each phase and then taking the average) as the dependent variables and participant type as the independent variable. A significant main effect was found, $F(6, 772) = 2.36$, $p = .03$, $\eta^2_{partial} = .02$.

Further exploration revealed that participants differed marginally in their placement of units into Phase 3 $F(2, 387) = 2.54$, $p = .08$, $\eta^2_{partial} = .01$ and differed significantly in their placement of units into Phase 4 $F(2, 387) = 3.54$, $p = .03$, $\eta^2_{partial} = .02$. Specifically, pairwise comparisons revealed that student participants (*M* = 2.13, *SE* = .06) were more likely than community participants (*M* = 2.28, *SE* = .05) to place units originally assigned to Phase 3 earlier in the process, $M_{diff} = .16$, $p = .04$. In addition,

Table 29

Unit Placement: Differences Between the Three Samples

Unit	F (*df* = *2, 387*)	p-value ($\eta^2_{partial}$)	Sample	Mean *(SE)*	p-value
1 – Acknowledge	9.12	<.001 *(.05)*	Student Community	8.12 *(.32)* 6.43 (.25)	<.001
			Student Counsellor	8.12 *(.32)* 6.65 *(.39)*	.004
5 – Commitment	2.49	.065 *(.01)*	Student Counsellor	6.40 *(.31)* 7.50 *(.39)*	.03
7 – Helping the Person Harmed	2.76	.001 *(.05)*	Community Counsellor	6.70 *(.26)* 7.81 *(.40)*	.02
8 – Empathy for Self	6.12	.002 *(.03)*	Counsellor Student	5.19 *(.41)* 6.70 *(.33)*	.004
			Counsellor Community	5.19 *(.41)* 6.80 *(.26)*	.001
10 – Responsibility	2.81	.06 *(.01)*	Student Community	6.10 *(.40)* 7.12 *(.32)*	.05
			Student Counsellor	6.10 *(.40)* 7.41 *(.50)*	.04
12 – Positive Sense of Self	3.47	.03 *(.02)*	Community Counsellor	7.20 *(.25)* 6.73 *(.39)*	.01

N (Student) = 121; N (Community) = 189; N (Counsellor) = 80

counsellor participants (*M* = 2.26, *SE* = .07) were more likely than student participants (M_{diff}= .19, *p* = .04) and community participants (*M* = 2.45, *SE* = .06; M_{diff} = .22, *p* = .009) to place units originally assigned to Phase 4 earlier in the process.

4.2.8 Irrelevant Units

Following their ordering of the units, the participants were asked if they believed any of the proposed units to be irrelevant to the self-forgiveness process. Fifty-seven

participants (71.3%) stated that they believed all of the proposed units to be relevant. However, many stated that although they believed all the units to be relevant, they may occur in a different order depending on the individual and the situation, and that they may not occur in a step-wise fashion.

For instance, one participant wrote, "I am challenged by the hierarchy order of these processes [and] would have preferred to weigh, as [an] example several [of] them may co-occur at the same time rather than [in] a linear process." Another wrote, "… as take clients through the process, they go in and out of many of these processes over and over at various times and each person is different." And yet another stated,

> In real life these are done at the same time, or some not at all. Some in a brilliant flash of understanding and some, years and years later, when one realizes from a more mature viewpoint that one did cause unnecessary pain to another or one's self.

Table 30 lists the units that the remaining 23 participants believed to be irrelevant (some believed more than one unit to be irrelevant).

For *Acknowledgment* of the Harmful Event the one participant who listed it as irrelevant explained, "I think that "acknowledging the truth" may not be necessary. People who need self-forgiveness are usually ruminating with guilt, etc. and know that they have done something already."

For *Intrusive Rumination* participants generally stated that not everyone experiences this and therefore, it is not integral to the self-forgiveness process. This is true, although, because individuals are feeling badly, their thoughts likely do stray back to the event; however, it may not be in an intrusive way.

Table 30

Units Believed to Be Irrelevant to Self-Forgiveness

Unit	Number Who Believed it to be Irrelevant
Acknowledgment	1
Intrusive Rumination	3
Empathy for Person Harmed	1
Helping the Person Harmed	8
Motives	3
Responsibility	1
Deservingness	2
Positive Sense of Self	3

N = 80

For the irrelevance of *Empathy for the Person Harmed*, the participant did not elaborate. For the irrelevance of *Helping the Person Harmed*, some believed that it was not relevant because the person may be deceased or in an unknown location, or there may be legal barriers involved. In addition, another believed it irrelevant out of concern to the person harmed, stating,

> Ethically, this is a tricky one. If we don't know the person who was hurt and have no way of knowing what is happening in their life, we don't have the right to go and rip his world apart. This can be seen as being victimized again by the person who was hurt.

In addition, one participant stated that in the case of self-blame where the person who self-blames is not responsible (e.g., child abuse), helping their abuser could be dangerous.

For *Motives*, one participant did not elaborate, another simply stated that understanding is not necessary, and another stated,

> …to me this sounds like a lot of justification, a way to escape the fact of having harmed someone or having done something wrong. If reviewing motives moves the person towards acknowledgement of the harmful act and towards taking full responsibility, then it might fit.

For *Responsibility*, the participant who deemed it irrelevant explained, "…in terms of taking responsibility, people who struggle to forgive themselves are already taking responsibility. They are taking too much. We need to back them away from that idea." Important here is the distinction between self-blame and responsibility: The notion of taking responsibility is different from self-blame. Individuals may be blaming themselves for things that they were not responsible for.

The two participants who listed *Deservingness* as irrelevant did not elaborate. For *Positive Sense of Self*, one participant stated that although it was a nice idea for people to have a positive sense of themselves, it is not a requisite for forgiving oneself, and another stated, "To be able to do all the steps, one must already possess a positive sense of self. People that do not have a positive sense of self have a hard time forgiving themselves." The notion that individuals struggling to forgive themselves do not have a positive sense of self was the reasoning behind my placing it near the end of the process in the hypothesized ordering; while moving through the other units, individuals would begin to acquire that positive sense of self.

4.2.9 Missing Units

Participants were also asked if they believe that there were units relevant to self-

forgiveness that had not been proposed in the study. In Studies 1 and 2, eight "missing units" were identified. In Study 3, 20 were suggested. The most commonly mentioned missing unit was mentioned by five participants and involved turning things over to a higher power. For example, one participant suggested, "…a prayer to Whomever like this: help me get through this with as much honesty and clarity as I can handle." Another participant suggested mediation. A similar unit was suggested by four participants in Study 2 and one participant in Study 1.

The second-most commonly suggested unit in Study 3 was mentioned by four participants and was a unit of self-love and the cessation of self-punishment, for example, "I would say that there needs to be an active development of a caring, loving, nurturing, self-soothing inner aspect…" the notion of developing a loving stance toward the self is encompassed in the current unit *Positive Sense of Self*.

The next three most commonly suggested units in Study 3 were each mentioned by three participants. The first was a unit in which responsible parties engage in some sort of ritual signifying that they have released the negative thoughts, emotions, and behaviours and have forgiven themselves. This could be something done when individuals are reflecting on how they have grown and are acknowledging that they have forgiven themselves (*Journey to Self-Forgiveness*).

The second was essentially a unit in which participants experience the negative emotions of shame and grief. For instance, one participant wrote, "What about the range and course of emotions/behaviours/thoughts a person goes through e.g., guilt, shame, embarrassment, anger/avoidance/justification, blame, and many others I'm sure…" and another wrote, "…a time of acknowledging their shame and grieving the loss of who they

thought they were or the losses that occurred as a result of their behaviour. Very difficult emotions like anger, shame and despair are involved in self-forgiveness…" These descriptions describe the already existing unit *Negative Emotions*.

The third was a unit in which individuals put their transgression into a broader context, for instance, exploring which of their needs and values were not being met when they acted that way. One participant described it in the following way,

> If we understand the neurodevelopmental and environmental context, viewing the situation and behavior through the eyes of implicit processing, we can reasonably expect certain behaviour in certain situations. It is reasonable to expect that people who have experienced child abuse will have a heightened fight or flight response, and that this response is likely to cause harm to others at times.

This would feasibly fall into the existing unit *Motives* in which responsible parties try to understand the reasons behind their behaviour (e.g., having a heightened fight or flight response).

All the remaining units were suggested in Study 3 were mentioned by only 1 participant each. One suggestion was for a unit in which responsible parties explore the importance of self-forgiveness. This aspect would fit in nicely with the existing unit *Commitment*. When making the commitment, responsible parties might find it useful to explore why it is important to them to forgive themselves. This might help them maintain their commitment when they find themselves struggling.

Another suggestion was for a unit in which responsible parties explore the secondary benefits they may be experiencing by holding on to their negative thoughts and emotions toward themselves, "I would explore the secondary gains to holding on to the

negative feelings and patterns associated with not forgiving [the] self; What's in it for him or her? What's being maintained that is more 'attractive' than the alternative?" Certainly, some individuals may be holding on to self-unforgiveness because of secondary gains that they are likely not aware of, and exploration of this would fit into three of the already existing units: *Negative Emotions*, *Intrusive Rumination*, and *Consequences of Negative Emotions and Rumination*.

Some of the units mentioned by single participants in Study 3 had been mentioned in the two previous studies. These included obtaining some guidance and support from others; obtaining forgiveness from the person harmed (although the participant who mentioned this also stated that it may not be crucial to the process); atoning to society (e.g., volunteering); and expecting some of the negative emotions to re-surface.

The remainder of the units suggested by single participants in Study 3 were ones that were already in existence. For instance, one was a unit in which participants actually forgive themselves. This is the already existing *Journey to Self-Forgiveness*. Another was a unit of accountability in which responsible parties do something to try and make things right through restoration or reconciliation. This would be encompassed in the already existing *Helping the Person Harmed*. Yet another was one in which responsible parties understand, "People need to understand why they do what they do. If they don't understand, the chances they will make the same mistake again and again and again is really likely." This is the essence of the already existing unit *Motives*. The other units suggested by one participant that already existed were *Empathy for the Self*, *Responsibility* (in the context of not only recognizing what you are responsible for but also what you are not responsible for) and *Intrusive Rumination*.

4.3 Discussion

The purpose of Study 3 was to explore, in a sample of counsellors and psychologists, the merits of a proposed self-forgiveness model and to see how results compare to results from a study with a student sample (Study 1) and results from a study with a community sample (Study 2).

The theoretical model is the same as outlined in Study 1. As in Studies 1 and 2, the results for Study 3 partially support the hypothesized model: Participants in Study 3 agreed that the units proposed are comprehensive of the self-forgiveness process, and they agreed with the proposed ordering of some of the units (e.g., *Consequences of Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination*). However, they also differed in their agreement for the ordering of some of the units (e.g., *Acknowledgment*).

Also in support of the hypotheses, although participants from all three studies ordered some of the units in similar ways, as expected, there were some significant differences in how they ordered the units. Also, the definitions of self-forgiveness provided by participants in Study 3 exhibited some differences to those espoused by researchers, however, they were more in-line with researcher definitions than those provided by participants in Studies 1 and 2.

4.3.1 Defining Self-Forgiveness

Both similarities and differences were observed in how the counsellor sample defined self-forgiveness when compared to those in Studies 1 and 2 (who had quite similar ways of defining it). Specifically, five of the seven categories identified in the first two studies emerged in Study 3. The two that were missing, *Punishment/Struggling* and *Forgetting/Excusing/Denying*, were mentioned by approximately 10% of participants

in each of the previous two studies. Some counsellors (Study 3) did mention that their clients are fearful of forgiving themselves because they equate it with forgetting and that some clients do not feel worthy of self-forgiveness (indicating they believe they need to continue to suffer and struggle for their misdeeds). In this instance, counsellor thinking is more consistent with the thinking of most researchers in the field who all very clearly state that forgiveness is not forgetting, excusing, or denying (e.g., Hall & Fincham, 2008). When deciding on a course of treatment, counsellors must take into account that some of their clients will likely disagree.

Correspondingly, although some of the participants in the previous two studies equated self-forgiveness with struggling and experiencing punishment (whether at one's own hand or at the hand of another), many researchers and counsellors likely view it not as a step in the process per se (i.e., individuals do not need to be punished in order to forgive themselves), but rather as something that may occur beforehand and motivate the desire to forgive oneself.

In agreement with researchers' views, an almost identical number of participants in Study 3 (33%) as in Studies 1 and 2 included in their definition of self-forgiveness the letting go of negative emotions and thoughts toward the self. Also in agreement with researchers, in Study 3, 66% (compared to less than 50% in Studies 1 and 2) included in their definition an aspect of adopting positive thoughts, emotions, or behaviours toward the self. Specifically, the majority mentioned the notion of self-acceptance and the understanding of oneself in the larger context of being human and flawed.

Researchers and the three different types of samples all seem to agree that self-forgiveness, much like the forgiveness of others, involves a letting go of negative

emotions, thoughts, and behaviours followed by an adoption of positive emotions, thoughts, and behaviours. However, while all researcher definitions mention this, only approximately 30% of the three samples specifically included in their definitions the aspect of letting go of negative emotions. Whereas more than 70% of counsellor participants included the adoption of positive thoughts and emotions in their definition, less than 50% of student and community participants specifically included this aspect. In addition, whereas researchers do not specifically allude to this, all three samples mentioned that self-forgiveness leads to acceptance of the self, despite past misdeeds.

Consistent with some researcher definitions, 21% of participants in Study 3 indicated that self-forgiveness is a letting go of and moving on from the past. Although mentioned by participants in all three studies, 10-25% more participants in Studies 1 and 2 than in Study 3 included this aspect in their definition, indicating that the symbolic moving on may hold more value for responsible parties than counsellors and researchers are aware.

In addition, although participants in all three studies included *Growth and Responsibility* in their definitions, this category was present in more of the counsellor (Study 3) definitions. Also, in all three studies, most of the definitions that fell into this category referenced learning from the experience (indirectly indicating an acceptance of responsibility for acting that way). However, only a handful of the definitions in Studies 1 and 2 specifically mentioned taking responsibility for one's actions; more of the counsellors in Study 3 specifically referenced acknowledgment of responsibility. As previously mentioned in Study 1, the word *responsibility* may be one that laypersons perceive as laden with negative connotations; "I was responsible for that harm" might

make it seem as if the harm was induced on purpose and may be perceived as less positive than, "I acknowledge that my behaviour was wrong, I learned from my actions and now I've grown into a better and wiser person."

As in Studies 1 and 2, a small number (5%) of the participants in Study 3 mentioned *Making Amends/Seeking Forgiveness* when defining self-forgiveness. Once again, this is interesting since the majority in all three studies agreed that *Helping the Person Harmed* is a unit relevant to the self-forgiveness process (with the caveat that sometimes it may not be possible). Perhaps this unit is an important step in the process, but not an integral component; not the essence of self-forgiveness.

4.3.2 Do Counsellors Believe They Define Self-Forgiveness in the Same Manner as Their Clients?

The above demonstrates lay people (students and members of the community at large) and counsellors differ in how they define self-forgiveness, but that many similarities also exist. Counsellors must be aware of these differences when approaching self-forgiveness with their clients; therapy sessions cannot be successful if the counsellor and client are working toward vastly different goals while believing they are working toward the same goal – self-forgiveness.

The results of Study 3 suggest that counsellors are indeed aware that they view self-forgiveness differently than their clients: 82% directly stated this. Whereas some mentioned that this difference lies in the association of self-forgiveness with forgetting, religion, or unworthiness, others mentioned that it was because although their clients may want to forgive themselves, and have an idea of what self-forgiveness would look like, they do not know how to go about attaining it. This highlights the need for the

establishment and empirical testing of a self-forgiveness model; access to this could help laypersons map out a process to help them reach their goal of forgiving themselves.

4.3.3 The Proposed Model vs. Participant Ordering of the Units

As in the previous two studies, although participants in Study 3 agreed that the proposed units were a comprehensive representation of the units involved in self-forgiveness, they did not always agree with the proposed ordering of these units. In particular, just under half the units were placed similarly to those in the proposed model (at the expected location or only one to two units away from the expected location): *Negative Emotions*, *Consequences of Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination*, *Commitment, Empathy for Self,* and *Motives.* This is similar to, but slightly less than the number of units participants agreed with in Studies 1 and 2 (two of the units match those from Study 1 and four match those from Study 2), although results showed that community participants agreed significantly more with the ordering than did either the student or counsellor participants.

In Study 3, a few of the differing placements of the units stood out. For instance, as in the other two studies, the anticipated first unit of the model, *Acknowledgment* of one's actions, was placed much later in the process than anticipated. Although student participants placed this unit significantly later in the process than the other two samples, that all three samples placed it near the end of the process suggests that that is when it occurs.

Although responsible parties must identify, at least to themselves, the behaviour that was wrong, a full acknowledgment of the spectrum of their actions and the consequences of those actions may only come later in the process, when they have

reached a point of being able to acknowledge responsibility for their misdeed. As suggested in Study 2, a unit in which individuals identify the misdeed they wish to forgive themselves for could occur at the start of the process whereas *Acknowledgment* of one's actions would come near the end, and could perhaps be absorbed into the *Responsibility* unit.

Participants in Study 3 seemed to view the placing of *Negative Emotions* and *Intrusive Rumination* in the much the same way as participants from Study 2, placing the first at the start of the process, only one unit away from its hypothesized location, and the second near the end of the process. This was contradictory to the placements observed in Study 1. However, participants in all three studies thought somewhat similarly: In both Studies 2 and 3, the second-most common placements of these units matched the most common placements in Study 1, and the second-most common placements of these units in Study 1 matched the most common placements in Studies 2 and 3. As suggested in Study 2, there may be a role for a unit at the start of the process in which responsible parties begin to identify any negative emotions and intrusive rumination that are occurring. A unit later in the process would be where they let go of these negative emotions and ruminative tendencies.

Once again, in Study 3 the placing of *Empathy for the Person Harmed* and *Helping the Person Harmed* reflected differences of opinion. As in Study 2, participants in Study 3 placed *Empathy for the Person Harmed* earlier in the process than expected, and earlier than it was placed in Study 1. Certainly, an immediate empathy for the person harmed may occur and would contribute to the onset of the negative emotions experienced by responsible parties, thus alerting the individuals that what they have done

is wrong and hurtful. However, caution must be observed: too much focus on the harmed party early in the process could overwhelm the wrongdoer and exacerbate feelings of shame and guilt, so that overcoming those feelings is more difficult.

In addition, an immediate desire to apologize and make amends may occur, which as previously mentioned, could be interpreted as insincere. Furthermore, if overwhelmed by feelings of guilt and shame, the responsible party could be at risk of being taken advantage of by the affected party; responsible parties should not be made to do anything humiliating or degrading because that would further damage their self-respect (Holmgren, 1998). In this instance, empathy for the affected party is not risky per se, but rather its leading to a desire to make amends.

Although participants in Study 3 believed *Empathy for the Person Harmed* should occur early in the process, the act of actually *Helping the Person Harmed* instead was most commonly placed at the end of the process. This is consistent with the results in Study 1, but it contradicts the results in Study 2. Although in Study 3, the second-most common placement for this unit was at the start of the process, which matches results from Study 2. Also, in Study 2, the second-most common placement of this unit was at the end of the process.

Empathy for the affected party may lead to an immediate desire to make amends, but as mentioned before, if it is expressed early in the process, it may be deemed insincere, or may put the responsible party in a vulnerable situation. Indeed, one of the post-transgression behaviours individuals engage in is groveling, in which they are willing to do anything asked of them to make amends to the person harmed (Rourke, 2007). Waiting until later in the process may be better; the transgressor has had the

opportunity to sincerely reflect upon the transgression and can offer a genuine apology. In addition, the transgressor has had more time to let go of the negative emotions and establish a positive sense of self, making it less likely that he or she will be accepting of any manipulative demands.

Once again, congruent with results from Studies 1 and 2, participants in Study 3 most commonly placed feeling *Deserving* of self-forgiveness near the beginning of the process. However, participants in Study 3 placed *Positive Sense of Self* much earlier in the process than participants in Study 1 and significantly earlier than those in Study 2. Counsellors want to help their clients feel better, and part of this may be helping them reach a point of feeling that they deserve self-forgiveness so that this is a goal toward which they can work. However, counsellors may underestimate how long it actually takes for this feeling of deservingness to evolve into an actual positive sense of self; laypersons (Studies 1 and 2) indicate that this positive sense of self does not occur until the very end of the process.

4.3.4 The Proposed Model vs. Participant Ordering of the Phases

Although participants in the three studies did not actually order the four proposed phases, by summing the number of participants who placed each unit within the units theorized to make up each phase, an attempt was made to discern how the participants might have ordered the phases (although as previously mentioned, this does present some problems because the dispersion of units within each phase was not equal.

As expected, participants in Study 3 were most likely to place *Consequences of Negative Emotions*, and *Commitment* in Phase 1. *Acknowledgment*, *Negative Emotions*, and *Intrusive Rumination* were missing; participants were instead most likely to place

these in Phases 3 and 4. The units *Empathy for the Person Harmed*, *Helping the Person Harmed*, *Motives, Responsibility, Deservingness, Positive Sense of Self* and *Journey to Self-forgiveness* were added to Phase 1. As in Study 2, the way participants in Study 3 placed the units was top-heavy; they placed nine of the 13 units into the first phase.

In Study 3, the unit *Responsibility,* was also added to Phase 1. This is contradictory to the findings from the two previous studies. Acknowledging responsibility for one's misdeeds is the crux of self-forgiveness; researchers claim that this is what distinguishes genuine self-forgiveness from pseudo self-forgiveness (e.g., Wohl et al., 2008; Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013a). Many tactics can help individuals release negative emotions and feel positively toward themselves (e.g., excusing or denying) but this is not genuine self-forgiveness. In order for a process to be considered genuine self-forgiveness, that element of responsibility-taking must occur. To have such a critical component of the process occur at the start of the process may not be a wise undertaking. Taking responsibility for one's actions is a difficult process that requires an understanding of the behaviour, its consequences, and the motives behind the behaviour. That in two studies the individuals who were actually engaged in self-forgiving most commonly placed it near the end of the process suggests that other elements need to be addressed before counsellors should broach this topic with their clients.

As in Study 2, participants in Study 3 placed *Positive Sense of Self* in Phase 1 (with their second-most common placement near the end of the process as expected). However, participants in Study 3 were clearly split in their beliefs: their second-most common placements were equally in Phases 3 and 4, and were only two fewer than the number who placed it in the first phase. As reflected in the placement of *Deservingness*

into the first phase by all three samples, a tendency to begin to feel good about the self from the start of the process seems universal. Whether this transforms into a positive sense of self early on likely depends on the depth of the shame and guilt, and the severity of the situation; as the severity of an incident increases, so do the negative emotions (Fisher & Exline, 2006). Presumably, if responsible parties are struggling enough to seek the aid of a counsellor, the attainment of a positive sense of self is unlikely to occur in the early stages. Perhaps the model needs an amendment to the *Deservingness* unit which suggests the commencement of building a positive sense of self, followed by the later unit of *Positive Sense of Self* in which individuals have fully embraced all of the positive thoughts and feelings about themselves, and have come to a place of self-acceptance.

Phase 2 was expected to contain *Empathy for the Person Harmed* and *Helping the Person Harmed*, but in Study 3, both these units were instead most often placed in Phase 1. As in the previous two studies, in Study 3 no units were most commonly placed in Phase 2.

As expected, and reflective of the previous two studies, participants in Study 3 most often placed *Empathy for the Self* in Phase 3. *Motives* and *Responsibility* were missing, and as mentioned above, were instead placed in Phase 1. The unit *Intrusive Rumination* was added to Phase 3. This matches the placement from Study 2, and the second-most common placement from Study 1. In addition, in Study 3, the only unit placed in Phase 4 was *Negative Emotions*. This matches the placement of those units from Study 1 and the second-most common placement in Study 2. This suggests, as previously stated, that although responsible parties may begin acknowledging, at the start of the process, that they are experiencing negative emotions and intrusive ruination

(perhaps spurring them to want to do something such as forgive themselves to put a stop to it), these are likely difficult to overcome, and as such, are not fully let go until the end of the process.

4.3.5 Were the Units Relevant?

Seventy-one percent of participants in Study 3 stated that they believed each of the proposed units was in fact relevant to the self-forgiveness process. In Studies 1 and 2, no unit was flagged as irrelevant by more than 5% of the sample and, in Study 3, the same results were obtained, with the exception of *Helping the Person Harmed*; 10% suggested that this unit may be irrelevant. This was a unit that many participants in the previous two studies also mentioned, with the caveat that although it may be relevant for many, that is not always the case: the affected party may be dead, the affected party may be further harmed by contact from the responsible party, and as a counsellor in Study 3 suggested, legal constraints may prevent contact. That few participants in all three studies identified any of the units as irrelevant suggests that each unit proposed has a role in the self-forgiveness process.

When participants in Study 3 were asked whether any units were missing, once again, the majority of participants were in agreement that the proposed units comprehensively represent the process. Interestingly, the most commonly mentioned missing unit (although, mentioned by only 6% of participants) was one in which responsible parties turn to a higher power, in the form of prayer or meditation. A similar unit was also suggested by a small number of participants in the two previous studies. In a group-intervention setting, making the units applicable to all, regardless of religious or spiritual belief, would be important. However, if religion or spirituality is important to a

person then turning to a higher power might be an important step. Participants in all three studies also suggested a unit in which responsible parties turn to others, such as a trusted friend, family member or counsellor, for support and guidance. Turning to a higher power could be incorporated into this unit.

4.3.6 Limitations

Of course Study 3 is not without limitations. One is the low response rate. Over 800 invitations to participate were sent to practitioners yet only 121 responses were received, of which only 80 were usable. Although many practitioners responded via email to say that although they thought it a worthy topic of study, they simply did not have the time to participate, an even larger number did not respond at all. Without feedback from those participants, discerning why the response rate was so low is difficult.

Another limitation was, once again, the labelling of the units. Based on some of the suggested units that may have been missing (but were actually a description of an already existing unit), some participants read the label but did not continue on to closely read the description of the unit; this may have led to some misunderstandings. As previously suggested, rather than presenting any labels to the participants, simply providing them with the description of each unit may be a better method.

Another limitation, is that Study 3 (as well as the two previous studies) was done on-line, during the participants' own time. Knowing how focused participants were is impossible, as is whether noise and distractions interfered with their ability to concentrate, and whether they completed the survey alone, or asked others for an opinion. Inviting participants to take the study in a lab setting would ensure a more distraction-free environment. However, as mentioned in Study 2, results from web-based studies have

been found to be consistent with the results obtained in traditional lab-based studies (Gosling et al., 2004).

4.3.7 Future Directions

Overall, laypersons and counsellors seem to have somewhat similar concepts of self-forgiveness, but they do vary on a few important steps, such as when to work toward the development of a positive sense of self. Future research should explore the utility of seeking the aid of a counsellor to attain self-forgiveness. Does it happen more quickly than if a responsible party attempts to forgive oneself on his or her own? Is it more effective than a group intervention aimed at forgiving the self? How is the process affected when the client and counsellor have differing views about what it means to forgive oneself, and about the steps involved in the process?

4.3.8 Conclusion

Study 3 was an exploratory study aimed at gaining an understanding of the way in which counsellors define self-forgiveness and whether they agree with the definitions proposed by laypersons (Studies 1 and 2) and researchers in the field, assessing the validity of a basic model of the steps involved in self-forgiveness, and ascertaining whether counsellors and laypersons (i.e., their potential clients) view the steps involved in self-forgiveness in the same way.

The definitions of self-forgiveness provided by students in Study 1, members of the general community in Study 2, and counsellors in Study 3 were similar. However, consistent with the beliefs of researchers in the field, counsellors do not associate self-forgiveness with forgetting, excusing, or self-punishment. That some of the layperson definitions included these elements suggests that counsellors could play a very important

role in helping clients dispel myths about self-forgiveness. In addition, many more counsellor participants than student or community participants included in their definitions the association of self-forgiveness with the adoption of positive emotions toward the self. This highlights the need for counsellors and their clients to have a discussion about what it means to forgive oneself; although counsellors may desire their clients reach a point of self-love, this may not be something their clients believe is achievable.

Once again, participants in Study 3 provided process-oriented definitions that best match Woodyatt and Wenzel's (2013a) belief that self-forgiveness is a journey of growth, acceptance of responsibility, and understanding of one's behaviour. Given the parallels between the definitions in all three studies, the definition proposed in Study 1 remains appropriate: Self-forgiveness is a process that moves us to a state of self-acceptance through a positive attitudinal shift in feelings, actions, and beliefs about the self. Self-forgiveness involves the acknowledgment of and moving on from our misbehaviour, through the recognition of the consequences of our actions, the exploration of the motives behind our actions, and a state of learning and growing from the experience.

The participants in Study 3 agreed that each of the proposed units was relevant to the self-forgiveness process. This is encouraging because the same results were obtained in the two previous studies. However, in all three studies, the order in which these units were thought to occur varied: participants agreed with the hypothesized ordering of approximately half of the proposed units (six units in Studies 1 and 3 and seven units in Study 2). However, in each of the studies, the units that participants matched to the hypothesized ordering were not always the same. This suggests that when clients turn to

counsellors for help in forgiving themselves, although both client and practitioner may agree to work toward self-forgiveness, they may not be defining that goal in the same way, nor expecting the process to unfold in the same way. Therefore, a detailed discussion about what it means to forgive oneself and a mapping out of the way to approach that process is imperative.

In Study 1 I suggested a slightly revised ordering of the phases of self-forgiveness. However, participants in Studies 2 and 3 lumped the majority of the steps involved in self-forgiveness together, at the start of the process. For a responsible party, this may be the result of feeling overwhelmed, not knowing where to start, and a desire to deal with everything immediately so as to quickly put it in one's past. For counsellors, this could be the result of relying on different approaches to therapy, or, it could be an inclination to expect too much too soon. Self-forgiveness is a difficult process. As nice as it would be to rid oneself of the negative consequences of one's misdeeds in an immediate fashion, for many, that is an unrealistic goal.

In Study 3, because so many of the units were lumped into the first phase, the new proposed ordering of the process of self-forgiveness is based on both the ordering of the units individually and the phases into which they were placed. Based on only the results from Study 3, therapeutic self-forgiveness begins with the identification of the *Negative Emotions* that one is experiencing and the development of *Empathy for the Person Harmed*. This is followed by an identification of the *Negative Consequences* the emotions and intrusive rumination are having in one's life and a sense of *Deserving* release from this through self-forgiveness. This prompts an embarkment on the *Journey to Self-Forgiveness* through the *Commitment* to trying to forgive oneself, and the

beginning of developing a *Positive Sense of Self*.

The above is followed by an examination of one's *Motives* for having behaved in a harmful way and by the development of *Empathy for the Self*. Following this is a full *Acknowledgment* of one's actions and an acceptance of *Responsibility* for one's actions. This is accompanied by the release of any *Intrusive Rumination* that is still occurring and an offer of *Helping the Person Harmed*.

In an individual therapy setting, a counsellor could easily tailor the ordering of the units to meet the needs of the client, but in the context of a group self-forgiveness intervention, the leader would need to present a single model that would apply to all those in attendance. A comparison of the new proposed ordering of the units to the order proposed in Studies 1 and 2 as well as an attempt to create a model that spans across participants in all three studies seems fruitful.

Considering all that has been discussed above, the model proposed in Study 3 is very similar to the model proposed when considering the combined results of Studies 1 and 2. As such, a model of self-forgiveness that could be utilized in a self-forgiveness intervention, one that reflects the beliefs of students, community members, and counselling practitioners is the following: Phase 1 - *Identifying the Harm, Empathy for the Person Harmed, Identifying Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination, Consequences of Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination, Deservingness,* and *Commitment*; Phase 2 – *Motives*, *Empathy for the Self*, *Acknowledgment of the Harm and Acceptance of Responsibility*, and *Letting go of Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination*; Phase 3 – *Positive Sense of Self*, *Helping the Person Harmed*, *Reflections on Self-Forgiveness Journey*.

Fortunately, the results of Study 3 suggest that counsellors are aware that they hold differing views from their clients. Ideally this translates into a flexible approach in which they put this knowledge to use and discuss with their clients exactly what they mean by self-forgiveness and the process they will undertake to get there.

CHAPTER V

General Discussion

And when we have disappointed ourselves, broken some cherished internal value of our own, or done some regrettable deed, we have also to learn how to wipe the slate clean, to forgive ourselves. True nurturance of self embraces these two, caring and forgiveness.

Kaufman, 1980, p. 155

Unforgiveness of the self and self-blame have been associated with increased anger and lower life-satisfaction (Fisher & Exline, 2006; Macaskill, 2012), increased anxiety and depression (e.g., Glinder & Compas, 1999; Macaskill, 2012; Worthington et al., 2007), excessive self-punishment (Dillon, 2001), poorer social relationships (Holmgren, 1998), impaired self-care and coping skills (Worthington et al., 2007), and increased shame (Fisher & Exline, 2010; Halling, 1994; Hall & Fincham, 2005; Macaskill, 2012).

In addition, the absence of self-forgiveness may result in more damage to one's well-being than the absence of other forgiveness because there is no escaping oneself (Macaskill, 2012). Despite this assertion, most research has focused on the forgiveness of others and only recently have researchers begun to empirically explore the topic of self-forgiveness. There does exist a small and significant positive correlation between self-forgiveness and the forgiveness of others (Macaskill, 2012); however, they are separate constructs and each deserves the attention of the research field.

Given the paucity of research on the topic, the present studies were largely exploratory in nature. One goal was to assess whether laypersons and counsellors define self-forgiveness in the same way as researchers. Given the results of similar assessments

on the definitions of forgiveness of others (DeCourville et al., 2008; Kanz 2000), I expected that they would differ. A second goal was to examine the unfolding of the self-forgiveness process by asking laypersons (students and members of the larger community) and counsellors, using items written in everyday language, to assess a hypothesized model of self-forgiveness. I expected that laypersons and counsellors might differ in their beliefs about the unfolding of the process, and that also, the process would look different depending on where in the process a responsible party placed him or herself (e.g., those in the process of forgiving themselves vs. those who have fully forgiven themselves).

5.1 Defining Self-Forgiveness

In general, researchers are inclined to presume that their definitions of forgiveness are correct, and also suppose, without verification, that layperson definitions of forgiveness mirror their own (DeCourville et al., 2008). This poses a problem because forgiveness is a concept familiar to all, and as such, individuals tend to assume consensus on its meaning. This can result in general confusion and also distort research findings (Denton & Martin, 1998). In fact, this has already begun to occur in self-forgiveness research; by defining self-forgiveness as an ambiguous end-state of feeling good about oneself, some researchers have been measuring a concept that is often indistinguishable from defensive responses such as minimization of the harm and denial of culpability (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013a).

Most researchers are adamant that self-forgiveness does not involve forgetting, excusing, or denying responsibility; this is pseudo-forgiveness (e.g., Akhtar, 2002; Dillon, 2001; Fisher & Exline, 2010). Counsellors and the majority of laypersons in the current studies seemed to be in agreement; however, approximately 10% of each of the two

layperson samples (student and community) believed otherwise. Similar to these results, when asked to define what it means to forgive another, 10% of both an undergraduate sample and a community sample stated that to forgive means to forget (Younger et al., 2004). Granted, 10% represents a minority of the population, however, researchers and counsellors should bear in mind that for some, excusing, denying, minimizing, and forgetting constitute forgiveness, whether of others, or the self.

In addition, although researchers define self-forgiveness as a way of moving away from self-punishment, a small amount of laypersons in Studies 1 and 2 stated that part of forgiving oneself involves punishing the self. This aspect was not present in any of the counsellor definitions.

Another element of self-forgiveness mentioned by a small number of participants was that of making amends to the person harmed. Researcher definitions do not reference the making of amends; however, for some, it is certainly part of the process. For instance, Woodyatt and Wenzel (2013c) suggest that without an attempt at reparation, responsible parties are left in a state of pseudo-forgiveness and may harbour unacknowledged shame (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013c).

Almost all definitions of self-forgiveness suggest that it is a release of negative emotions and thoughts and an adoption of positive emotions and thoughts toward the self (e.g., Enright & the HDSG, 1996; Hall & Fincham, 2005; Wohl et al., 2008). Surprisingly, only 30% of participants in each of the current studies echoed the belief that self-forgiveness involves the release of negative emotions. However, this is quite similar to Younger et al.'s (2004) findings on layperson definitions of the forgiveness of others; 30% of their undergraduate sample and 40% of their community sample associated

forgiveness with the release of negative thoughts and emotions. In the current samples, although the majority may not have directly stated that self-forgiveness involves the release of negative thoughts and emotions, they may have indirectly referenced this occurrence through statements such as, "self-forgiveness means being at peace with yourself."

Participants in all three of the current studies also agreed with researchers that self-forgiveness results in the adoption of positive thoughts and emotions toward the self. However, the number of participants that defined self-forgiveness in this way varied across the different types of samples; a somewhat similar number of student and community participants included this aspect in their definitions (40% and 48% respectively); however, a much larger proportion of counsellors included it in their definitions (66%).

For both community and counsellor participants, the adoption of positive thoughts and emotions toward the self was the most common descriptor given, suggesting that they place more of an emphasis on it than the younger, student sample. The emphasis was even more pronounced in the practitioner sample; this is not surprising, their role is to guide their clients to a more positive place in their lives; however, they should be made aware that when working toward self-forgiveness, their clients may not bear the same expectations.

In researcher definitions, an emphasis tends to be placed on achieving compassion and love for the self (Enright & Eastin, 1992; Hall & Fincham, 2005, 2008; Holmgren, 1998). Very few of the participants in the current studies mentioned self-love. Instead, the emphasis of their definitions was on reaching a point of self-acceptance. This is more

consistent with Dillon's (2001) belief that self-forgiveness is not necessarily about creating love or compassion for the self, but rather, is about fostering a position of self-respect (Dillon, 2001).

Two significant components in the self-forgiveness definitions presented by participants in all three of the studies were the aspects of moving on from and letting go of the experience, and learning and growing from the experience. A somewhat similar number of participants from the community and counsellor samples (28% and 21% respectively) identified moving on and letting go in their definitions. For the student sample, however, this was the most commonly mentioned aspect of self-forgiveness, with 46% referencing it in the definition they provided.

A similar number of student and community participants identified learning and growing from the experience as part of their definition of self-forgiveness (30% and 32% respectively). A slightly larger number (41%) of the counsellors' definitions contained this element. Again, this is not surprising as the counsellor's job is to help clients understand, learn, and grow from their experiences. Most researcher definitions of self-forgiveness do not specifically mention moving on and growing from the experience; the exception is Woodyatt and Wenzel's (2013a) whose definition further corresponds to participant definitions in that it specifically mentions coming to a place of self-acceptance.

The crux of Woodyatt and Wenzel's (2013a) definition is that wrongdoers take responsibility for their actions. Participants in the current studies did not often specifically state the words *taking responsibility*; however, the notion of learning from and growing from one's experience indirectly supports taking responsibility – one must own up to their actions in order to learn from them.

Based on the definitions provided by the participants in the three current samples, and in keeping with the idea of creating a definition that describes the process, rather than an ambiguous end-state, an amendment to Woodyatt and Wenzel's (2013a) definition is proposed: Self-forgiveness is a process that moves us to a state of self-acceptance and involves the acknowledgment of and moving on from our misbehaviour, through the recognition of the consequences of our actions, the exploration of the motives behind our actions, and a state of learning and growing from the experience.

5.2 A Process-Model of Self-Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a long and difficult process (Enright, 2001; Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; Fincham and Beach, 2001; Fisher & Exline, 2006; Hall & Fincham, 2005; Kanz 2000; Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013a) because a battle is raging within the self: the need to forgive versus the need to condemn (Tipping, 2011; Worthington, 2006). Indeed, in Study 1 (student sample), even though the transgression for which participants desired self-forgiveness had occurred at least one year beforehand, only 30% stated they had forgiven themselves and less than 10% of those participants classified that self-forgiveness as complete self-forgiveness. Similar results were obtained in Study 2 (community sample): for two-thirds of the sample, the transgression for which they desired self-forgiveness had occurred three years prior yet only 42% stated that they had forgiven themselves, and of those, less than half classified it as complete self-forgiveness.

The above suggests that individuals struggle with forgiving themselves. As Pettit (1987) notes, we are urged to forgive, but nowhere, not in schools, nor religious institutions, are we taught exactly how to do this. Consistent with this opinion, one participant wrote,

> I think this is a wonderful question/topic to be looking at. Our culture is not very good at acknowledging or talking about how we forgive ourselves when we do something to hurt someone. We teach children not to hurt other people and that it is wrong but we rarely talk to children about how you come to forgive yourself when you do. These children then grow into adults who also do not know how to move on and forgive themselves for their mistakes and errors.

One way in which researchers have helped individuals struggling to forgive someone who has transgressed against them is through forgiveness interventions. These interventions aid affected parties acknowledge and resolve their negative emotions in a healthy way (Fitzgibbons, 1998), and have been found to lead to greater forgiveness and improvements in mental health (e.g., Hebl & Enright, 1993; Lin et al., 2004). Meta-analyses support the efficacy of forgiveness interventions both immediately following treatment and at follow-up testing, and demonstrate that process-based models are superior in their results than decision-based models (Baskin & Enright, 2004; Lundahl et al., 2008). Likely this is a result of process-based interventions covering a broader range of topics, covering topics in more depth, and spanning a longer period of time (Lundahl et al., 2008).

The efficacy of forgiveness interventions suggests there could be benefit in developing self-forgiveness interventions. In addition, as the above participant stated, many adults do not know how to forgive themselves, and there may be benefit in creating educational programs for school-aged children, helping them to learn about the importance of forgiveness and self-forgiveness for individuals and for their communities. Before any such educational program or intervention can be created, a model of self-

forgiveness upon which to build the sessions must be developed. Although numerous models of self-forgiveness exist, none have, to my knowledge, been empirically validated.

The process-model of self-forgiveness proposed and tested in the current studies was created through an examination of the existing models, with the intent of addressing the areas individuals tend to focus on after having committed a transgression: reducing their own distress (e.g., negative emotions and intrusive rumination), achieving a positive sense of self, preserving the relationship and promoting the interests of the person harmed (e.g., by making amends; Fisher & Exline, 2010). In addition, I wanted to ensure that the model contained cognitive elements, behavioural elements, and emotional elements (e.g., Enright & the HSDG, 1996; Ingersoll-Dayton & Krause, 2005).

The process model proposed was the following: In Phase 1, individuals who have committed a transgression focus first on the negative aspects of their harmful behaviour and the negative emotions that arise as a result of that behaviour (units: *Acknowledgment, Negative Emotions, Intrusive Rumination, Consequences of Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination, Commitment*). In Phase 2, individuals focus on the consequences of their actions on the affected party (units: *Empathy for the Person Harmed, Helping the Person Harmed*). In Phase 3, individuals desire to understand the motives behind their harmful actions and acknowledge responsibility for the harm (units: *Empathy for the Self, Motives, Responsibility*). Finally, in Phase 4, individuals experience positive feelings toward the self, and ultimately, full self-forgiveness (units: *Deservingness, Positive Sense of Self, Journey to Self-Forgiveness*).

The majority of participants in all three studies believed that each of the proposed units was relevant to the self-forgiveness process. For instance, one participant wrote,

"Actually I thought those stated steps were pretty thorough. Taught me a lot just to see them labelled out that way" and another stated, "I think they are all good steps! I had not thought of it as a step by step process before and believe these are all things I have gone through without knowing it at the time."

In addition to believing that the proposed units were relevant, participants in each of the studies agreed with the ordering of approximately half of the units; however, as expected, the ordering differed by sample, and also, by where in the process individuals placed themselves. This highlights the need for researchers in the field to have an awareness that findings from self-forgiveness studies may not be relevant to all who are going through the process. It also highlights the need for counsellors to be aware that when using the term *self-forgiveness*, they may be referring to something that holds a different meaning and experiential unfolding than it does for their clients.

5.2.1 Acknowledgment

The first unit, *Acknowledgment*, was presented to participants as one in which they recognize and admit to themselves that they have done something wrong. In all three samples, this unit was placed much later in the process than expected. Possibly, when reading the label *Acknowledging What Happened*, individuals in the studies understood this to mean an acknowledgment not only to the self, but also to others (e.g., to the harmed party). This would be difficult to do because one's weaknesses would be exposed, and likely, a lengthy period of time would be required before an individual would feel ready to do this. Probably individuals would feel ready to do this, as Holmgren (2002) suggests, once they had taken responsibility for their actions. As such, this unit seems best absorbed into the later *Responsibility* unit. A follow-up study, using an in-depth

interviewing method would help researchers fully understand the reasons behind unit placement.

However, in order to forgive oneself it is vital to identify exactly what it is one is forgiving (i.e., acknowledge that a harm did indeed occur; DiBlasio, 1998). Acknowledging that a harm occurred and identifying the behaviour(s) that constituted that harm then allows individuals to take the steps necessary to forgive themselves and learn from their behaviour (Veenstra, 1992). Given the importance of an initial acknowledgment, a new first unit, *Identifying the Harm* is proposed.

5.2.2 Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination

Negative Emotions was thought to be the second unit in which individuals feel badly about the harm that occurred and recognize some of the negative emotions they are feeling as a result of their transgression (e.g., guilt, shame). *Intrusive Rumination* was proposed to be the third unit in which individuals identify that they may be compulsively thinking about the negative event.

Some participants suggested that *Intrusive Rumination* may not be relevant for all. Indeed, not everyone will experience intrusive rumination and some forms of rumination, for instance, Ysseldyk et al.'s, (2007) *Ruminative Reflection* can in fact be adaptive, allowing the individual to reappraise and assimilate the situation (Greenberg, 1995). However, for some, especially if the harm was severe (Fehr, Gelfand, & Nag, 2010), the rumination will be repetitive and intrusive (Greenberg, 1995), and should be addressed, perhaps merged into the *Negative Emotions* unit.

According to Berecz (2001), approximately 75% of counselling clients are dealing with shame or guilt about their own behaviour or anger and bitterness about

someone else's actions. This suggests that identifying and releasing negative emotions is a need applicable to many. For individuals to begin to deal with these emotions early on in the process is important, although the full release of them is likely to only occur later.

Although guilt has been shown to motivate reparative actions (e.g., Tangney, 1990), excessive amounts have been associated with aggression (Tangney et al., 1996), excuse-making, and a rejection of responsibility (Fisher & Exline, 2010l; Schwan, 1998). In addition, shame has been found to be a unique predictor of self-forgiveness: those who experience more shame are less likely to forgive themselves (Macaskill, 2012). Chronic shame can be debilitating; however, as witnessed in restorative justice conferencing, the acknowledgment and discussion of shame can bring individuals closer together and contribute to healing (van Stokkom, 2002). For instance, shame acknowledgment, in the form of admitting a wrong and expressing remorse predicted less bullying, whereas the displacement of shame by blaming others predicted more (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2006).

Of course, other negative emotions may be relevant to this unit, such as anger at the self, self-loathing, and regret. In addition, the acknowledgment of loss or damage, whether to the relationship with the harmed party, or to one's sense of self may prompt feelings of immense sadness, and in this unit, individuals may need to begin a grieving process (Fisher & Exline, 2010; Malcolm, Warwar, & Greenberg, 2005).

In all three samples, the placement of both *Negative Emotions* and *Intrusive Rumination* vacillated: most common placements of them were either at the start of the process or at the end, with the second most-common placement occurring at the opposite end. Possibly some individuals understood these units to be, as intended, the identification of the negative emotions and intrusive rumination, whereas others may

have understood these units to represent when in the process an individual is ready to let them go. Both perceptions have value, and thus, the creation of the unit *Identifying Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination* is suggested for the start of the process and the unit *Letting go of Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination* is suggested for later in the process.

Negative emotions and intrusive rumination can be overwhelming and some participants suggested that the model could benefit from a unit in which individuals turn to others for guidance or support. The unit *Identifying Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination* could include the option of turning to friends, family, or a counsellor for support and guidance, or, as some participants mentioned, turning to God or a Higher Self. Researchers have found that asking for and perceiving forgiveness from a higher power results in a greater ability to forgive the self (Hall & Fincham, 2008).

5.2.3 Consequences of Negative Emotions and Commitment

Consequences of Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination was thought to be the fourth unit in the process, in which individuals begin to realize that the negative emotions and intrusive rumination they have been experiencing are negatively affecting their lives. The unit following this was expected to be *Commitment*, in which individuals realize that they desire to forgive themselves and make the commitment to try and do so.

Individuals in the three samples tended to agree with the placement of both *Consequences of Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination*, and *Commitment*. For simplicity, merging *Consequences of Negative Emotions* and *Intrusive Rumination* into *Identifying Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination* would make sense – as one is identifying the negative emotions and intrusive rumination, one is also likely

identifying the consequences that these are having on one's life. This would make the new unit: *Identifying Negative Emotions, Intrusive Rumination, and their Consequences.*

For *Commitment* to forgiving oneself, some participants mentioned that this is not something they consciously do. A conscious statement of this may instead be more relevant for group-interventions or counselling settings. For individuals working on their own, a silent acknowledgement that one is on the path to trying to forgive oneself may be sufficient. In addition, some participants mentioned that a unit reminding them to "hang on" when doubt arose would be beneficial. This notion of "hanging on" is similar to Worthington's (2006) stage *Hold On* and would fit nicely into this *Commitment* unit: a reminder that even though one is on the path toward self-forgiveness, doubt may arise and negative feelings may return and this is all a normal part of the process.

5.2.4 Empathy for the Person Harmed

The sixth unit was expected to be *Empathy for the Person Harmed* in which individuals reflect on the ways that their actions may have negatively impacted the affected party. Empathy for the person harmed is important because it increases the likelihood that the wrongdoer will consider their well-being in future interactions (Weiner, Graham, Peter, & Zmuidinas, 1991). This unit, instead of being placed in the middle of the process as expected, was most often placed very early on. Clearly, for most, there is an immediate concern for the person harmed.

Exploring this empathy early on in the process may have its benefits because empathy has been found to motivate actions relating to later units in the process, such as taking responsibility (Caprara et al., 1992) and making amends (Caprara et al., 1992; Coke, Batson, & McDavis, 1978). Although some suggest that experiencing empathy for

victims inhibits self-forgiveness (Hall & Fincham, 2005), others have instead found a positive correlation between genuine self-forgiveness and empathy (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013b). For some, revisiting the unit toward the end of the process may be wise as individuals experiencing high levels of shame (which would likely be higher at the start of the process) tend to be self-focused and are less likely to be able to tune into the emotional state of others (Bassett et al., 2008).

5.2.5 Helping the Person Harmed

Helping the Person Harmed was expected to be the seventh unit in the process, and one in which responsible parties desire to somehow make up for their harmful actions, for instance, by apologizing. As with the units *Negative Emotions* and *Intrusive Rumination*, in all three samples, the placement of *Helping the Person Harmed* vacillated; the most common placement was either at the start of the process or at the end, with the second most-common placement occurring at the opposite end. That this occurred is not surprising, following a transgression, some individuals have the immediate desire to approach the person harmed whereas others have the immediate desire to withdraw from the person harmed (Rourke, 2003).

Many participants stated that although in general, this unit is relevant to self-forgiveness, it may not be relevant in every situation, for instance, when the person harmed is the self, when the person harmed is deceased, when it would cause further harm to make contact with the affected party, or when legal constraints have been enacted. In addition, wrongdoers may shy away from making amends because they fear punishment or retaliation, because their shame is overwhelming, because they refuse to accept responsibility for the harm (making amends is in essence, an admission of guilt),

because they fear their gesture will be rejected, (Struthers, Eaton, Shirvani, Georghiou, & Edell, 2008), or perhaps because they simply do not know what they should do in order to help heal the harm. Fortunately, some research indicates that conciliatory behaviours are not predictive of self-forgiveness (Rangganadhan & Todorov, 2010).

However, empathy for the person harmed is likely to prompt a desire to want to do something to help that person feel better. Attempting to make amends can be an important part of the process, helping to reduce negative emotions by transforming a harmful experience into one that encourages growth (Fisher & Exline, 2010). In the instance where making amends is not possible (for the various reasons outlined above), Worthington (2006) has suggested that just visualizing making restitution can be effective. A person could also, as one participant suggested, write a letter of apology and then destroy it. However, the question remains as to where in the process this unit best fits – at the beginning or at the end?

One common way to make amends is through an apology. Apologies have repeatedly been linked to a greater likelihood of forgiveness (e.g., Bono, McCullough, & Root, 2006; Enright, 2001; Ohbuchi, Kameda, & Agarie, 1989), probably because they elicit empathy for the wrongdoer (Leary et al., 1998; McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997; Takaku, 2001). This can create beneficial circumstances for both the harmed and the affected parties: Receiving forgiveness may be something that is important to the wrongdoer (indeed, a number of participants indicated that it was), and some harmed parties need an apology before they can forgive (DeCourville et al., 2008).

Even if the harmed party does not require an apology before forgiving, the offer of one creates an environment in which the difficult task of forgiveness is made easier

and can increase the harmed person's self-respect (Luchies, Finkel, McNulty, & Kumashiro, 2010); "As the success of restorative justice shows, the person with the greatest ability to help you forgive might not be you, but instead, the person who harmed you" (McCullough, 2008, p. 178).

Some of the most common reasons harmed people give for believing why a transgression occurred are that the wrongdoer is insensitive, inconsiderate, and deliberately wanted to cause harm (Leary et al., 1998). An apology can remedy these beliefs, however, an apology issued too early may be perceived as insincere. This is because a genuine apology is an acknowledgment of wrongdoing, an indication that the wrongdoer is taking responsibility, and an admission that the harmed person was undeserving of his or her actions (Govier & Vewoerd). In addition, it is a statement that the wrongdoer does not value the harmful behaviour but instead shares the same values as the person harmed (Okimoto, Wenzel, & Hedrick, 2013; McCullough, 2008; Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2014), and that the wrongdoer is committed to behavioural change (Baumeister et al., 1994; Fincham & Beach, 2001).

Reflection upon one's harmful actions, the understanding of those actions, the ability to admit responsibility for those actions, and any demonstration of change in behaviour takes time. As such, there may be value for both the responsible and affected parties if amends are not made immediately following the transgression. In addition, an apology too soon may reflect an excuse-apology whereas if an apology comes after one has accepted responsibility for the harm, the focus will instead be on *explaining* rather than *excusing* (Veenstra, 1992). That being said, in some instances, an immediate apology may be warranted, for instance, after uttering words that one immediately regrets.

In an intervention or counselling setting, the opportunity for an immediate apology has already passed, but counsellors or intervention leaders could help their clients learn when an early versus a late apology is beneficial.

Upon reflection, the term "Helping" is slightly vague, and a change in label for this unit to *Making Amends/Apologizing* is suggested.

5.2.6 Empathy for the Self and Motives

The eighth unit was expected to be *Empathy for the Self*, in which individuals begin to try and understand the context in which the harm took place (e.g., what else was going on in their lives at the time). In all three samples, participants were in agreement with the expected placement of this unit. It seems that developing empathy for the self begins before one is ready to accept full responsibility for one's actions. However, the term "empathy" is one that may not be fully applicable to the self. Certainly, it is possible to develop a sense of empathy for others, but when referring to oneself, the term "compassion" might be more relevant than the term "empathy." As such, a change in label for this unit to *Compassion for the Self* is suggested.

The ninth unit was expected to be *Motives* and is similar to Enright and the Human Development Study Group's (1996) notion of reframing, in which individuals try and understand why they behaved the way that they did. Participants instead often placed this unit earlier in the process. This may be out of a desire to make sense of the confusion in their own mind, or, because of pressure from outsiders – friends or family asking why they behaved that way. This is an important unit because understanding why one transgressed can aid in the acceptance of responsibility and motivate a person to identify and remedy (learn and grow) whichever needs of theirs were not being met (Clark, 2002).

An early attempt to identifying motives for the behaviour, however, may lead individuals to be more prone to excusing rather than understanding their actions.

5.2.7 Responsibility

The tenth unit was expected to be *Responsibility* in which individuals acknowledge that regardless of the context, they are responsible for having behaved in a harmful way. In general, participants agreed with the placing of this unit late in the process, however, overall, counsellors were more likely to place this unit earlier in the process. Although counsellors may desire to help their clients come to a place of being able to accept responsibility for their actions, it is important that they are aware that this is perceived as a difficult task, and may require some patience on their part. In addition, the argument that self-forgiveness is selfish hinges on self-forgiveness being a method of excusing or dismissing one's behaviour, rather than a process that results in the acceptance of responsibility (Dillon, 2001). This is more likely to occur if the task of taking responsibility is attempted too early in the process and individuals have not yet had a chance to begin releasing overwhelming emotions such as shame (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2014).

Just as an apology can change the perspective of the affected party, accepting responsibility (which one often conveys through an apology) can lead to the affected party being less likely to associate the harmful behaviour with some sort of unchangeable, dispositional attribute of the wrongdoer (Weiner et al., 1991). Research indicates that victims of child abuse who are non-forgiving perceive their abuser as not acknowledging and not taking responsibility for the harm (Chagigiorgis & Paivio, 2008). Taking responsibility can be difficult; it is achieved through feeling remorse (Wohl et al., 2008),

understanding why the behaviour was wrong, and learning from that behaviour so that the action is not repeated again in the future (Holmgren, 2002; Ingersoll-Dayton & Krause, 2005). As such, it makes sense that would come after units such as *Negative Emotions*, *Empathy for the Person Harmed, and Motives.*

A few participants disagreed that *Responsibility* should be part of the self-forgiveness process, stating that in some instances, such as abuse, the victim may blame him or herself and need self-forgiveness, but in actuality, bear no responsibility for the harm. Indeed, no victim of abuse should ever be made to bear responsibility for the abuser's actions, however, it may be that this unit is actually the most important unit for someone in that scenario: through proper exploration of responsibility, this person may finally be able to come to the realization that he or she is not to blame (Hall & Fincham, 2005).

5.2.8 Deservingness and Positive Sense of Self

The eleventh unit was expected to be *Deservingness* in which after developing empathy for themselves, individuals begin to feel deserving of forgiving themselves because they are human and flawed just like everybody else. Participants in all three studies were unanimous in their placement of this unit much earlier in the process. Perhaps feeling deserving self-forgiveness is what initially prompts individuals to begin the process, and what throughout, keeps them committed to the process.

The twelfth unit was expected to be *Positive Sense of Self* in which individuals develop a positive sense of self by focusing on their strengths, positive attributes, and the good choices they have made in their lives. Rather than feeling only positive toward themselves, many of the participants made reference to the importance of acceptance of

the self. It seems that although there is an increase in the positive thoughts and emotions toward the self, the foundation of this unit is truly accepting yourself as you are, in spite of the transgression (Dillon, 2001; Holmgren, 1998).

The student and community participants tended to agree with the placement of this unit late in the process, however, counsellors were more likely to place this unit earlier in the process. Once again, there is a discrepancy in the expectations of counsellors and potential clients: counsellors may have the goal of helping their clients achieve a sense of self-acceptance, but this seems to be a task that for the layperson, takes a fair amount of time.

5.2.9 Journey to Self-Forgiveness

The thirteenth unit was expected to be *Journey to Self-Forgiveness* in which individuals reflect on how they have changed and grown as a person, look toward their future, and feel like they have forgiven themselves. Oddly, participants often placed this unit near the beginning of the model, likely because, as one participant stated, the words *journey to* suggest the start of a process. Given this, a change of title to *Reflections on Self-Forgiveness Journey* is suggested.

Of course, the act of recognizing that one has forgiven the self is important, and some participants suggested that it be marked with some sort of ceremonial act; researchers have made similar suggestions (e.g., DiBlasio, 1998; Ferch, 1998). Also important is the act of reflecting on how far one has come, the things one has learned, and the positive ways in which one has changed (Holmgren, 1998). Self-forgiveness fosters personal growth, enabling one to become a better person (Wohl et al., 2008), and lay people have said that it is easier to forgive someone who has demonstrated that they have

grown and changed as a person since the incident (Kanz, 2000).

Some participants, similar to the principles of restorative justice (Zehr, 2005) suggested that part of self-forgiveness entails giving back to the community. This would fit nicely into this final unit and would foster a sense of belonging and connection with others.

5.2.10 The New Rourke's Model of Self-Forgiveness and Healing

The results of the three studies indicate that individuals share similarities but also express differences in their perceptions of self-forgiveness and the way that it unfolds. In the context of a group-intervention however, it is necessary to present a model that can be applied to all in attendance. Of the existing self-forgiveness models discussed in the introduction of this manuscript, the new model is most reflective of Enright and the Human Development Study Group's (1996), model.

After an examination of the results from all three of the studies, the following new model of self-forgiveness is proposed: Phase 1 (Uncover) – *Identifying the Harm; Empathy for the Person Harmed; Identifying Negative Emotions, Intrusive Rumination, and Their Consequences; Deservingness;* and *Commitment*; Phase 2 (Work) – *Motives*; *Compassion for the Self; Acknowledgment of the Harm and Acceptance of Responsibility*; and *Letting go of Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination*; Phase 3 (Transformation) – *Positive Sense of Self*; *Making Amends/Apologizing*; *Reflections on Self-Forgiveness Journey*.

5.3 Limitations and Future Directions

The three studies were exploratory in nature; the goal was to create research studies that would generate topics for future research in a field that is in need of more

attention. It goes without saying that future validation and refinement of *Rourke's Model of Self-Forgiveness and Healing* is required; these studies were only a first attempt at its establishment. In addition, further probing is needed: which units are the easiest to move through? Which are the most difficult?

Some limitations of the three current studies are that participants were self-selected and they participated on their own time, on-line. This made it impossible to monitor the environment in which participants took the study. In addition, some individuals were not able to complete the survey because on their IPad and Android they were unable to drag and drop the units of self-forgiveness into their desired order.

Another limitation was that the sample distributions were not comparable in terms of gender (many more women than men participated), where in the process individuals placed themselves (the majority were in the process of forgiving themselves or had fully forgiven themselves), and how long ago the transgression for which they desired self-forgiveness had occurred (for the majority, it had occurred at least one year prior).

An additional limitation is that important variables that may have had a significant impact on the way in which individuals ordered the units of self-forgiveness, and even on the variables which they deemed relevant to the process, were not assessed. For instance, the personality of the wrongdoer is likely relevant: those high in honesty-humility, agreeableness, and conscientiousness are significantly less likely to deny and hide their transgression (Rourke, 2007) and those with high self-punishment tendencies are more likely to encounter difficulty forgiving themselves (Chiaramello, Sastre, & Mullet, 2008).

In addition, those higher in neuroticism exhibit more fear of punishment, which could hinder their ability to move through certain units such as *Acknowledgment and*

Acceptance of Responsibility and *Helping the Person Harmed* (Einstein & Lanning, 1998). Research has found that those higher in neuroticism are less likely to forgive themselves (e.g., Mullet et al., 2005), while those high in narcissism are more likely to forgive themselves, in the sense of letting themselves off the proverbial hook (Macaskill, 2012).

Severity of the transgression and relationship to the person harmed are two other variables that may have a significant impact on the perception and understanding of self-forgiveness. For instance, more severe transgressions result in greater rumination (Fehr et al., 2010) and a reduced likelihood of self-forgiveness (Hall & Fincham, 2008). In addition, it has been suggested that repentance is more likely if the responsible party had a close relationship with the person harmed (Fisher & Exline, 2006).

Another variable that requires further exploration is age. Participants in Study 2 were significantly older than participants in Study 1 and the differences found in the way in which they ordered the units and the way in which they defined self-forgiveness may have, at least in part, stemmed from this difference.

Future research should also explore the relation between self-forgiveness and the forgiveness of others. Research indicates that feeling unforgiven by others results in less forgiveness of the self (Hall & Fincham, 2008; Ingersoll-Dayton & Krause, 2010); however, others suggest that the ability to forgive oneself is independent from forgiveness of others (Wohl et al., 2008). Making amends can reduce one's guilt, but what happens if those amends are rejected, or the harm is so severe that the damage to the relationship cannot be repaired? How does this affect the mental health and self-esteem of responsible parties? How does it affect their progress toward self-forgiveness? In

addition, some participants stated that forgiving themselves allows them to be more forgiving of others. Future research should explore whether people who have forgiven themselves, as defined in this research, are more likely to grant forgiveness to others. Although it may be possible for individuals to forgive themselves without receiving forgiveness from the person harmed, it seems unlikely that the two constructs are completely independent of each other.

In the current studies, approximately 10% of participants in both the student and community samples indicated that they had never felt the need to forgive themselves. Is it simply, as one participant indicated, that they were unable to bring an incident to mind in that moment, or is it something more? Do these individuals exhibit particular personality traits? Certainly, some even stated that they do not believe in or understand the concept of self-forgiveness. For instance, one participant wrote, "I do not understand the term self forgiveness. I regret the many mistakes I have made in my life, but never felt the need to contemplate further, whether forgiveness is relevant because such a thought process is never triggered…" Another stated, "There is no such thing. Forgiveness is given to us by those we have harmed. We do not have the ability to "self" forgive any more than we have the ability to wish away guilt."

Another interesting finding was that in the current studies, although forgiveness increased in a linear trend over time, and despite the fact that for the majority of participants their transgression had occurred at least one year prior, over half had yet to achieve self-forgiveness, and of those, few had achieved what they perceived as complete self-forgiveness. In addition, approximately 15% of individuals in each of the layperson samples indicated that they wanted to forgive themselves but had yet to begin (although

interestingly, on a numerical scale, all of these participants indicated that they had forgiven themselves by a small degree). Why is it that for some, even after three years, they have not been able to forgive themselves? Why is it that some cannot even bring themselves to begin the process? Is it the severity of their transgressions? Their personality? Are they stuck on a specific unit? Do they believe they will ever reach complete self-forgiveness, and what would it take to get them there?

Another interesting finding was that only 30% of each sample indicated that self-forgiveness is the releasing of negative emotions toward the self. Some suggest that because self-condemnation is a unique predictor of self-forgiveness, to forgive oneself requires that one stop self-condemnation, but does not necessarily require the complete release of negative emotions such as remorse (Fisher & Exline, 2006). Future research should explore whether there is benefit to holding on to some of those negative emotions (e.g., increasing the likelihood the behaviour will not be repeated), or whether there is harm (e.g., to mental or physical health).

This also begs the question: are there different types of self-forgiveness? Is it possible that participants' answers varied because they were describing different typologies of what it means to forgive oneself? In the literature on the forgiveness of others, researchers have been coming to the conclusion that there exist different types of forgiveness. For example, *unresolved forgiveness* in which the harmed individual forgives the transgressor but still harbours some negative feelings toward him or her, *compassionate forgiveness* in which the harmed party feels empathy, compassion, and love for the transgressor and initiates reconciliation with that person, and *forgiveness motivated by religious beliefs* in which the harmed party forgives and reconciles with the

transgressor because it is the morally correct thing to do (Stewart, DeCourville, & Belicki, 2010).

Both Tangney (2005) and Woodyatt and Wenzel (2013a) suggest that there exist different types of self-forgiveness. For instance, Tangney (2005) differentiates between two types of self forgiveness: *guilt-prone* in which individuals struggle with self-forgiveness but eventually find their way, and *self-absorbed non self-condemning* in which individuals do not struggle with self-forgiveness and instead achieve it quite readily (they tend to be high in narcissism and self-involvement and low in shame and guilt). The results of the current three studies lend further support to the notion of different types of self-forgiveness and suggest the need for greater differentiation between these types. Future research should also explore the ordering and relevance of the units involved in self-forgiveness for these different types and whether they have different mental and health benefits. For instance, when recalling an offense, people who forgave out of a sense of love for the transgressor had lower blood pressure than those who forgave out of religious obligation (Huang & Enright, 2000). Researchers should also examine whether there even exists a fixed order for units in "spontaneous" self-forgiveness; this type of self-forgiveness is likely a much less linear process than I have described.

Another area of future study should be the applications of self-forgiveness. For instance, at least some forms of self-forgiveness increase respect and compassion for the self and others (Holmgren, 1998). If self-forgiveness initiatives that were careful to address the taking responsibility component of genuine self forgiveness were implemented in the prison system, would this lessen offender recidivism upon release?

Certainly, restorative justice programs (which involve many of the steps pertaining to the proposed model) yield lower recidivism rates than non-restorative approaches (Latimer, Dowden, & Muise, 2005). What about the role of self-forgiveness in the treatment of veteran PTSD? In one study, two-thirds of the Vietnam veterans assessed were experiencing moderate or greater guilt (Kubany et al., 1996). In addition, the severity of guilt regarding combat (acts of commission and omission) is positively correlated with the ruminative and avoidance symptoms of PTSD as well as PTSD severity (Henning & Frueh, 1997). Could self-forgiveness help decrease this shame, guilt, and rumination, thereby decreasing the severity of the PTSD? Would the current units proposed be sufficient, or in the case of war trauma, are more units needed?

In addition, given that one of the current studies involved counsellor participants, future research should explore the utility of seeking the aid of a counsellor to attain self-forgiveness. Does it happen more quickly than if a responsible party attempts to forgive oneself on his or her own? Is it more effective than a group intervention aimed at forgiving the self? How is the process affected when the client and counsellor have differing views about what it means to forgive oneself, and about the steps involved in the process?

Finally, how does the model change if the person seeking self-forgiveness was in fact a victim and not a transgressor? Harmed parties may blame themselves for an offense because of a belief that somehow they should have predicted and prevented its occurrence (Flanigan, 1992). This may be a common occurrence: 88% of affected parties in one sample believed that they had somehow contributed to the transgression (Leary et al., 1998). In addition, harmed parties may need self-forgiveness because they feel guilty

for not wanting to reconcile with the offender (Scobie & Scobie, 2002).

The topic of forgiveness can be controversial especially when it is applied to cases of battered women or child abuse. In the instance of adults who were abused as children, the suggestion has been made that affected parties need to feel more at peace and stronger within themselves before moving on to a state of being able to hold the offender fully accountable (Chagigiorgis & Paivio, 2008). This indicates that moving through the process of self-forgiveness before attempting forgiveness of the abuser might be beneficial.

Baker (2008), who studied women in recovery from drug or alcohol abuse, found that almost all of her participants reported having been sexually molested as children or young adults. Many of these women felt guilty about having been abused and blamed themselves for the abuse (e.g., for being intoxicated at the time of the assault). These women stated that they felt the need to forgive themselves, but that they struggled with it and that some form of assistance with self-forgiveness would be extremely helpful. This suggests the relevance of a self-forgiveness model, and that the expertise of a counsellor, or the inclusion of a self-forgiveness unit in a treatment/recovery program might be beneficial; however, in the instance of an individual having been abused, the term "self-forgiveness" may not be relevant. Instead, working through the process of self-forgiveness, the individual should come to the realization that he or she bears no responsibility for the abuser's actions, and instead of self-forgiveness, *acceptance* is more relevant.

5.4 Conclusion

The three exploratory studies presented in this manuscript have provided a

definition of self-forgiveness as well as a process-model of self-forgiveness that reflects the views of a student sample, a community sample, and a sample of counsellors. The value in this is that laypersons desiring guidance in how to forgive the self can now access a definition that provides a goal to work toward, and a model that maps out a possible process for them to follow. In addition, "…understanding how people outside of the academic community conceptualize and understand forgiveness may better equip researchers to develop improved forgiveness interventions both therapeutically and psychoeducationally" (Kanz, 2000, p. 175). Counsellors, although seemingly aware that they hold differing views of self-forgiveness than their clients (over 80% indicated this was the case), now also have a detailed description on the aspects of self-forgiveness that their clients may hold different views about.

Much research still needs to be done, and certainly, the division between, and the movement through, the units of the model is likely not be clear cut and linear (North, 1998). One participant likened movement through the units to the board game *Snakes and Ladders* in which one progresses along sequentially, but then lands on a snake and must back-track and work through the same sections again. Another wrote,

> I think the steps are elegant and all there. Perhaps stating the obvious, these steps are not linear but fluid, overlapping, messy, and one goes back and forth on them. But ultimately I believe that this is the process or "flow" that one (ideally) goes through, if one has the gravitas to do so.

The proposed model suggests a self-forgiveness process that is beneficial to the responsible party, the affected party, and the community (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013a). The model is meant as a guide, and individuals, intervention leaders, and counsellors will

need to tweak it to fit their own situation and needs.

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Appendix A: Pilot Study Material

Pilot Study

Thank you so much for doing this! It should take approximately 10-15 minutes...I have created a model of self-forgiveness that is divided into various units. These units and a brief description of what they entail are on this 1st page (that way you can split the document and have this page available to you as you scroll down the units). You'll notice that each unit is numbered 1-13. In the pages that follow are phrases representing each unit (in random order). Next to each phrase, please put the number of the unit to which you believe it belongs (**there are some filler phrases that do not belong with any unit. When you come across a phrase you believe is a filler phrase, please put an "X" next to it**). Thank you!

UNIT + brief description
1. **Unit 1: Acknowledging What Happened** – Individuals contemplate what happened and whether or not their actions were harmful/hurtful to another
2. **Unit 2: Negative Emotions** – Individuals realize that they are experiencing negative emotions because of the negative event
3. **Unit 3: Intrusive Rumination** – Individuals realize that they are compulsively thinking about the event over and over again
4. **Unit 4: Consequences of Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination** – Individuals realize that the negative emotions and the rumination they are experiencing may be negatively affecting their lives
5. **Unit 5: Commitment** – Individuals recognize that they are in a place of needing self-forgiveness and make the commitment to try and forgive themselves
6. **Unit 6: Empathy for the Person I Hurt** – Individuals develop empathy for the person harmed by reflecting on how that person has been affected by their behaviour and exploring why they feel badly about this
7. **Unit 7: Helping the Person I Hurt** – Individuals develop the desire to somehow make up for their harmful actions

8. **Unit 8: Empathy for Self** – Individuals try and understand the context in which the harm took place by reflecting on what else was going on in their lives at the time
9. **Unit 9: Motives** – Individuals try and understand why they acted the way that they did
10. **Unit 10: Responsibility** – Individuals acknowledge that regardless of context, they are responsible for their actions
11. **Unit 11: Deservingness** – Individuals come to the realization that they are deserving of forgiving themselves because they are human and flawed just like everybody else
12. **Unit 12: Positive Sense of Self** – Individuals develop a positive sense of self by reflecting on their positive attributes and strengths
13. **Unit 13: Journey to Self-Forgiveness** – Individuals reflect on how they have changed and grown as a person since the negative event and acknowledge that the negative thoughts and emotions have left them and that they have forgiven themselves

PHRASES in Random Order

_ 8_ Developing compassion for myself by understanding what I was going through at the time I acted this way

_ 3_ Thinking or dreaming about what I did even though I didn't mean to

_10_ Recognizing that no matter what else was going on in my life, I am responsible for the choice that I made to act this way

_11_ Feeling that I deserve good things to happen to me

_ 1_ Admitting to myself that what I did may have been wrong

_10_ Acknowledging that I am responsible for my own actions

_ 7_ Wanting to apologize to the person affected by my actions
_ 6_ Reflecting on why I feel badly that my actions (or inaction) have had a negative effect on somebody [REMOVED – BOTH RATERS PLACED IT INTO DIFFERENT UNITS]
_5_ Making the commitment to try and forgive myself
_2_ Recognizing that I am feeling guilt or shame because of what I did (or didn't) do
_4_ Feeling the effects of the stress I am experiencing because of what I did (or didn't do)
_6_ Putting myself in the shoes of the person I feel that I hurt in order to gain perspective on how he or she might be feeling
_10_ Thinking about what I was hoping to gain by behaving the way that I did
_13_ Feeling like I've forgiven myself; the negative thoughts and emotions have left me
_11_ Feeling that despite my flaws, I deserve to forgive myself
_X_ Realizing that there was a big misunderstanding and no harm was actually done.
_6__Finding ways to be kind to myself [REMOVED – BOTH RATERS RATED IT AS A FILLER ITEM]
_13_ Feeling positive about how far I've come and my future
_4__ Becoming aware that my thoughts and emotions about the event are negatively affecting my life (e.g., my mental or physical health)
_3__ Not being able to stop thinking about what I did
_X_ Realizing that I've been blowing things out of proportion and this isn't really a big deal

_1__ Recognizing that I have done something that was hurtful to someone else
_12_ Focusing on the positive qualities I possess
_10_ Understanding that even though I may have had my reasons for acting the way that I did, ultimately I am responsible for the choices that I make
_X__ Coming to the realization that forgiving myself was really easy!
_1__ Admitting to myself that I did something hurtful to someone else
_12_ Remembering the good choices I've made in my life
_7__ Wanting to make amends to the person I hurt
_12_ Seeing myself as more than just my actions that I regret [REMOVED – BOTH RATERS PLACED IT IN DIFFERENT UNITS]
_2__ Feeling badly because of what I did (or didn't do)
_8__ Thinking about the stressors in my life at the time that I acted this way
_5__ Recognizing that I need to move on from the past and accept myself [REMOVED – BOTH RATERS PLACED IT IN UNIT 11]
_X__ Realizing that the person I hurt is making this into something much bigger than it needs to be
_10_ Thinking about what I had hoped to accomplish by acting in this way
_5__ Being willing to try and forgive myself
_11_ Accepting that everyone, including myself has flaws, and that is okay

_9__ Thinking about my reasons for choosing to act the way that I did
_X__ Thinking about what was going on in my life at the time and realizing that based on this, my actions were justified, so it's not really a big deal
_2__ Blaming myself for what the other person is feeling [REMOVED – BOTH RATERS RATED IT AS A FILLER ITEM]
_13_ Reflecting on how I've changed and grown as a person since I acted this way
_4__ Feeling like my ability to function in my life is being affected by the thoughts and emotions I am having
_3__ Automatically thinking about what I did
_6__ Acknowledging the consequences that my actions may have had on others [REMOVED – BOTH RATERS PLACED IT IN UNIT 1]
_7__ Thinking about what I can do to make it up to the person I hurt

Any comments (i.e., any items confusing, etc.)?

ITEM ADDED:

_6_ Taking the time to understand how the other person might be feeling because of your actions and reflecting on why it is you feel badly that your actions may have had this effect on another

Appendix B: Participant Pool Recruitment Paragraph

Title of Study: What Are the Steps Involved in Self-Forgiveness?

I want to know your perspective about the steps involved in self-forgiveness!

This study will be completed on-line, in one of the computer labs on campus, and will require about 30 minutes of your time. Your participation will include answering some general questions about self-forgiveness and as well, indicating the steps you believe to be involved in self-forgiveness. You will receive 1 course credit for your participation.

Creator: Jessica Rourke, PhD candidate (UVic)

This study is being conducted as a requirement of my PhD program and has been approved by the University of Victoria's Research Ethics Board, File #13-254

Appendix C: Consent Form – Student Participants

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Letter of Information for Implied Consent

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What are the Steps Involved in Self-Forgiveness?

Welcome!

You are invited to participate in this research study in which I am exploring the steps involved in self-forgiveness. I (Jessica Rourke) am a PhD Candidate in the department of Psychology at the University of Victoria. In order to obtain my PhD, I am required to conduct an independent research project. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact myself or my supervisor at our information above.

Purpose and Objectives

I have been studying forgiveness for 10 years, and in doing so, I have realized how little scientific research exists on self-forgiveness. Given this, I have created a model that outlines some of the steps that may be involved in the process of forgiving oneself. The purpose of this research study is to obtain your perspective – do you agree with the steps, or do you think that some of them are irrelevant? Or, maybe you think some important steps are missing!

Benefits and Importance of this Research

This type of research is important because it will provide valuable information for the research field – the field desperately needs some insight into self-forgiveness! The results of this study may also prove to be important for the counselling community – providing important information that counsellors and clinicians may be able to employ when aiding clients forgive themselves.

Participant Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are interested in sharing your opinion on self-forgiveness. Interested participants should not currently be experiencing psychological distress nor currently receiving counselling, therapy, or psychiatric treatment.

What's Involved?

If you consent to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include filling out a web-based questionnaire asking you some general questions about self-forgiveness and as well, asking you to indicate the steps you believe to be involved in self-forgiveness. Participation in this study will require approximately 30 minutes of your time and you will receive 1 course credit. Please be advised that the information you provide for this study is gathered via an online program located in the United States. The

U.S. government reserves the right to access any and all data gathered without your knowledge or consent, in compliance with the U.S. Patriot Act.

Inconvenience and Risk
This study asks you questions about self-forgiveness and it is possible that this could elicit some negative emotions. Please know that if this occurs, it is perfectly normal. If a question makes you feel upset in any way, you are free to skip it, or to withdraw from the study without any penalty or consequence. If you believe that completing this study will be an upsetting, overwhelming, and/or negative experience for you, please do not participate in this study.

If you do participate in this study and your participation elicits negative emotions and you find that you are having difficulty overcoming any of the negative emotions, please make sure to look after yourself and seek help. This could mean talking to a trusted friend or family member, making an appointment with a counsellor, or calling a local crisis line. UVic offers free counselling to registered students. You can contact UVic's counselling services at 250-721-8341. Most crisis lines are open 24 hours/day, 7 days/week. You can reach the B.C. Distress Line Network at 1-888-562-1214 (toll-free).

Voluntary Participation and Compensation
You will receive 1 course credit for your participation in this study. In order to receive this course credit, you must have provided your name on the SONA system. If you consent to participate in this study, this form of compensation must not be coercive. It is unethical to provide undue compensation or inducements to research participants. If you would not participate if the compensation was not offered, then you should decline to participate. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can decline to participate, or, if you agree to participate, at any point in time, you can skip a question which makes you feel upset or uncomfortable, or, you can withdraw from the study without any consequence or explanation. To withdraw from the study, simply close the window in which the study is displayed. You will still be granted your research credit via the SONA system. If you decide to withdraw from the study, I will not contact you to ask why you did not complete the study, and you will not be penalized in any way. In addition, any answers you have provided to questions in the survey will not be used – they will be deleted. Please note however, that due to the anonymity of the data you provide, if you have answered all of the questions up to the end of the survey and then decide that you do not want your data to be used, it will not be possible for me to locate your data to delete it (this is because there will be no identifying information associated with your data).

Anonymity and Confidentiality
You will be completing this survey in a computer lab. Other participants will also be completing the survey in the same room, at the same time. To protect your privacy, no one will be seated directly next to you. In order to grant you course credit on the SONA system, you will have had to provide your name, however, all of the information you provide during the survey will be anonymous – your name will not be associated with it in any way. In addition, in order to protect your confidentiality and the confidentiality of

the information you provide, all files will be stored on a password protected computer. It is important that you know that it is my goal to present the results of this study in my dissertation, at academic conferences, and to submit them for publication in scholarly journals. However, no names or identifying information will ever be used in the presentations or articles. In addition, I may re-analyze the data in the future, and, if, in the future, a researcher associated with an accredited university requests access to this data, such access will be given (once again, no names or identifying information will be passed on). If any media outlet requests information on the results of this study, that request may be granted. Please remember that all data will remain anonymous, even for re-analysis and any media articles. Data collected during this study will be kept for 5 years after publication, after which it will be deleted. Also, if at any point in time you email me to ask a question about the study, your email will be deleted immediately following my reply (i.e., I will not be keeping any personal information relating to you).

Contacts

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact myself or my project supervisor. Our contact information can be found at the beginning of this form. In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca). The file number for this study is: 13-254.

By completing and submitting the questionnaire (by clicking on the "Continue" button below), **your free and informed consent is implied** and it indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher.

Thank you for taking the time to read over this form and to consider whether or not you would like to participate in my study.

Sincerely,
Jessica Rourke

Please retain a copy of this letter for your reference

Appendix D: Example of the Units Presented to Participants

Below is a list of randomly ordered categories believed to represent components of the self-forgiveness process. Imagine these are the steps involved in self-forgiveness and put them in the order in which you think they occur (i.e., the order in which you think self-forgiveness unfolds).

- **Negative Emotions** – You realize that you are experiencing negative emotions because of what you did (or did not do). For example, you might:
  - Feel badly because of what you did (or did not do)
  - Recognize that you are feeling negative emotions such as guilt or shame because of what you did (or did not do)

- **Motives** – You try and understand why you acted the way that you did. For instance, you might:
  - Think about what you had hoped to accomplish by acting in this way
  - Think about what you were hoping to gain by behaving the way that you did
  - Think about your reasons for choosing to act the way that you did

- **Commitment** – You recognize that you are in a place of needing self-forgiveness and make the commitment to put in the effort to try and forgive yourself. For instance, you might:
  - Acknowledge to yourself that you are committed to trying to forgive yourself
  - Begin feeling like you are willing to try and forgive yourself

- **Helping the Person Harmed** – You develop the desire to somehow make up for your harmful actions. For example, you might:
  - Think about what you can do to make it up to the person you hurt
  - Want to make amends to the person you hurt
  - Want to apologize to the person affected by your actions

- **Deservingness** – You come to the realization that you are deserving of forgiving yourself because your are human and flawed just like everybody else. For instance, you might:
  - Accept that everyone, including yourself has flaws, and that is okay
  - Feel that despite your flaws, you deserve to forgive yourself
  - Feel that you deserve good things to happen to you

- **Empathy for the Person Harmed** – You develop empathy for the person harmed by reflecting on how that person may have been affected by your behaviour and exploring why you feel badly about this. For example, you might:
  - Put yourself in the shoes of the person you feel that you hurt in order to gain perspective on how he or she might be feeling
  - Take the time to understand how the other person might be feeling because of your actions and reflect on why it is you feel badly that your actions may have had this effect on another

- **Responsibility** – You acknowledge that regardless of context, you are responsible for

for your actions. For example, you might:

- Recognize that no matter what else was going on in your life, you are responsible for the choice that you made to act this way
- Acknowledge that you are responsible for your own actions
- Understand that even though you may have had your reasons for acting the way that you did, ultimately, you are responsible for the choices that you make

- **Journey to Self-Forgiveness** – You reflect on how you have changed and grown as a person since the negative event and acknowledge that the negative thoughts and emotions have left you and that you have forgiven yourself. For instance, you might:
  - Reflect on how you've changed and grown as a person since you acted this way
  - Feel like you've forgiven yourself; the negative thoughts and emotions have left you
  - Feel positive about your future

- **Positive Sense of Self** – You develop a positive sense of self by reflecting on your positive attributes and strengths. For example, you might:
  - Focus on the positive qualities you possess
  - Remember the good choices you've made in your life

- **Empathy for Self** – You try and understand the context in which the harm took place by reflecting on what else was going on in your life at the time. For instance, you might:
  - Think about the stressors in your life at the time that you acted this way
  - Develop compassion for yourself by understanding what you were going through at the time you acted this way

- **Consequences of Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination** – You realize that the negative emotions and the rumination you are experiencing may be negatively affecting your life. For instance, you might:
  - Become aware that your thoughts and emotions about the event are negatively affecting your life (e.g., mental or physical health)
  - Feel the effects of the stress you are experiencing because of what you did (or did not do)
  - Feel like your ability to function in your life is being affected by the thoughts and emotions you are having

- **Acknowledging What Happened** – You contemplate what happened and whether or not your actions were harmful/hurtful to another. For example, you might:
  - Recognize that you have done something that was hurtful to someone else
  - Admit to yourself that what you did may have been wrong

- **Intrusive Rumination** – You realize that you are compulsively thinking about the event over and over again. For instance, you might:
  - Think or dream about what you did even though you don't mean to
  - Not be able to stop thinking about what you did
  - Automatically think about what you did

Appendix E: Debriefing Form – Student Participants

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What are the Steps Involved in Self-Forgiveness?
Debriefing Letter

Thank you so much for your time and cooperation. Your willingness to share your thoughts and feelings made this study possible, and I am truly thankful.

The study in which you just participated was testing the effectiveness of a newly developed model of self-forgiveness. My main interest was to explore whether my model was lacking any important steps, or, if it contained some unnecessary steps. I was also interested in exploring whether or not individuals with different life experiences have different ideas about the steps involved in self-forgiveness. For instance, do individuals who have forgiven themselves differ in their view of self-forgiveness as compared to individuals who have not been able to forgive themselves, or who are in the process of forgiving themselves? I was also interested in whether or not counsellors' and clinicians' perspectives on the steps involved in self-forgiveness would differ from the perspectives of participants from the general population.

As mentioned in the letter you read before beginning this study, the results of this study will be presented in my dissertation and may also be presented at academic conferences and published in academic journals. No matter the mode of presentation, results will only be presented in a general format and your data will never be identifiable in any way; it will always remain anonymous.

I am very mindful that participation in this study may have required you to recall an experience that elicited some negative emotions. Please know that if this occurred, it is perfectly normal. If this occurred and you find that you are having difficulty overcoming any of the negative emotions, please make sure to look after yourself and seek help. This could mean talking to a trusted friend or family member, making an appointment with a

counsellor, or calling a local crisis line. Most crisis lines are open 24 hours/day, 7 days/week. You can reach the B.C. Distress Line Network at 1-888-562-1214 (toll-free). If you would like to see a counsellor, UVic offers free counselling to registered students. You can contact UVic's counselling services at 250-721-8341. Or, to obtain the phone number for a local crisis line elsewhere than B.C., please look at the inside cover of the phone book, or, search on-line (e.g., Google the name of your city + "crisis line"). If you would like to see a counsellor, please search the phone book under "counselling." In addition, you can find therapist information online through a Google search by typing in the name of your city + "counselling." Many counsellors offer their services on a sliding fee scale, based on your income.

Once again, thank you so much for taking the time to participate in my study. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your participation, please feel free to contact me, Jessica Rourke (jrourke@uvic.ca) or my supervisor, Dr. Robert Gifford (rgifford@uvic.ca). The results of this study will be available by December, 2013. If you are interested in the results of this study, you can e-mail me and I will gladly send you that information.

Finally, as a thank you for your participation, I would like to offer you 1 course credit. I will automatically assign you this credit on the SONA system. Please see me before leaving for a paper receipt for this credit.

Thank you very much,

Jessica Rourke

Appendix F: Table 8, Frequencies of the Ordering of the Units (Students)

Table 8

Frequencies of the Ordering of the Units

Unit	Sub-groups	Put as Unit… 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1: Acknowledge	T	2 1.7%	17 14%	11 9.1%	25 20.7%	0 0%	1 0.8%	9 7.4%	7 5.8%	2 1.7%	**41** **33.9%**	6 5%	0 0%	0 0%
	A	1 7.1%	**5** **35.7%**	1 7.1%	2 14.3%	0 0%	1 7.1%	0 0%	1 7.1%	0 0%	3 21.4%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%
	B	0 0%	3 16.7%	2 11.1%	1 5.6%	0 0%	0 0%	2 11.1%	0 0%	0 0%	**8** **44.4%**	2 11.1%	0 0%	0 0%
	C	1 1.9%	6 11.5%	8 15.4%	**14** **26.9%**	0 0%	0 0%	3 5.8%	3 5.8%	2 3.8%	13 25%	2 3.8%	0 0%	0 0%
	D	0 0%	3 8.1%	0 0%	8 21.6%	0 0%	0 0%	4 10.8%	3 8.1%	0 0%	**17** **45.9%**	2 5.4%	0 0%	0 0%
2: Negative Emotions	T	5 4.1%	0 0%	1 0.8%	0 0%	25 20.7%	20 16.5%	0 0%	7 5.8%	**29** **24%**	4 3.3%	15 12.4%	4 3.3%	11 9.1%
	A	1 7.1%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	2 14.3%	3 21.4%	0 0%	0 0%	**5** **35.7%**	1 7.1%	1 7.1%	1 7.1%	0 0%
	B	1 5.6%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	4 22.2%	**5** **27.8%**	0 0%	3 16.7%	1 5.6%	0 0%	3 16.7%	0 0%	1 5.6%
	C	1 1.9%	0 0%	1 1.9%	0 0%	**10** **19.2%**	8 15.4%	0 0%	3 5.8%	8 15.4%	3 5.8%	8 15.4%	2 3.8%	8 15.4%
	D	2 5.4%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	9 24.3%	4 10.8%	0 0%	1 2.7%	**15** **40.5%**	0 0%	3 8.1%	1 2.7%	2 5.4%

Table 8, Continued.

Unit	Sub-groups	Put as Unit… 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
3: Intrusive Rumination	T	1 0.8%	**32** **26.4%**	23 19%	15 12.4%	2 1.7%	3 2.5%	18 14.9%	6 5%	3 2.5%	12 9.9%	5 4.1%	0 0%	1 0.8%
	A	0 0%	**4** **28.6%**	**4** **28.6%**	2 14.3%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 7.1%	3 21.4%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%
	B	0 0%	**5** **27.8%**	1 5.6%	**5** **27.8%**	2 11.1%	0 0%	1 5.6%	1 5.6%	1 5.6%	0 0%	2 11.1%	0 0%	0 0%
	C	1 1.9%	**14** **26.9%**	11 21.2%	7 13.5%	0 0%	2 3.8%	5 9.6%	2 3.8%	0 0%	7 13.5%	3 5.8%	0 0%	0 0%
	D	0 0%	9 24.3%	7 18.9%	1 2.7%	0 0%	1 2.7%	**12** **32.4%**	3 8.1%	1 2.7%	2 5.4%	0 0%	0 0%	1 2.7%
4: Consequences of Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination	T	7 5.8%	2 1.7%	13 10.7%	6 5%	8 6.6%	16 13.2%	15 12.4%	**22** **18.2%**	9 7.4%	2 1.7%	15 12.4%	0 0%	6 5%
	A	**2** **14.3%**	0 0%	1 7.1%	**2** **14.3%**	1 7.1%	**2** **14.3%**	0 0%	1 7.1%	**2** **14.3%**	0 0%	**2** **14.3%**	0 0%	1 7.1%
	B	0 0%	0 0%	2 11.1%	1 5.6%	1 5.6%	2 11.1%	**3** **16.7%**	**3** **16.7%**	2 11.1%	0 0%	**3** **16.7%**	0 0%	1 5.6%
	C	3 5.8%	1 1.9%	5 9.6%	1 1.9%	4 7.7%	7 13.5%	7 13.5%	**11** **21.2%**	4 7.7%	1 1.9%	5 9.6%	0 0%	3 5.8%
	D	2 5.4%	1 2.7%	5 13.5%	2 5.4%	2 5.4%	5 13.5%	5 13.5%	**7** **18.9%**	1 2.7%	1 2.7%	5 13.5%	0 0%	1 2.7%
5: Commitment	T	4 3.3%	3 2.5%	18 14.9%	5 4.1%	13 10.7%	15 12.4%	7 5.8%	**21** **17.4%**	9 7.4%	5 4.1%	16 13.2%	1 0.8%	4 3.3%

Table 8, Continued.

Unit	Sub-groups	Put as Unit… 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	A	1 7.1%	0 0%	2 14.3%	0 0%	**3** **21.4%**	**3** **21.4%**	2 14.3%	2 14.3%	1 7.1%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%
	B	1 5.6%	0 0%	2 11.1%	1 5.6%	**3** **16.7%**	**3** **16.7%**	0 0%	2 11.1%	1 5.6%	1 5.6%	**3** **16.7%**	0 0%	1 5.6%
	C	1 1.9%	2 3.8%	7 13.5%	3 5.8%	4 7.7%	6 11.5%	4 7.7%	**10** **19.2%**	5 9.6%	1 1.9%	7 13.5%	1 1.9%	1 1.9%
	D	1 2.7%	1 2.7%	**7** **18.9%**	1 2.7%	3 8.1%	3 8.1%	1 2.7%	**7** **18.9%**	2 5.4%	3 8.1%	6 16.2%	0 0%	2 5.4%
6: Empathy for Person Harmed	T	12 9.9%	0 0%	0 0%	1 0.8%	**24** **19.8%**	16 13.2%	1 0.8%	3 2.5%	18 14.9%	3 2.5%	11 9.1%	10 8.3%	22 18.2%
	A	**3** **21.4%**	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 7.1%	0 0%	1 7.1%	2 14.3%	1 7.1%	**3** **21.4%**	2 14.3%	1 7.1%
	B	1 5.6%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 5.6%	2 11.1%	1 5.6%	0 0%	5 27.8%	1 5.6%	0 0%	0 0%	**7** **38.9%**
	C	3 5.8%	0 0%	0 0%	1 1.9%	**13** **25%**	6 11.5%	0 0%	2 3.8%	7 13.5%	1 1.9%	6 11.5%	5 9.6%	8 15.4%
	D	5 13.5%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	**10** **27%**	7 18.9%	0 0%	0 0%	4 10.8%	0 0%	2 5.4%	3 8.1%	6 16.2%
7: Helping Person Harmed	T	41 33.9%	0 0%	0 0%	1 0.8%	3 2.5%	1 0.8%	1 0.8%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 0.8%	**55** **45.5%**	18 14.9%

Table 8, Continued.

Unit	Sub-groups	Put as Unit… 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	A	1 7.1%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 7.1%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	5 35.7%	**7** **50%**
	B	**8** **44.4%**	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	7 38.9%	3 16.7%
	C	**23** **44.2%**	0 0%	0 0%	1 1.9%	1 1.9%	0 0%	1 1.9%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 1.9%	19 36.5%	6 11.5%
	D	9 24.3%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 2.7%	1 2.7%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	**24** **64.9%**	2 5.4%
8: Empathy for Self	T	4 3.3%	0 0%	2 1.7%	0 0%	17 14%	24 19.8%	6 5%	8 6.6%	**27** **22.3%**	2 1.7%	11 9.1%	2 1.7%	18 14.9%
	A	1 7.1%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	**3** **21.4%**	1 7.1%	**3** **21.4%**	**3** **21.4%**	1 7.1%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	2 14.3%
	B	2 11.1%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	4 22.2%	1 5.6%	1 5.6%	1 5.6%	**6** **33.3%**	0 0%	1 5.6%	0 0%	2 11.1%
	C	1 1.9%	0 0%	1 1.9%	0 0%	9 17.3%	9 17.3%	2 3.8%	3 5.8%	**13** **25%**	2 3.8%	4 7.7%	2 3.8%	6 11.5%
	D	0 0%	0 0%	1 2.7%	0 0%	1 2.7%	**13** **35.1%**	0 0%	1 2.7%	7 18.9%	0 0%	6 16.2%	0 0%	8 21.6%
9: Motives	T	1 0.8%	16 13.2%	16 13.2%	21 17.4%	1 0.8%	2 1.7%	**33** **27.3%**	3 2.5%	0 0%	19 15.7%	7 5.8%	0 0%	2 1.7%
	A	0 0%	0 0%	3 21.4%	1 7.1%	1 7.1%	0 0%	**5** **35.7%**	0 0%	0 0%	4 28.6%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%

Table 8, Continued.

Unit	Sub-groups	Put as Unit… 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	B	0 0%	3 16.7%	**5** **27.8%**	1 5.6%	0 0%	0 0%	4 22.2%	1 5.6%	0 0%	3 16.7%	1 5.6%	0 0%	0 0%
	C	1 1.9%	7 13.5%	6 11.5%	9 17.3%	0 0%	2 3.8%	**13** **25%**	1 1.9%	0 0%	7 13.5%	4 7.7%	0 0%	2 3.8%
	D	0 0%	6 16.2%	2 5.4%	10 27%	0 0%	0 0%	**11** **29.7%**	1 2.7%	0 0%	5 13.5%	2 5.4%	0 0%	0 0%
10: Responsibility	T	6 5%	0 0%	3 2.5%	2 1.7%	10 8.3%	16 13.2%	11 9.1%	**21** **17.4%**	12 9.9%	3 2.5%	16 13.2%	2 1.7%	19 15.7%
	A	1 7.1%	0 0%	0 0%	1 7.1%	1 7.1%	2 14.3%	3 21.4%	1 7.1%	0 0%	0 0%	**4** **28.6%**	0 0%	1 7.1%
	B	1 5.6%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	2 11.1%	**5** **27.8%**	1 5.6%	3 16.7%	2 11.1%	1 5.6%	2 11.1%	0 0%	1 5.6%
	C	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 1.9%	6 11.5%	7 13.5%	5 9.6%	**9** **17.3%**	6 11.5%	1 1.9%	6 11.5%	2 3.8%	**9** **17.3%**
	D	4 10.8%	0 0%	3 8.1%	0 0%	1 2.7%	2 5.4%	2 5.4%	**8** **21.6%**	4 10.8%	1 2.7%	4 10.8%	0 0%	**8** **21.6%**
11: Deservingness	T	2 1.7%	7 5.8%	**32** **26.4%**	9 7.4%	5 4.1%	5 4.1%	17 14%	19 15.7%	7 5.8%	2 1.7%	13 10.7%	1 0.8%	2 1.7%
	A	0 0%	0 0%	2 14.3%	**3** **21.4%**	1 7.1%	0 0%	1 7.1%	**3** **21.4%**	1 7.1%	0 0%	2 14.3%	1 7.1%	0 0%
	B	0 0%	0 0%	**6** **33.3%**	1 5.6%	0 0%	0 0%	5 27.8%	4 22.2%	0 0%	0 0%	1 5.6%	0 0%	1 5.6%

Table 8, Continued.

Unit	Sub-groups	Put as Unit… 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	C	1 1.9%	2 3.8%	**13** **25%**	3 5.8%	2 3.8%	5 9.6%	9 17.3%	6 11.5%	4 7.7%	1 1.9%	5 9.6%	0 0%	1 1.9%
	D	1 2.7%	5 13.5%	**11** **29.7%**	2 5.4%	2 5.4%	0 0%	2 5.4%	6 16.2%	2 5.4%	1 2.7%	5 13.5%	0 0%	0 0%
12: Positive Sense of Self	T	31 25.6%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	13 10.7%	1 0.8%	2 1.7%	1 0.8%	5 4.1%	2 1.7%	4 3.3%	**45** **37.2%**	17 14%
	A	2 14.3%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 7.1%	1 7.1%	0 0%	0 0%	1 7.1%	0 0%	2 14.3%	**5** **35.7%**	2 14.3%
	B	4 22.2%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 5.6%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 5.6%	0 0%	**11** **61.1%**	1 5.6%
	C	12 23.1%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	3 5.8%	0 0%	2 3.8%	1 1.9%	3 5.8%	1 1.9%	1 1.9%	**21** **40.4%**	8 15.4%
	D	**13** **35.1%**	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	8 21.6%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 2.7%	0 0%	1 2.7%	8 21.6%	6 16.2%
13: Journey to Self-Forgiveness	T	5 4.1%	**44** **36.4%**	2 1.7%	36 29.8%	0 0%	1 0.8%	1 0.8%	3 2.5%	0 0%	26 21.5%	1 0.8%	1 0.8%	1 0.8%
	A	1 7.1%	**5** **35.7%**	1 7.1%	3 21.4%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	2 14.3%	0 0%	2 14.3%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%
	B	0 0%	7 38.9%	0 0%	**8** **44.4%**	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	3 16.7%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%

Table 8, Continued.

Unit	Sub-groups	Put as Unit… 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	C	4 7.7%	**20** **38.5%**	0 0%	12 23.1%	0 0%	0 0%	1 1.9%	1 1.9%	0 0%	14 26.9%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%
	D	0 0%	12 32.4%	1 2.7%	**13** **35.1%**	0 0%	1 2.7%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	7 18.9%	1 2.7%	1 2.7%	1 2.7%

N = 121

Note: Numbers in bold depict the most common placement of the unit; T = Total sample, A = Have never felt the need to forgive myself, B = Want to forgive myself but have not begun, C = Am in the process of forgiving myself, D = Have fully forgiven myself.

Appendix G: Table 10, Frequencies of the Ordering of the Units into the Phases (Students)

Table 10

Frequencies of the Ordering of Units into the Phases

Units in Theoretical Order	Subgroups	Put as Phase… 1	2	3	4
Unit 1, Phase 1: Acknowledgement	Total Sample	**55 (45.5%)**	10 (8.3%)	50 (41.3%)	6 (5%)
	Never felt need to forgive self	**9 (64.3%)**	1 (7.1%)	4 (28.6%)	0 (0%)
	Want to forgive self but have not begun	6 (33.3%)	2 (11.1%)	**8 (44.4%)**	2 (11.1%)
	In process of forgiving self	**29 (55.8%)**	3 (5.8%)	18 (34.6%)	2 (3.8%)
	Have fully forgiven self	11 (29.7%)	4 (10.8%)	**20 (54.1%)**	2 (5.4%)
Unit 2, Phase 1: Negative Emotions	Total Sample	31 (25.6%)	20 (16.5%)	**40 (33.1%)**	30 (24.8%)
	Never felt need to forgive self	3 (21.4%)	3 (21.4%)	**6 (42.9%)**	2 (14.3%)
	Want to forgive self but have not begun	**5 (27.8%)**	**5 (27.8%)**	4 (22.2%)	4 (22.2%)
	In process of forgiving self	12 (23.1%)	8 (15.4%)	14 (26.9%)	**18 (34.6%)**
	Have fully forgiven self	11 (29.7%)	4 (10.8%)	**16 (43.2%)**	6 (16.2%)
Unit 3, Phase 1: Intrusive Rumination	Total Sample	**73 (60.3%)**	21 (17.4%)	21 (17.4%)	6 (5%)
	Never felt need to forgive self	**10 (71.4%)**	0 (0%)	4 (28.6%)	0 (0%)

Table 10, Continued.

Units in Theoretical Order	Subgroups	Put as Phase… 1	2	3	4
	Want to forgive self but have not begun	**13 (72.2%)**	1 (5.6%)	2 (11.1%)	2 (11.1%)
	In process of forgiving self	**33 (63.5%)**	7 (13.5%)	9 (17.3%)	3 (5.8%)
	Have fully forgiven self	**17 (45.9%)**	13 (35.1%)	6 (16.2%)	1 (2.7%)
Unit 4, Phase 1: Consequences of Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination	Total Sample	**36 (29.8%)**	31 (25.6%)	33 (27.3%)	21 (17.4%)
	Never felt need to forgive self	**6 (42.9%)**	2 (14.3%)	3 (21.4%)	3 (21.4%)
	Want to forgive self but have not begun	4 (22.2%)	**5 (27.8%)**	**5 (27.8%)**	4 (22.2%)
	In process of forgiving self	14 (26.9%)	14 (26.9%)	**16 (30.8%)**	8 (15.4%)
	Have fully forgiven self	**12 (32.4%)**	10 (27%)	9 (24.3%)	6 (16.2%)
Unit 5, Phase 1: Commitment	Total Sample	**43 (35.5%)**	22 (18.2%)	35 (28.9%)	21 (17.4%)
	Never felt need to forgive self	**6 (42.9%)**	5 (35.7%)	3 (21.4%)	0 (0%)
	Want to forgive self	**7 (38.9%)**	3 (16.7%)	4 (22.2%)	4 (22.2%)
	In process of forgiving self	**17 (32.7%)**	10 (19.2%)	16 (30.8%)	9 (17.3%)
	Have fully forgiven self	**13 (35.1%)**	4 (10.8%)	12 (32.4%)	8 (21.6%)

Table 10, Continued.

Units in Theoretical Order	Subgroups	Put as Phase… 1	2	3	4
Unit 6, Phase 2: Empathy for Person Harmed	Total Sample	37 (30.6%)	17 (14%)	24 (19.8%)	**43 (35.5%)**
	Never felt need to forgive self	3 (21.4%)	1 (7.1%)	4 (28.6%)	**6 (42.9%)**
	Want to forgive self but have not begun	2 (11.1%)	3 (16.7%)	6 (33.3%)	**7 (38.9%)**
	In process of forgiving self	17 (32.7%)	6 (11.5%)	10 (19.2%)	**19 (36.5%)**
	Have fully forgiven self	**15 (40.5%)**	7 (18.9%)	4 (10.8%)	11 (29.7%)
Unit 7, Phase 2: Helping Person Harmed	Total Sample	45 (37.2%)	2 (1.7%)	0 (0%)	**74 (61.2%)**
	Never felt need to forgive self	2 (14.3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	**12 (85.7%)**
	Want to forgive self but have not begun	8 (44.4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	**10 (55.6%)**
	In process of forgiving self	25 (48.1%)	1 (1.9%)	0 (0%)	**26 (50%)**
	Have fully forgiven self	10 (27%)	1 (2.7%)	0 (0%)	**26 (70.3%)**
Unit 8, Phase 3: Empathy for Self	Total Sample	23 (19%)	30 (24.8%)	**37 (30.6%)**	31 (25.6%)
	Never felt need to forgive self	**4 (28.6%)**	**4 (28.6%)**	**4 (28.6%)**	2 (14.3%)
	Want to forgive self but have not begun	6 (33.3%)	2 (11.1%)	**7 (38.9%)**	3 (16.7%)

Table 10, Continued.

Units in Theoretical Order	Subgroups	Put as Phase… 1	2	3	4
	In process of forgiving self	11 (21.2%)	11 (21.2%)	**18 (34.6%)**	12 (23.1%)
	Have fully forgiven self	2 (5.4%)	13 (35.1%)	8 (21.6%)	**14 (37.8%)**
Unit 9, Phase 3: Motives	Total Sample	**55 (45.5%)**	35 (28.9%)	22 (18.2%)	9 (7.4%)
	Never felt need to forgive self	**5 (35.7%)**	**5 (35.7%)**	4 (28.6%)	0 (0%)
	Want to forgive self but have not begun	**9 (50%)**	4 (22.2%)	4 (22.2%)	1 (5.6%)
	In process of forgiving self	**23 (44.2%)**	15 (28.8%)	8 (15.4%)	6 (11.5%)
	Have fully forgiven self	**18 (48.6%)**	11 (29.7%)	6 (16.2%)	2 (5.4%)
Unit 10, Phase 3: Responsibility	Total Sample	21 (17.4%)	27 (22.2%)	36 (29.8%)	**37 (30.6%)**
	Never felt need to forgive self	3 (21.4%)	**5 (35.7%)**	1 (7.1%)	**5 (35.7%)**
	Want to forgive self but have not begun	3 (16.7%)	**6 (33.3%)**	**6 (33.3%)**	3 (16.7%)
	In process of forgiving self	7 (13.5%)	12 (23.1%)	16 (30.8%)	**17 (32.7%)**
	Have fully forgiven self	8 (21.6%)	4 (10.8%)	**13 (35.1%)**	12 (32.4%)

Table 10, Continued.

Units in Theoretical Order	Subgroups	Put as Phase… 1	2	3	4
Unit 11, Phase 4: Deservingness	Total Sample	**55 (45.5%)**	22 (18.2%)	28 (23.1%)	16 (13.2%)
	Never felt need to forgive self	**6 (42.9%)**	1 (7.1%)	4 (28.6%)	3 (21.4%)
	Want to forgive self but have not begun	**7 (38.9%)**	5 (27.8%)	4 (22.2%)	2 (11.1%)
	In process of forgiving self	**21 (40.4%)**	14 (26.9%)	11 (21.2%)	6 (11.5%)
	Have fully forgiven self	**21 (56.8%)**	2 (5.4%)	9 (24.3%)	5 (13.5%)
Unit 12, Phase 4: Positive Sense of Self	Total Sample	44 (36.4%)	3 (2.5%)	8 (6.6%)	**66 (54.5%)**
	Never felt need to forgive self	3 (21.4%)	1 (7.1%)	1 (7.1%)	**9 (64.3%)**
	Want to forgive self but have not begun	5 (27.8%)	0 (0%)	1 (5.6%)	**12 (66.7%)**
	In process of forgiving self	15 (28.8%)	2 (3.8%)	5 (9.6%)	**30 (57.7%)**
	Have fully forgiven self	**21 (56.8%)**	0 (0%)	1 (2.7%)	15 (40.5%)
.					
Unit 13, Phase 4: Journey to Self-Forgiveness	Total Sample	**87 (71.9%)**	2 (1.7%)	29 (24%)	3 (2.5%)
	Never felt need to forgive self	**10 (71.4%)**	0 (0%)	4 (28.6%)	0 (0%)
	Want to forgive self but have not begun	**15 (83.3%)**	0 (0%)	3 (16.7%)	0 (0%)

Table 10, Continued.

Units in Theoretical Order	Subgroups	Put as Phase… 1	2	3	4
	In process of forgiving self	**36 (69.2%)**	1 (1.9%)	15 (28.8%)	0 (0%)
	Have fully forgiven self	**26 (70.3%)**	1 (2.7%)	7 (18.9%)	3 (8.1%)

N = 121. Note: Numbers in bold depict the most common placement of the unit.

Appendix H: Recruitment Email – Community Participants

Department of Psychology
P. O. Box 1700, University of Victoria
Victoria, British Columbia
Canada, V8W 2Y2
Tel (250) 721-7525; Fax (250) 721-

Hello!

My name is Jessica Rourke and I am a PhD candidate in the Department of Psychology at the University of Victoria. I am writing to you in regards to my dissertation, "What are the Steps Involved in Self-forgiveness?"

Following much research on the topic, I have created a model of what I believe to be the necessary steps for self-forgiveness. I am writing to you in the hopes that, if you feel comfortable, you might help me to recruit participants by circulating this email, for example, via a department listserv.

My dissertation research will be comparing the beliefs (about the steps involved in self-forgiveness) of individuals in the general community with the beliefs of those in the helping profession, namely, counsellors, therapists, and clinical psychologists. Participation will be done on-line, at participants' own convenience. Participants will be asked to order the steps in my model, to add any steps they feel are missing, and to delete any steps they feel are unnecessary. This study will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. All data will remain anonymous and confidential, and participants will have the opportunity to enter their name into a draw for $50.00. Interested participants should not currently be experiencing psychological distress and must not be currently receiving counselling, therapy or psychiatric treatment.

If you are interested in participating, please visit the following website:
https://uvic.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_ahsRoCyYczDXnmZ

Upon arrival at this website, you will be able to view a letter outlining the steps involved as well as inconveniences and benefits associated with participating in this study. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at jrourke@uvic.ca (to ensure confidentiality, all correspondence will be deleted immediately following my reply). If you know of anyone who may be interested in participating in this study, and if you feel comfortable doing so, please feel free to forward this letter to him or her.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter!

Sincerely,
Jessica Rourke

Appendix I: Recruitment Poster – Community Participants

What are the Steps Involved in Self-Forgiveness?

About the Study: I want to know your perspective about the steps involved in self-forgiveness!

Are you someone over the age of 19, who:

- Is interested in sharing your opinion about the steps involved in forgiving oneself?

OR, are you a

- Counsellor, Registered Clinical Counsellor, or Psychologist?

If you answered yes to either of the above questions, you are eligible for this study! Please note that interested participants should not currently be experiencing psychological distress and should not be currently receiving counselling, therapy, or psychiatric treatment.

This study will be completed on-line, on your own time, and will require about 20-30 minutes of your time. Afterwards, you can enter your name into a draw for $50.

Creator: Jessica Rourke, PhD candidate (UVic)

This study is being conducted as a requirement of my PhD program and has been approved by the University of Victoria's Research Ethics Board, File #13-254

If you are interested, please visit
https://uvic.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_ahsRoCyYczDXnmZ

If you have any questions, please contact Jessica at jrourke@uvic.ca

https://uvic.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_ahsRoCyYczDXnmZ
https://uvic.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_ahsRoCyYczDXnmZ
https://uvic.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_ahsRoCyYczDXnmZ
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https://uvic.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_ahsRoCyYczDXnmZ

Appendix J: Consent Form – Community and Counsellor Participants

Department of Psychology
P. O. Box 1700, University of Victoria
Victoria, British Columbia
Canada, V8W 2Y2
Tel (250) 721-7525; Fax (250) 721-8929
E-mail psyc@uvic.ca web.uvic.ca/psyc

Letter of Information for Implied Consent

Investigator: Jessica Rourke, M.A., PhD Candidate
Department of Psychology, UVic
jrourke@uvic.ca, 250-472-4872

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Robert Gifford,
Department of Psychology, UVic
rgifford@uvic.ca, 250-721-7532

What are the Steps Involved in Self-Forgiveness?

Welcome!
You are invited to participate in this research study in which I am exploring the steps involved in self-forgiveness. I (Jessica Rourke) am a PhD Candidate in the department of Psychology at the University of Victoria. In order to obtain my PhD, I am required to conduct an independent research project. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact myself or my supervisor at our information above.

Purpose and Objectives
I have been studying forgiveness for 10 years, and in doing so, I have realized how little scientific research exists on self-forgiveness. Given this, I have created a model that outlines some of the steps that may be involved in the process of forgiving oneself. The purpose of this research study is to obtain your perspective – do you agree with the steps, or do you think that some of them are irrelevant? Or, maybe you think some important steps are missing!

Benefits and Importance of this Research
This type of research is important because it will provide valuable information for the research field – the field desperately needs some insight into self-forgiveness! The results of this study may also prove to be important for the counselling community – providing important information that counsellors and clinicians may be able to employ when aiding clients forgive themselves.

Participant Selection
You are being asked to participate in this study because you are interested in sharing your opinion on self-forgiveness, or, you are a counsellor/clinician who has had or may have clients wanting to forgive themselves. Interested participants should not currently be experiencing psychological distress and must not be currently receiving counselling, therapy, or psychiatric treatment.

What's Involved?
If you consent to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include filling out a web-based questionnaire asking you some general questions about self-forgiveness and as well, asking you to indicate the steps you believe to be involved in self-forgiveness. Participation in this study will likely require 30 minutes of your time and you will have the opportunity to enter your name in a draw for $50. Please be advised

that the information you provide for this study is gathered via an online program located in the United States. The U.S. government reserves the right to access any and all data gathered without your knowledge or consent, in compliance with the U.S. Patriot Act.

Inconvenience and Risk
This study asks you questions about self-forgiveness and it is possible that this could elicit some negative emotions. Please know that if this occurs, it is perfectly normal. If a question makes you feel upset in any way, you are free to skip it, or to withdraw from the study without any penalty or consequence. If you believe that completing this study will be an upsetting, overwhelming, and/or negative experience for you, please do not participate in this study.

If you do participate in this study and your participation elicits negative emotions and you find that you are having difficulty overcoming any of the negative emotions, please make sure to look after yourself and seek help. This could mean talking to a trusted friend or family member, making an appointment with a counsellor, or calling a local crisis line. Most crisis lines are open 24 hours/day, 7 days/week. You can reach the B.C. Distress Line Network at 1-888-562-1214 (toll-free). To obtain the phone number for a local crisis line elsewhere than B.C., please look at the inside cover of the phone book, or, search on-line (e.g., Google the name of your city + "crisis line"). If you would like to see a counsellor, please search the phone book under "counselling." In addition, you can find therapist information online through a Google search by typing in the name of your city + "counselling." Many counsellors offer their services on a sliding fee scale, based on your income.

Voluntary Participation and Compensation
Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can decline to participate, or, if you agree to participate, at any point in time, you can skip a question which makes you feel upset or uncomfortable, or, you can withdraw from the study without any consequence or explanation. There are two ways in which you can withdraw from the study. First, you can simply close the window in which the study is displayed. Choosing this option will not provide you with the opportunity to enter your name in the draw for $50. Your second option, which allows you to enter your name in the draw for $50, requires you to click forward to the end of the study where you will view a summary outlining the purpose of the study. At the end of this summary, you will be given the opportunity to navigate to a separate website in order to enter your information for the draw.

If you decide to withdraw from the study, I will not contact you to ask why you did not complete the study, and you will not be penalized in any way. In addition, any answers you have provided to questions in the survey will not be used – they will be deleted. Please note however, that due to the anonymity of the data you provide, if you have answered all of the questions up to the end of the survey and then decide that you do not want your data to be used, it will not be possible for me to locate your data to delete it. For participants who complete the entire survey, you will be given the option of having your name entered in a draw for $50 (at the end of the survey). If you decide to enter the

draw, you will be directed to a new webpage so that your name is not in any way associated with the information you provided in the survey. If you consent to participate in this study, this form of compensation must not be coercive. It is unethical to provide undue compensation or inducements to research participants. If you would not participate if the compensation was not offered, then you should decline to participate.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

All of the information you provide during the survey will be anonymous – your name will not be associated with it in any way. In addition, in order to protect your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the information you provide, all files will be stored on a password protected computer. It is important that you know that it is my goal to present the results of this study in my dissertation, at academic conferences, and to submit them for publication in scholarly journals. However, no names or identifying information will ever be used in the presentations or articles. In addition, I may re-analyze the data in the future, and, if, in the future, a researcher associated with an accredited university requests access to this data, such access will be given (once again, no names or identifying information will be passed on). If any media outlet requests information on the results of this study, that request may be granted. Please remember that all data will remain anonymous, even for re-analysis and any media articles. Data collected during this study will be kept for 5 years after publication, after which it will be deleted. If you decide to enter your name into the draw for $50, you will first be directed to a new website in order to do so. This is to ensure that your data cannot be linked in any way to the personal information that you provide for the draw (name and email or phone number). The draw will take place the day after the closing of this study and all participant information (names, emails and phone numbers) will be immediately deleted following the draw. Also, if at any point in time you email me to ask a question about the study, your email will be deleted immediately following my reply (i.e., I will not be keeping any personal information relating to you).

Contacts

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact myself or my project supervisor. Our contact information can be found at the beginning of this form. In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca). The file number for this study is: 13-54 .

By completing and submitting the questionnaire (by clicking on the "Continue" button below), **your free and informed consent is implied** and it indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher.

Thank you for taking the time to read over this form and to consider whether or not you would like to participate in my study.

Sincerely,
Jessica Rourke ***Please retain a copy of this letter for your reference***

Appendix K: Debriefing Form – Community and Counsellor Participants

Department of Psychology
P. O. Box 1700, University of Victoria
Victoria, British Columbia
Canada, V8W 2Y2
Tel (250) 721-7525; Fax (250) 721-8929
E-mail psyc@uvic.ca web.uvic.ca/psyc

What are the Steps Involved in Self-Forgiveness?
Debriefing Letter

Thank you so much for your time and cooperation. Your willingness to share your thoughts and feelings made this study possible, and I am truly thankful.

The study in which you just participated was testing the effectiveness of a newly developed model of self-forgiveness. My main interest was to explore whether my model was lacking any important steps, or, if it contained some unnecessary steps. I was also interested in exploring whether or not individuals with different life experiences have different ideas about the steps involved in self-forgiveness. For instance, do individuals who have forgiven themselves differ in their view of self-forgiveness as compared to individuals who have not been able to forgive themselves, or who are in the process of forgiving themselves? I was also interested in whether or not counsellors' and clinicians' perspectives on the steps involved in self-forgiveness would differ from the perspectives of participants from the general population.

As mentioned in the letter you read before beginning this study, the results of this study will be presented in my dissertation and may also be presented at academic conferences and published in academic journals. No matter the mode of presentation, results will only be presented in a general format and your data will never be identifiable in any way; it will always remain anonymous.

I am very mindful that participation in this study may have required you to recall an experience that elicited some negative emotions. Please know that if this occurred, it is perfectly normal. If this occurred and you find that you are having difficulty overcoming any of the negative emotions, please make sure to look after yourself and seek help. This

could mean talking to a trusted friend or family member, making an appointment with a counsellor, or calling a local crisis line. Most crisis lines are open 24 hours/day, 7 days/week. You can reach the B.C. Distress Line Network at 1-888-562-1214 (toll-free). To obtain the phone number for a local crisis line elsewhere than B.C., please look at the inside cover of the phone book, or, search on-line (e.g., Google the name of your city + "crisis line"). If you would like to see a counsellor, please search the phone book under "counselling." In addition, you can find therapist information online through a Google search by typing in the name of your city + "counselling." Many counsellors offer their services on a sliding fee scale, based on your income.

Once again, thank you so much for taking the time to participate in my study. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your participation, please feel free to contact me, Jessica Rourke (jrourke@uvic.ca) or my supervisor, Dr. Robert Gifford (rgifford@uvic.ca). The results of this study will be available by December, 2013. If you are interested in the results of this study, you can e-mail me and I will gladly send you that information.

Finally, as a thank you for your participation, I would like to offer you the opportunity to enter your name into a draw for $50.00. If you are not interested in this offer, simply close this browser window. If you would like to enter your name in the draw, please click on the "Continue" button below. In order to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of your data, you will be directed to a new website where you can enter your name and email or phone number (whichever you prefer) into the draw. You will be directed to a new website in order to ensure that your name, email, and phone number will not in any way be associated with the data you have just provided for the study. The draw for $50 will take place the day after the closing of this study. All names, emails, and phone numbers will be deleted from our records immediately following the draw.

Thank you very much,
Jessica Rourke

CONTINUE

Appendix L: Table 17, Frequencies of the Ordering of the Units (Community)

Table 17

Frequencies of the Ordering of the Units

		Put as Unit…												
Units	Sub-groups	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1: Acknowledge	T	15 7.9%	18 9.5%	17 9.0%	20 10.6%	9 4.8%	6 3.2%	14 7.4%	**21** **11.1%**	15 7.9%	19 10.1%	12 6.3%	**21** **11.1%**	2 1.1%
	A	0 0%	3 17.6%	3 17.6%	0 0%	1 5.9%	1 5.9%	0 0%	1 5.9%	0 0%	1 5.9%	3 17.6%	**4** **23.5%**	0 0%
	B	3 11.5%	1 3.8%	3 11.5%	**7** **26.9%**	1 3.8%	1 3.8%	3 11.5%	2 7.7%	2 7.7%	2 7.7%	1 3.8%	0 0%	0 0%
	C	8 11.9%	4 6.0%	6 9.0%	6 9.0%	2 3%	0 0%	7 10.4%	**10** **14.9%**	9 13.4%	3 4.5%	4 6.0%	8 11.9%	0 0%
	D	4 5.1%	10 12.7%	5 6.3%	7 8.9%	5 6.3%	4 5.1%	4 5.1%	8 10.1%	4 5.1%	**13** **16.5%**	4 5.1%	9 11.4	2 2.5%
2: Negative Emotions	T	**34** **18%**	13 6.9%	12 6.3%	7 3.7%	12 6.3%	22 11.6%	18 9.5%	1 0.5%	11 5.8%	12 6.3%	7 3.7%	18 9.5%	22 11.6%
	A	3 17.6%	0 0%	0 0%	1 5.9%	1 5.9%	3 17.6%	**4** **23.5%**	0 0%	2 11.8%	1 5.9%	0 0%	2 11.8%	0 0%
	B	**5** **19.2%**	3 11.5%	1 3.8%	1 3.8%	2 7.7%	3 11.5%	2 7.7%	0 0%	1 3.8%	1 3.8%	0 0%	3 11.5%	4 15.4%
	C	**16** **23.9%**	2 3.0%	6 9.0%	1 1.5%	2 3.0%	8 11.9%	8 11.9%	0 0%	2 3.0%	5 7.5%	3 4.5%	7 10.4%	7 10.4%
	D	10 12.7%	8 10.1%	5 6.3%	4 5.1%	7 8.9%	8 10.1%	4 5.1%	1 1.3%	6 7.6%	5 6.3%	4 5.1%	6 7.6%	**11** **13.9%**

Table 17, Continued.

Units	Sub-groups	Put as Unit… 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
3: Intrusive Rumination	T	10 5.3%	9 4.8%	7 3.7%	18 9.5%	6 3.2%	9 4.8%	14 7.4%	33 17.5%	**38** **20.1%**	8 4.2%	22 11.6%	6 3.2%	9 4.8%
	A	1 5.9%	0 0%	0 0%	1 5.9%	1 5.9%	1 5.9%	2 11.8%	2 11.8%	**5** **29.4%**	0 0%	3 17.6%	1 5.9%	0 0%
	B	0 0%	0 0%	2 7.7%	1 3.8%	1 3.8%	1 3.8%	**4** **15.4%**	3 11.5%	**4** **15.4%**	**4** **15.4%**	1 3.8%	2 7.7%	3 11.5%
	C	1 1.5%	2 3.0%	2 3.0%	8 11.9%	2 3.0%	3 4.5%	1 1.5%	14 20.9%	**18** **26.9%**	0 0%	10 14.9%	2 3.0%	4 6.0%
	D	8 10.1%	7 8.9%	3 3.8%	8 10.1%	2 2.5%	4 5.1%	7 8.9%	**14** **17.7%**	11 13.9%	4 5.1%	8 10.1%	1 1.3%	2 2.5%
4: Consequences of Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination	T	5 2.6%	12 6.3%	27 14.3%	13 6.9%	**35** **18.5%**	9 4.8%	19 10.1%	11 5.8%	9 4.8%	30 15.9%	10 5.3%	3 1.6%	6 3.2%
	A	0 0%	2 11.8%	**5** **29.4%**	3 17.6%	1 5.9%	1 5.9%	0 0%	1 5.9%	0 0%	3 17.6%	1 5.9%	0 0%	0 0%
	B	1 3.8%	2 0%	2 7.7%	1 3.8%	5 19.2%	1 3.8%	**7** **26.9%**	2 7.7%	0 0%	3 11.5%	2 7.7%	1 3.8%	1 3.8%
	C	0 0%	5 7.5%	10 14.9%	6 9%	**17** **25.4%**	2 3%	4 6%	2 3%	1 1.5%	15 22.4%	1 1.5%	2 3%	2 3%
	D	4 5.1%	5 6.3%	10 12.7%	3 3.8%	**12** **15.2%**	5 6.3%	8 10.1%	6 7.6%	8 10.1%	9 11.4%	6 7.6%	0 0%	3 3.8%
5: Commitment	T	13 6.9%	6 3.2%	21 11.1%	3 1.6%	26 13.8%	**34** **18%**	10 5.3%	15 7.9%	7 3.7%	12 6.3%	20 10.6%	9 4.8%	13 6.9%

Table 17, Continued.

Units	Sub-groups	Put as Unit… 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	A	2 11.8%	0 0%	1 5.9%	1 5.9%	**5** **29.4%**	2 11.8%	0 0%	2 11.8%	0 0%	2 11.8%	2 11.8%	0 0%	0 0%
	B	2 7.7%	3 11.5%	2 7.7%	0 0%	2 7.7%	**5** **19.2%**	0 0%	3 11.5%	3 11.5%	2 7.7%	2 7.7%	0 0%	2 7.7%
	C	6 9%	2 3%	7 10.4%	0 0%	**11** **16.4%**	9 13.4%	4 6%	5 7.5%	3 4.5%	3 4.5%	10 14.9%	3 4.5%	4 6%
	D	3 3.8%	1 1.3%	11 13.9%	2 2.5%	8 10.1%	**18** **22.8%**	6 7.6%	5 6.3%	1 1.3%	5 6.3%	6 7.6%	6 7.6%	7 8.9%
6: Empathy for Person Harmed	T	8 4.2%	**35** **18.5%**	6 3.2%	12 6.3%	16 8.5%	28 14.8%	21 11.1%	7 3.7%	13 6.9%	7 3.7%	9 4.8%	14 7.4%	13 6.9%
	A	0 0%	**6** **35.3%**	0 0%	1 5.9%	1 5.9%	2 11.8%	0 0%	0 0%	1 5.9%	2 11.8%	0 0%	2 11.8%	2 11.8%
	B	2 7.7%	**5** **19.2%**	0 0%	3 11.5%	2 7.7%	4 15.4%	1 3.8%	1 3.8%	3 11.5%	0 0%	2 7.7%	1 3.8%	2 7.7%
	C	1 1.5%	**14** **20.9%**	3 4.5%	4 6%	7 10.4%	10 14.9%	8 11.9%	2 3%	4 6%	2 3%	2 3%	5 7.5%	5 7.5%
	D	5 6.3%	10 12.7%	3 3.8%	4 5.1%	6 7.6%	**12** **15.2%**	**12** **15.2%**	4 5.1%	5 6.3%	3 3.8%	5 6.3%	6 7.6%	4 5.1%
7: Helping Person Harmed	T	**33** **17.5%**	15 7.9%	12 6.3%	8 4.2%	7 3.7%	24 12.7%	16 8.5%	3 1.6%	2 1.1%	11 5.8%	12 6.3%	26 13.8%	20 10.6%

Table 17, Continued.

Units	Sub-groups	Put as Unit… 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	A	2 11.8%	2 11.8%	1 5.9%	0 0%	2 11.8%	**4** **23.5%**	2 11.8%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 5.9%	2 11.8%	1 5.9%
	B	2 7.7%	2 7.7%	3 11.5%	0 0%	2 7.7%	3 11.5%	1 3.8%	2 7.7%	0 0%	1 3.8%	2 7.7%	**8** **30.8%**	0 0%
	C	**13** **19.4%**	9 13.4%	2 3%	4 6%	0 0%	11 16.4%	5 7.5%	0 0%	0 0%	5 7.5%	4 6%	7 10.4%	7 10.4%
	D	**16** **20.3%**	2 2.5%	6 7.6%	4 5.1%	3 3.8%	6 7.6%	8 10.1%	1 1.3%	2 2.5%	5 6.3%	5 6.3%	9 11.4%	12 15.2%
8: Empathy For Self	T	8 4.2%	5 2.6%	10 5.3%	12 6.3%	18 9.5%	16 8.5%	4 2.1%	24 12.7%	**37** **19.6%**	14 7.4%	21 11.1%	7 3.7%	13 6.9%
	A	**2** **11.8%**	1 5.9%	0 0%	0 0%	**2** **11.8%**	1 5.9%	1 5.9%	**2** **11.8%**	1 5.9%	**2** **11.8%**	**2** **11.8%**	1 5.9%	**2** **11.8%**
	B	1 3.8%	2 7.7%	1 3.8%	1 3.8%	2 7.7%	3 11.5%	1 3.8%	4 15.4%	3 11.5%	2 7.7%	**5** **19.2%**	0 0%	1 3.8%
	C	2 3%	1 1.5%	4 6%	5 7.5%	6 9%	6 9%	1 1.5%	6 9%	**15** **22.4%**	6 9%	5 7.5%	3 4.5%	7 10.4%
	D	3 3.8%	1 1.3%	5 6.3%	6 7.6%	8 10.1%	6 7.6%	1 1.3%	12 15.2%	**18** **22.8%**	4 5.1%	9 11.4%	3 3.8%	3 3.8%
9. Motives	T	23 12.2%	22 11.6%	16 8.5%	**25** **13.2%**	5 2.6%	8 4.2%	22 11.6%	12 6.3%	2 1.1%	12 6.3%	12 6.3%	18 9.5%	12 6.3%
	A	2 11.8%	1 5.9%	2 11.8%	**3** **17.6%**	0 0%	1 5.9%	**3** **17.6%**	1 5.9%	0 0%	2 11.8%	0 0%	1 5.9%	1 5.9%

Table 17, Continued.

Units	Sub-groups	Put as Unit… 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	B	3 11.5%	3 11.5%	3 11.5%	**4** **15.4%**	1 3.8%	1 3.8%	2 7.7%	2 7.7%	1 3.8%	2 7.7%	1 3.8%	2 7.7%	1 3.8%
	C	**9** **13.4%**	7 10.4%	3 4.5%	8 11.9%	3 4.5%	4 6%	6 9%	5 7.5%	1 1.5%	4 6%	5 7.5%	7 10.4%	5 7.5%
	D	9 11.4%	**11** **13.9%**	8 10.1%	10 12.7%	1 1.3%	2 2.5%	**11** **13.9%**	4 5.1%	0 0%	4 5.1%	6 7.6%	8 10.1%	5 6.3%
10: Responsibility	T	5 2.6%	8 4.2%	15 7.9%	7 3.7%	18 9.5%	14 7.4%	10 5.3%	22 11.6%	**23** **12.2%**	16 8.5%	21 11.1%	13 6.9%	17 9%
	A	1 5.9%	0 0%	1 5.9%	2 11.8%	2 11.8%	1 5.9%	0 0%	1 5.9%	2 11.8%	1 5.9%	**3** **17.6%**	2 11.8%	1 5.9%
	B	2 7.7%	1 3.8%	0 0%	0 0%	2 7.7%	0 0%	1 3.8%	2 7.7%	1 3.8%	**6** **23.1%**	3 11.5%	2 7.7%	**6** **23.1%**
	C	1 1.5%	4 6%	8 11.9%	2 3%	5 7.5%	7 10.4%	6 9%	**10** **14.9%**	7 10.4%	3 4.5%	7 10.4%	3 4.5%	4 6%
	D	1 1.3%	3 3.8%	6 7.6%	3 3.8%	9 11.4%	6 7.6%	3 3.8%	9 11.4%	**13** **16.5%**	6 7.6%	8 10.1%	6 7.6%	6 7.6%
11: Deservingness	T	9 4.8%	22 11.6%	15 7.9%	**27** **14.3%**	7 3.7%	9 4.8%	21 11.1%	19 10.1%	11 5.8%	5 2.6%	21 11.1%	21 11.1%	2 1.1%
	A	1 5.9%	0 0%	2 11.8%	0 0%	1 5.9%	0 0%	**4** **23.5%**	1 5.9%	**4** **23.5%**	0 0%	2 11.8%	2 11.8%	0 0%
	B	0 0%	2 7.7%	3 11.5%	**5** **19.2%**	2 7.7%	2 7.7%	2 7.7%	3 11.5%	1 3.8%	0 0%	2 7.7%	3 11.5%	1 3.8%

Table 17, Continued.

Units	Sub-groups	Put as Unit… 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	C	5 7.5%	**11** **16.4%**	2 3%	9 13.4%	1 1.5%	4 6%	8 11.9%	8 11.9%	3 4.5%	2 3%	6 9%	7 10.4%	1 1.5%
	D	3 3.8%	9 11.4%	8 10.1%	**13** **16.5%**	3 3.8%	3 3.8%	7 8.9%	7 8.9%	3 3.8%	3 3.8%	11 13.9%	9 11.4%	0 0%
12: Positive Sense of Self	T	19 10.1%	2 1.1%	17 9%	16 8.5%	21 11.1%	7 3.7%	11 5.8%	17 9%	14 7.4%	15 7.9%	11 5.8%	**30** **15.9%**	9 4.9%
	A	3 17.6%	0 0%	0 0%	2 11.8%	0 0%	0 0%	1 5.9%	**6** **35.5%**	1 5.9%	2 11.8%	0 0%	0 0%	2 11.8%
	B	**3** **11.5%**	1 3.8%	**3** **11.5%**	2 7.7%	2 7.7%	1 3.8%	1 3.8%	2 7.7%	4 15.4%	1 3.8%	2 7.7%	**3** **11.5%**	1 3.8%
	C	4 6%	0 0%	10 14.9%	7 10.4%	8 11.9%	2 3%	4 6%	4 6%	3 4.5%	5 7.5%	5 7.5%	**13** **19.4%**	2 3%
	D	9 11.4%	1 1.3%	4 5.1%	5 6.3%	11 13.9%	4 5.1%	5 6.3%	5 6.3%	6 7.6%	7 8.9%	4 5.1%	**14** **17.7%**	4 5.1%
13: Journey to Self-Forgiveness	T	7 3.7%	22 11.6%	14 7.4%	21 11.1%	9 4.8%	3 1.6%	9 4.8%	4 2.1%	7 3.7%	28 14.8%	11 5.8%	3 1.6%	**51** **27%**
	A	0 0%	3 11.8%	2 11.8%	3 17.6%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 5.9%	1 5.9%	0 0%	0 0%	**8** **47.1%**
	B	2 7.7%	3 11.5%	3 11.5%	1 3.8%	2 7.7%	1 3.8%	1 3.8%	0 0%	3 11.5%	2 7.7%	3 11.5%	1 3.8%	**4** **15.4%**

Table 17, Continued.

Units	Sub-groups	Put as Unit… 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	C	1 1.5%	6 9%	4 6%	7 10.4%	3 4.5%	1 1.5%	5 7.5%	1 1.5%	1 1.5%	14 20.9%	5 7.5%	0 0%	**19** **28.4%**
	D	4 5.1%	11 13.9%	5 6.3%	10 12.7%	4 5.1%	1 1.3%	3 3.8%	3 3.8%	2 2.5%	11 13.9%	3 3.8%	2 2.5%	**20** **25.3%**

N = 189

Note: Numbers in bold depict most the common placement of the unit; T = Total sample, A = Have never felt the need to forgive myself, B = Want to forgive myself but have not begun, C = Am in the process of forgiving myself, D = Have fully forgiven myself.

Appendix M: Table 19, Frequencies of the Ordering of the Units into the Phases (Community)

Table 19

Frequencies of the Ordering of Units into the Phases

Units in Theoretical Order	Subgroups	Put as Phase… 1	2	3	4
Unit 1, Phase 1: Acknowledgement	Total Sample	**79 (41.8%)**	20 (10.6%)	55 (29.1%)	35 (18.5%)
	Never felt need to forgive self	**7 (41.2%)**	1 (5.9%)	2 (11.8%)	**7 (41.2%)**
	Want to forgive self but have not begun	**15 (57.7%)**	4 (15.4%)	6 (23.1%)	1 (3.8%)
	In process of forgiving self	**26 (38.8%)**	7 (10.4%)	22 (32.8%)	12 (17.9%)
	Have fully forgiven self	**31 (39.2%)**	8 (10.1%)	25 (31.6%)	15 (19%)
Unit 2, Phase 1: Negative Emotions	Total Sample	**78 (41.3%)**	40 (21.2%)	24 (12.7%)	47 (24.9%)
	Never felt need to forgive self	5 (29.4%)	**7 (41.2%)**	3 (17.6%)	2 (11.8%)
	Want to forgive self but have not begun	**12 (46.2%)**	5 (19.2%)	2 (7.7%)	7 (26.9%)
	In process of forgiving self	**27 (40.3%)**	16 (23.9%)	7 (10.4%)	17 (25.4%)
	Have fully forgiven self	**34 (43%)**	12 (15.2%)	12 (15.2%)	21 (26.6%)
Unit 3, Phase 1: Intrusive Rumination	Total Sample	50 (26.5%)	23 (12.2%)	**79 (41.8%)**	37 (19.6%)
	Never felt need to forgive self	3 (17.6%)	3 (17.6%)	**7 (41.2%)**	4 (23.5%)

Table 19, Continued.

Units in Theoretical Order	Subgroups	Put as Phase… 1	2	3	4
	Want to forgive self but have not begun	4 (15.4%)	5 (19.2%)	**11 (42.3%)**	6 (23.1%)
	In process of forgiving self	15 (22.4%)	4 (6%)	**32 (47.8%)**	16 (23.9%)
	Have fully forgiven self	28 (35.4%)	11 (13.9%)	**29 (36.7%)**	11 (13.9%)
Unit 4, Phase 1: Consequences of Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination	Total Sample	**92 (48.7%)**	28 (14.8%)	50 (26.5%)	19 (10.1%)
	Never felt need to forgive self	**11 (64.7%)**	1 (5.9%)	4 (23.5%)	1 (5.9%)
	Want to forgive self but have not begun	**9 (34.6%)**	8 (30.8%)	5 (19.2%)	4 (15.4%)
	In process of forgiving self	**38 (56.7%)**	6 (9%)	18 (26.9%)	5 (7.5%)
	Have fully forgiven self	**34 (43%)**	13 (16.5%)	23 (29.1%)	9 (11.4%)
Unit 5, Phase 1: Commitment	Total Sample	**69 (36.5%)**	44 (23.3%)	34 (18%)	42 (22.2%)
	Never felt need to forgive self	**9 (52.9%)**	2 (11.8%)	4 (23.5%)	2 (11.8%)
	Want to forgive self	**9 (34.6%)**	5 (19.2%)	8 (30.7%)	4 (15.4%)
	In process of forgiving self	**26 (38.8%)**	13 (19.4%)	11 (16.4%)	17 (25.4%)
	Have fully forgiven self	**25 (31.6%)**	24 (30.4%)	11 (13.9%)	19 (24.1%)

Table 19, Continued.

Units in Theoretical Order	Subgroups	Put as Phase… 1	2	3	4
Unit 6, Phase 2: Empathy for Person Harmed	Total Sample	**77 (40.7%)**	49 (26%)	27 (14.3%)	36 (19%)
	Never felt need to forgive self	**8 (47.1%)**	2 (11.8%)	3 (17.6%)	4 (23.5%)
	Want to forgive self but have not begun	**12 (46.2%)**	5 (19.2%)	4 (15.4%)	5 (19.2%)
	In process of forgiving self	**29 (43.3%)**	18 (26.9%)	8 (11.9%)	12 (17.9%)
	Have fully forgiven self	**28 (35.4%)**	24 (30.4%)	12 (15.2%)	15 (19%)
Unit 7, Phase 2: Helping Person Harmed	Total Sample	**75 (39.7%)**	40 (21.2%)	16 (8.5%)	58 (30.7%)
	Never felt need to forgive self	**7 (41.2%)**	6 (35.3%)	0 (0%)	4 (23.5%)
	Want to forgive self but have not begun	9 (34.6%)	4 (15.4%)	3 (11.5%)	**10 (38.5%)**
	In process of forgiving self	**28 (41.8%)**	16 (23.9%)	5 (7.5%)	18 (26.9%)
	Have fully forgiven self	**31 (39.2%)**	14 (17.7%)	8 (10.1%)	26 (32.9%)
Unit 8, Phase 3: Empathy for Self	Total Sample	53 (28%)	20 (10.6%)	**75 (39.7%)**	41 (21.7%)
	Never felt need to forgive self	**5 (29.4%)**	2 (11.8%)	**5 (29.4%)**	**5 (29.4%)**
	Want to forgive self but have not begun	7 (26.9%)	4 (15.4%)	**9 (34.6%)**	6 (23.1%)

Table 19, Continued.

Units in Theoretical Order	Subgroups	Put as Phase… 1	2	3	4
	In process of forgiving self	18 (26.7%)	7 (10.4%)	**27 (40.3%)**	15 (22.4%)
	Have fully forgiven self	23 (29.1%)	7 (8.9%)	**34 (43%)**	15 (19%)
Unit 9, Phase 3: Motives	Total Sample	**91 (48.1%)**	30 (15.9%)	26 (13.8%)	42 (22.2%)
	Never felt need to forgive self	**8 (47.1%)**	4 (23.5%)	3 (17.6%)	2 (11.8%)
	Want to forgive self but have not begun	**14 (53.8%)**	3 (11.5%)	5 (19.2%)	4 (15.4%)
	In process of forgiving self	**30 (44.8%)**	10 (14.9%)	10 (14.9%)	17 (25.4%)
	Have fully forgiven self	**39 (49.4%)**	13 (16.5%)	8 (10.1%)	19 (24.1%)
Unit 10, Phase 3: Responsibility	Total Sample	53 (28%)	24 (12.7%)	**61 (32.3%)**	51 (27%)
	Never felt need to forgive self	**6 (35.3%)**	1 (5.9%)	4 (23.5%)	**6 (35.3%)**
	Want to forgive self but have not begun	5 (19.2%)	1 (3.8%)	9 (34.6%)	**11 (42.3%)**
	In process of forgiving self	**20 (29.9%)**	13 (19.4%)	**20 (29.9%)**	14 (20.9%)
	Have fully forgiven self	22 (27.8%)	9 (11.4%)	**28 (35.4%)**	20 (25.3%)

Table 19, Continued.

Units in Theoretical Order	Subgroups	Put as Phase… 1	2	3	4
Unit 11, Phase 4: Deservingness	Total Sample	**80 (42.3%)**	30 (15.9%)	35 (18.5%)	44 (23.3%)
	Never felt need to forgive self	4 (23.5%)	4 (23.5%)	**5 (29.4%)**	4 (23.5%)
	Want to forgive self but have not begun	**12 (46.2%)**	4 (15.4%)	4 (15.4%)	6 (23.1%)
	In process of forgiving self	**28 (41.8%)**	12 (17.9%)	13 (19.4%)	14 (20.9%)
	Have fully forgiven self	**36 (45.6%)**	10 (12.7%)	13 (16.5%)	20 (25.3%)
Unit 12, Phase 4: Positive Sense of Self	Total Sample	**75 (39.7%)**	18 (9.5%)	46 (24.3%)	50 (26.5%)
	Never felt need to forgive self	5 (29.4%)	1 (5.9%)	**9 (52.9%)**	2 (11.8%)
	Want to forgive self but have not begun	**11 (42.3%)**	2 (7.7%)	7 (26.9%)	6 (23.1%)
	In process of forgiving self	**29 (43.3%)**	6 (9%)	12 (17.9%)	20 (29.9%)
	Have fully forgiven self	**30 (38%)**	9 (11.4%)	18 (22.8%)	22 (27.8%)
.					
Unit 13, Phase 4: Journey to Self-Forgiveness	Total Sample	**73 (38.6%)**	12 (6.3%)	39 (20.6%)	65 (34.4%)
	Never felt need to forgive self	7 (41.2%)	0 (0%)	2 (11.8%)	**8 (47.1%)**
	Want to forgive self but have not begun	**11 (42.3%)**	2 (7.7%)	5 (19.2%)	8 (30.8%)

Table 19, Continued.

Units in Theoretical Order	Subgroups	Put as Phase… 1	2	3	4
	In process of forgiving self	21 (31.3%)	6 (9%)	16 (23.9%)	**24 (35.8%)**
	Have fully forgiven self	**34 (43%)**	4 (5%)	16 (20.3%)	25 (31.6%)

N = 189

Note: Numbers in bold depict the most common placement of the unit

Appendix N: Recruitment Email – Counsellor Participants

Department of Psychology
P. O. Box 1700, University of Victoria
Victoria, British Columbia
Canada, V8W 2Y2
Tel (250) 721-7525; Fax (250) 721-8929
E-mail psyc@uvic.ca web.uvic.ca/psyc

Hello!

My name is Jessica Rourke and I am a PhD candidate in the Psychology Department at the University of Victoria. I am writing to you in regards to my dissertation, "What Are the Steps Involved in Self-Forgiveness?"

Following much research on the topic, I have created a model of what I believe to be the necessary steps for self-forgiveness. I am writing to you because I would very much like your opinion! My dissertation research will be comparing the beliefs (about the steps involved in self-forgiveness) of individuals in the general community who have forgiven or not forgiven themselves for something they did for which they feel badly. I am also interested in comparing the beliefs of these individuals with the beliefs of those in the helping profession, namely, counsellors, therapists, and clinical psychologists.

This study will take approximately 20 minutes of your time. Participation will be done on-line, at your own convenience. You will be asked to order the steps in my model, to add any steps you feel are missing, and to delete any steps you feel are unnecessary. All of your data will remain anonymous and confidential, and you will have the opportunity to enter your name into a draw for $50.00.

If you are interested in participating, please visit the following website:
https://uvic.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_cDavxv1iV2HLv1P

Upon arrival at this website, you will be able to view a letter outlining the steps, inconveniences, and benefits associated with participating in this study. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at jrourke@uvic.ca (to ensure confidentiality, all correspondence will be deleted immediately following my reply). If you know of any other counsellor, therapist, or clinical psychologist who may be interested in participating in this study, and if you feel comfortable doing so, please feel free to forward this letter to him or her.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter!

Sincerely,
Jessica Rourke

Appendix O: Table 26, Frequencies of the Ordering of the Units (Counsellor)

Table 26

Frequencies of the Ordering of the Units

Proposed Order	Put as Unit… 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1: Acknowledgement	0 0%	5 6.3%	6 7.5%	10 12.5%	3 3.8%	4 5%	4 5%	**18** **22.5%**	7 8.8%	13 16.3%	2 2.5%	8 10%	0 0%
2: Negative Emotions	**16** **20%**	0 0%	3 3.8%	1 1.3%	5 6.3%	6 7.5%	6 7.5%	2 2.5%	6 7.5%	6 7.5%	4 5%	10 12.5%	15 18.8%
3: Intrusive Rumination	1 1.3%	10 12.5%	5 6.3%	4 5%	2 2.5%	7 8.8%	4 5%	12 15%	**15** **18.8%**	1 1.3%	9 11.3%	3 3.8%	7 8.8%
4: Consequences of Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination	3 3.8%	4 5%	**14** **17.5%**	5 6.3%	12 15%	9 11.3%	6 7.5%	10 12.5%	4 5%	4 5%	4 5%	2 2.5%	3 3.8%
5: Commitment	11 13.8%	5 6.3%	7 8.8%	3 3.8%	4 5%	**12** **15%**	2 2.5%	7 8.8%	6 7.5%	5 6.3%	**12** **15%**	2 2.5%	4 5%
6: Empathy for Person Harmed	6 7.5%	**12** **15%**	3 3.8%	2 2.5%	10 12.5%	7 8.8%	7 8.8%	4 5%	4 5%	5 6.3%	4 5%	6 7.5%	10 12.5%
7: Helping Person Harmed	15 18.8%	6 7.5%	9 11.3%	1 1.3%	3 3.8%	4 5%	3 3.8%	4 5%	1 1.3%	3 3.8%	8 10%	**17** **21.3%**	6 7.5%
8: Empathy for Self	2 2.5%	0 0%	5 6.3%	7 8.8%	8 10%	8 10%	0 0%	9 11.3%	**12** **15%**	8 10%	10 12.5%	7 8.8%	4 5%
9: Motives	11 13.8%	9 11.3%	3 3.8%	11 13.8%	0 0%	8 10%	**16** **20%**	2 2.5%	1 1.3%	1 1.3%	6 7.5%	5 6.3%	7 8.8%
10: Responsibility	2 2.5%	3 3.8%	2 2.5%	1 1.3%	**16** **20%**	4 5%	11 13.8%	1 1.3%	8 10%	11 13.8%	9 11.3%	4 5%	8 10%
11: Deservingness	3 3.8%	**19** **23.8%**	9 11.3%	10 12.5%	1 1.3%	6 7.5%	9 11.3%	4 5%	3 3.8%	2 2.5%	6 7.5%	6 7.5%	2 2.5%

Table 26, Continued.

	Put as Unit…												
Proposed Order	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
12: Positive Sense of Self	9 11.3%	0 0%	9 11.3%	7 8.8%	**11** **13.8%**	1 1.3%	9 11.3%	5 6.3%	7 8.8%	5 6.3%	4 5%	9 11.3%	4 5%
13: Journey to Self-Forgiveness	1 1.3%	7 8.8%	5 6.3%	**18** **22.5%**	5 6.3%	4 5%	3 3.8%	2 2.5%	6 7.5%	16 20%	2 2.5%	1 1.3%	10 12.5%

N = 80

Note: Numbers in bold depict the most common placement of the unit

Appendix P: Table 28, Frequencies of the Ordering of the Units into the Phases (Counsellor)

Table 28

Frequencies of the Ordering of Units into the Phases

Units in Theoretical Order	Put as Phase… 1	2	3	4
Unit 1, Phase 1: Acknowledgement	24 (30%)	8 (10%)	**38 (47.5%)**	10 (12.5%)
Unit 2, Phase 1: Negative Emotions	25 (31.3%)	12 (15%)	14 (17.5%)	**29 (36.3%)**
Unit 3, Phase 1: Intrusive Rumination	22 (27.5%)	11 (13.8%)	**28 (35%)**	19 (23.8%)
Unit 4, Phase 1: Consequences of Negative Emotions and Intrusive Rumination	**38 (47.5%)**	15 (18.8%)	18 (22.5%)	9 (11.3%)
Unit 5, Phase 1: Commitment	**30 (37.5%)**	14 (17.5%)	18 (22.5%)	18 (22.5%)
Unit 6, Phase 2: Empathy for Person Harmed	**33 (41.3%)**	14 (17.5%)	13 (16.3%)	20 (25%)
Unit 7, Phase 2: Helping Person Harmed	**34 (42.5%)**	7 (8.8%)	8 (10%)	31 (38.8%)
Unit 8, Phase 3: Empathy for Self	22 (27.5%)	8 (10%)	**29 (36.3%)**	21 (26.3%)
Unit 9, Phase 3: Motives	**34 (42.5%)**	24 (30%)	4 (5%)	18 (22.5%)
Unit 10, Phase 3: Responsibility	**24 (30%)**	15 (18.8%)	20 (25%)	21 (26.3%)

Table 28, Continued.

Units in Theoretical Order	Put as Phase… 1	2	3	4
Unit 11, Phase 4: Deservingness	**42 (52.5%)**	15 (18.8%)	9 (11.3%)	14 (17.5%)
Unit 12, Phase 4: Positive Sense of Self	**36 (45%)**	10 (12.5%)	17 (21.3%)	17 (21.3%)
Unit 13, Phase 4: Journey to Self-Forgiveness	**36 (45%)**	7 (8.8%)	24 (30%)	13 (16.3%)

N = 80
Note: Numbers in bold depict the most common placement of the unit