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THE EXPERIENCE OF UNFORGIVENESS OF EXTRAMARITAL INFIDELITY WITHIN A CHRISTIAN CONTEXT

by

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MINOR DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

in the

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

at the

UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

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May 2013
Acknowledgements

I would like to sincerely thank the following people:

- The participants who courageously shared their stories for this research.
- The National Research Foundation (NRF). The opinions expressed and conclusions reached are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the NRF.
- Elsabê Jordaân, for her continued support and guidance throughout this process.
- My friends for their support while on this journey; for all their prayers and encouraging words.
- My family for their love, encouragement and constant prayers. A special mention to my mom for always being willing to help.
- My husband, for his unconditional devotion. His love for me has allowed me to accomplish my dream of becoming a clinical psychologist. We have walked this road together.

Most importantly I would like to thank God for His unfailing affection towards me. I am grateful for our relationship, and for all that He has allowed me to accomplish through this research. Through this work I believe I have a fuller appreciation of what Jesus did for me on the cross of Cavalry. I also have come to realise a deeper understanding of His love towards me. I pray this work brings Him glory, and that He uses it to bind up the broken-hearted and set the captives free.
Abstract

This qualitative phenomenological study explores the experience of unforgiveness of extramarital infidelity within a Christian context. Both unforgiveness and infidelity are topics in the field of psychological research that remain relatively unexplored. Descriptions of the above-mentioned experience were sourced from three participants. In order to extrapolate the essence of their subjective experiences, semi-structured interviews comprised of open-ended questions were compiled. These interviews were then transcribed and analysed from an interpretive phenomenological analysis. The analysis process resulted in the emergence of themes representing the phenomenon in question. Themes found in this study included those of a difficult emotional experience, loss and grieving, the process of moving from unforgiveness towards forgiveness, and finally, personal growth and spiritual progression. The repercussions experienced by the pressure to forgive also formed an integral part of the study. This research significantly contributes to the field of research in the manner in which it is focused on the relatively unexplored topic of unforgiveness and infidelity. Attention to the topic of forgiveness has the potential to considerably influence how social scientists and psychologist view unforgiveness within psychotherapy as well as within the field of research.

Key words: Unforgiveness, extramarital infidelity, affairs, Christian context.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

1 INTRODUCTION

Until very recently, the concept of forgiveness was scarcely discussed within psychological literature (McCullough & Witvliet, 2002). Social scientists previously perceived forgiveness as a doctrinal construct which was left for religious institutions to deliberate upon (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; McCullough & Witvliet, 2002). Forgiveness was recognised as a religious duty, with little or no psychological association (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). However, during the last three decades of the 20th century, some social scientists have focused their research specifically onto the field of forgiveness (McCullough & Witvliet, 2002).

Forgiveness is described as a process whereby the offended individuals’ responses become more positive and less negative following a perceived offence (Gordon, Baucom and Snyder, 2005; McCullough, Pargament & Thoresen, 2000). Psychological studies indicate that the consequences of forgiveness are advantageous, as they result in the reduction of depression and anxiety, and the development of hope and self esteem in the offendee (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). Forgiveness is often associated with the letting go of pain and/or with moving on with one’s life (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; Ransley, 2004).

Unforgiveness is described as the offendee’s experience of the offence and his/her negative responses (feelings, cognitions and behaviours) towards the offender (McCullough et al., 2000). The experience of unforgiveness is defined as a complex combination of negative emotions that may be aligned with feelings such as shame, resentment, bitterness, hostility, hatred, anger and fear, which occur after an individual perceives an offence (Lansky, 2009;
Worthington & Wade, 1999; Worthington, Mazzeo & Kliewer, 2002). An individual living with unforgiveness may feel trapped in a past offence, and may experience an inability to let go of the offence and carry on with his/her life (Seligman, 2005; Worthington & Wade, 1999).

Psychological research indicates that the ramifications of unforgiveness are negative and may influence every area of an offendee’s life (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; McCullough & Witvliet, 2005; Witvliet, Ludwig & van der Laan, 2001). Studies conducted among college students show that unforgiveness scores were specifically related to depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem (Witvliet, 2001).

During the investigation on the topic of forgiveness, researchers in the discipline of psychology claimed that the experience of unforgiveness was not being given sufficient attention within the context of clinical practice and research (Enright and Fitzgibbons, 2000). This lack of attention may be hindering clinician’s views of their clients and their psychopathologies encountered in psychotherapy (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000).

Theological researchers have argued that Christianity is one of the most reliable resources to consider when studying forgiveness and unforgiveness, as it includes teachings on the nature of forgiveness (Holloway 2002; Ransley, 2004). According to the Christian perspective, great emphasis is placed on the need for humans to receive forgiveness from God for their own shortcomings, as well as the need for humans to forgive one another (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; Tsang McCullough & Hoyt, 2005; Worthington, 2005). The Christian perspective regards the refusal to forgive as sin (Ransley, 2004; Rye, 2005).

In this study, infidelity within Christian marriages is explored as a potential source of unforgiveness. Infidelity is defined as the action or state of being unfaithful to a spouse or partner, where the mutually agreed-upon rules of a committed relationship are violated (Barta & Kiene, 2005; Leeker & Carlozzi, 2012; Soanes & Stevenson, 2008). Statistics indicate that approximately 50% of Christian marriages end in divorce (Grissom, 2004).
Specific statistics that outline the number of Christian marriages that end in divorce due to infidelity are not available from academic sources. However, psychological researchers describe infidelity as one of the most common problems married couples deal with (Kluwer and Karremans; 2009; Wallerstein, Lewis & Blakeslee, 2001).

Witvliet (2001) suggested that the Christian mandate to forgive may complicate the forgiveness process. Witvliet explains that Christian individuals who find themselves experiencing unforgiveness may also be subjected to the adverse effects of guilt (Witvliet, 2001). Therefore, Christian individuals who are psychologically impacted by extramarital affairs may not only struggle to forgive their partners, but may further wrestle with the guilt of not fulfilling church doctrine (Witvliet et al., 2001).

The topic of this research is: The experience of unforgiveness of extramarital infidelity within a Christian context. There appears to be a deficit in literature which focuses on the experience of unforgiveness of infidelity within a Christian context. The aim of this study is to utilize a qualitative methodology, coupled with a phenomenological research design, in order for the this study to elicit a rich subjective description of the experience being explored. The participants are three individuals who reported experiencing marital difficulties due to their spouses’ previous sexual indiscretions, and they reported experiencing unforgiveness. The collection of data occurred through the use of semi-structured interviews. In order to capture an in-depth subjective description of the experience of unforgiveness regarding infidelity, interpretive phenomenological analysis was utilized.

The insight gained from this in-depth description will be of value to clinicians working with clients experiencing unforgiveness of extra-marital infidelity. An understanding of this lived experience will assist in the formulating of possible psychological therapeutic programmes that address the psychological needs of the clients. Lastly, this study will recommend formulations for further empirical investigations within the fields of unforgiveness and infidelity.
2 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

The proposed structure of this study is the following: chapter one serves as the introduction to the current study. Chapter two entails an exposition of current literature on the subject at hand. This is followed by chapter three, which outlines the research methodology and design of this study. Chapters four, five and six contain the intra-individual analysis of the participants. The inter-individual analysis is presented in Chapter seven, and the discussion of the findings and the conclusion is comprised within the eighth chapter.

2.1 Chapter 2: Literature review

The aim of chapter two, namely the literature review chapter, is twofold: firstly to bring attention to the research which discusses forgiveness as well as unforgiveness, and secondly to expose the relative lack of attention which the topic of unforgiveness has been given in the field of psychological research. This entails a brief exposition on the topics of forgiveness and unforgiveness, and a discussion of the history of the psychology of forgiveness. Literature discussing the construct of unforgiveness follows. A discussion of the various psychological theories and the religious and philosophical assumptions regarding forgiveness and unforgiveness then ensues. This includes Butler’s philosophical sermon on hasty forgiveness and the right to unforgiveness. Holloway's views regarding the double-bind predicament are further included in this discussion.

The concepts of marriage and infidelity are then expounded upon. Various models which conceptualise the psychological processes following an offence such as infidelity are presented. Lastly, literature that discusses the Christian context and the relationship that unforgiveness of infidelity shares with a Christian context is considered.
2.2 Chapter 3: Methodology

The methodological approach employed in this study is explored in the third chapter. The methodological approach utilized entails qualitative methodology, the phenomenological research method and interpretive phenomenological analysis.

2.3 Chapters 4-6: Intra-individual analysis

Chapters four to six contain the intra-individual analysis of each participant. Chapter four discusses the intra-individual analysis of participant one (P1), chapter five presents the intra-individual analysis of participant two (P2), and chapter six presents the intra-individual analysis of participant three (P3). Each chapter discusses a general overview of each participant. The participants’ marital statuses following the infidelity was deliberately excluded from the participants’ brief history subsection. This decision was taken in order to assist readers in maintaining their attention on the experience of unforgiveness of infidelity, and not the experience of unforgiveness of divorce, as they are two separate experiences. The main aim of these chapters is to present the findings of the analysis process in clusters, themes and sub-themes.

2.4 Chapter 7: Inter-individual analysis

Chapter seven identifies and discusses the common themes from chapters four to six in an inter-individual analysis.

2.5 Chapter 8: Discussion and conclusion

The findings of the data from chapter seven are critically compared with existing literature in chapter eight. This chapter includes an overview of the researcher’s reflections while working through the minor dissertation. The limitations, strengths and future research possibilities are also considered.

The literature review, relevant to this study is presented in the following chapter.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

1 INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the topic of forgiveness has received increased attention within the field of psychology (Anderson, 2007; Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; McCullough & Witvliet, 2005; Seligman, 2005; Strelan & Covic, 2006). Although most practising clinicians would agree that the experience of unforgiveness is a significantly common issue that arises in psychotherapy (Gordon et al., 2005), the focus of psychological research has largely remained on the topic of forgiveness itself. As a result, unforgiveness has remained relatively unexplored (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). This research therefore sets out to explore the experience of unforgiveness following the offence of extramarital infidelity within a Christian context.

The aim of this chapter is to present a general overview of the existing psychological literature related to the concepts of forgiveness and unforgiveness, marriage and infidelity, and the Christian context itself.

This overview begins by presenting the psychological history of forgiveness. It highlights the relative lack of attention the topic of unforgiveness has received, despite the significant focus on forgiveness as a topic. Literature centred on the topic of unforgiveness is then discussed. The exploration of unforgiveness includes a brief definition of the construct. Unforgiveness is then considered from three different psychological perspectives, namely an integrative neuropsychological perspective, developmental perspective and lastly from an existential perspective.
According to theological literature, Christianity is founded upon the notion of forgiveness (Holloway, 2002), therefore forgiveness and unforgiveness are also explored from a Christian perspective. The chapter thereafter presents existing knowledge on the topics of marriage and infidelity. Literature considering the implications of unforgiveness and infidelity within a Christian context is also discussed.

2 THE PSYCHOLOGY OF FORGIVENESS

2.1 A brief history of the psychology of forgiveness

During the earliest years of psychology (the scientific study of human cognition and emotions as well as behavioural functioning in a given context (Barlow & Durand, 2005)), the topic of forgiveness did not receive sufficient attention (McCullough, Pargament & Thoresen, 2000). McCullough et al. (2000) describe several possible reasons for this relative neglect. One such reason is the association between forgiveness and theological beliefs. This association may have discouraged psychological researchers from investigating the topic (McCullough et al., 2000). Furthermore, these authors note that psychological research during the 1930's favoured the examination of observable behaviour (2000). Gathering of “reliable” data regarding forgiveness may have proved to be difficult (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; McCullough et al., 2000).

Despite the relative lack of psychological research on the topic during the early to mid twentieth century, research on forgiveness has shown significant development over the past 30 years in the field of psychology (Anderson, 2007; Cosgrove & Konstam, 2008; Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; McCullough & Witvliet, 2005; Seligman, 2005; Strelan & Covic, 2006). This increased interest was in part fuelled by research findings which suggested that forgiveness has the potential for improving psychological well being (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; Ransley, 2004). These findings demonstrated the potential relevance of forgiveness in clinical work across a variety of populations and contexts (McCullough et al., 2000).
2.2 Definitions of forgiveness

Even though scientific research on the concept of forgiveness appears to be on the rise, consensus regarding the definition of forgiveness does not exist (Worthington, 2005). Various researchers have presented their own definitions of forgiveness. Enright and Fitzgibbons (2000, p. 24) define forgiveness in the following manner: “People upon rationally determining that they have been unfairly treated, forgive when they wilfully abandon resentment and related responses...and endeavour to respond to the wrongdoer based on the moral principle of beneficence...”.

Gordon et al. define forgiveness as “a process whereby individuals pursue increased understanding of themselves, each other, and their relationship in order to free themselves from being dominated by negative thoughts, feelings and behaviours after experiencing a major...betrayal” (2005, p. 407).

McCullough and Witvliet (2005) describe forgiveness as a positive change in a person’s reaction towards an offending relationship partner. For Ransley (2004), forgiveness is not simply overcoming resentment, bitterness and even hatred towards an offender, but rather forsaking it on moral grounds. Still other researchers offer additional definitions and descriptions of forgiveness (Govier, 2002; Holloway, 2002; Spy, 2004).

McCullough, Pargament and Thoresen (2000) identified a central theme across the varying definitions of forgiveness. According to these authors, this core feature is the following: “The responses (or, in other words, what they think of, feel about, want to do, or actually do) towards people who have offended or injured them became more positive and less negative” (McCullough et al., 2000, p. 9).

This shift in responses appears to involve the decrease of consequent anger, depression and anxiety, while increasing hope and self-esteem in the offended (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). From a psychological perspective, the consequences of forgiveness are
advantageous, as they appear to result in the “letting go” of the emotional pain involved and/or in moving on with one’s life (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; Ransley, 2004).

While considering the definitions of forgiveness it is important to note, that the definition of forgiveness offered by McCullough et al (2000) will be applied to this study. Psychological researchers have stressed that forgiveness is not forgetting, ignoring, denying, minimizing, exonerating or condoning (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; McCullough & Witvliet, 2005). In addition, some authors emphasise that forgiveness is a separate process from reconciling and could never take the place of justice (McCullough & Witvliet, 2005).

It appears, however, that the concept of unforgiveness has remained relatively unexplored in the psychological study of forgiveness. Regarding this, Enright & Fitzgibbons (2000) describe a concern, namely that the psychological experience of the state of unforgiveness may be overlooked within psychological research focusing on the forgiveness process itself (2000). This deficit may restrict clinicians in the process of psychotherapy (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000).

3 UNFORGIVENESS

This section sets out to explore existing psychological literature on the topic of unforgiveness. Unforgiveness is defined and discussed from three different psychological perspectives. A discussion of existential and Christian perspectives of unforgiveness follows the discussion of the psychological perspectives.

3.1 The state of unforgiveness

Unforgiveness is described as the offendees’ experience of the offence and his/her negative responses (feelings, cognitions and behaviours) towards the offender (McCullough et al., 2000). Unforgiveness has been defined as a multifaceted combination of negative emotions that may be associated with feelings such as shame, resentment, bitterness, hostility, hatred, anger and fear, which occur after an individual perceives an offence (Lansky, 2009;
Worthington & Wade, 1999; Worthington, Mazzeo & Kliewer, 2002). Ransley (2004) points out that it may be useful to think about these responses in terms of a continuum: while some individuals’ experiences of unforgiveness may lean towards only one side of the continuum, such as shame or rage, others may oscillate between the numerous responses (Ransley, 2004).

A common response associated with unforgiveness, as described by Enright and Fitzgibbons (2000), is anger. These authors emphasize that the anger is based upon the experience of hurt and/or a real injustice, and not some irrationally perceived incident (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). In this view, the feelings of anger are rooted in feelings of sadness. During the stages immediately following an offence, the anger is characterized as intense and uncontrollable; it is extreme in either its passivity or its overt hostility. According to these authors, even though the anger may result in aggressive behavior, it will, however, subside over time.

Worthington et al. (2002) notes that unforgiveness occurs as a consequence of maladaptive coping, as the individual is unable to integrate the perceived offence into his/her definition of self. Other authors regard unforgiveness as a negative mindset (Pattakos, 2004; Seligman, 2005; Witvliet, Ludwig, & van der Laan, 2001), which influences how offenders perceive themselves and others as well as how they interpret their reality. According to Pattakos (2004), the experience of unforgiveness is intense, overwhelming and threatening to a person’s sense of self.

Although a variety of definitions of unforgiveness are listed, these listed definitions do not in any way contradict one another but instead create a clearer picture of the phenomenon in question. It is this all encompassing description of unforgiveness that applies to this study.

Because unforgiveness may be a difficult emotional experience, some individuals may attempt to lessen or remove their unforgiveness through distractions, psychological defences
(denial and/or projection), or through addictive behaviour (Worthington et al., 2002). Many individuals may continue to minimize or eliminate their unforgiveness because they fear that they will not be able to contain their feelings of hopelessness, helplessness and powerlessness (Worthington & Wade, 1999). The psychological ramifications of this are harmful (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; McCullough & Witvliet, 2005; Witvliet et al., 2001).

The quantitative research described in the following section supports the notion that the chronic state of unforgiveness is a psychologically harmful experience.

### 3.1.1 Psychological research on the effects of unforgiveness

A quantitative study undertaken by Witvliet among college students found that unforgiveness scores were related with indicators of psychopathology on the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (2001). Elevated scores were found to be specifically related to depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem (Witvliet, 2001).

An experimental design conducted by Witvliet et al., (2001) examined the immediate emotional and physiological effects that occurred when 71 patients nursed their unforgiveness through the rehearsing of negative memories, compared to when they practiced an emphatic attitude and imagined granting forgiveness towards their offenders (2001) Results indicated that unforgiving thoughts provoked aversive emotions and significantly higher corrugator electromyography (EMG), skin conductance, heart rate and blood pressure changes from baseline (Witvliet et al., 2001). Furthermore, EMG, skin conductance, and heart rate effects continued to persist, even into the recovery period where unforgiving memories were not rehearsed (Witvliet et al., 2001). A critique of this study is that the preferred methodological approach implies a cause and effect relationship, and this cannot be established.

The harmful effects of unforgiveness on patients’ physiological health have been confirmed in studies conducted on patients diagnosed with cardiovascular diseases (Waltman, Russel,
Coyle, Enright, Holter, & Swoboda, 2009; Witvliet, 2001). These studies have indicated that the unforgiving responses rehearsed by offenders were both psychologically and physiologically harmful to them (Witvliet, 2001; Witvliet et al., 2001). The scarcity of qualitative research that exists in this particular field is identified as a limitation.

This general description of the state of unforgiveness and the psychological research that has been conducted in this regard will now be followed by the psychological perspectives and theories of unforgiveness.

3.2 Psychological perspectives and theories regarding unforgiveness

In order to adequately understand the concept of unforgiveness, knowledge of its underlying psychological mechanisms is required (Newberg, d’Aquili, Newberg, & deMarici, 2000). Unforgiveness is described from the following theoretical perspectives: a neuropsychological model, a developmental psychological viewpoint, and lastly from an existential perspective.

3.2.1 An integrated neuropsychological model

According to Witvliet et al., in order for an individual to experience unforgiveness he/she requires an injury to the self (2001). The first prerequisite is the occurrence of an offence towards an individual who has a sense of self (Witvliet et al., 2001), and also for this offence to disrupt the individual’s self-world congruence (Newberg et al., 2000). Self-world congruence is described as a compatibility between the view the person has of him/herself, and the views the person believes others have of him/her (Newberg et al., 2000). These authors explain that the posterior superior parietal lobe assists in the self differentiating from and comparing with others. This region of the brain needs to be free from neurological damage, for a disruption of the self-world congruence to occur (Newberg et al., 2000).

According to the above-mentioned authors (2000), the perceived offence enters the brain via the sensorimotor system. This input is compared with existing memories regarding information of the self and its interaction with the world (this process is mediated by the
parietal, frontal, and temporal lobes, with input from the sensory system and hippocampus for memory) (Newberg et al., 2000). When incongruency occurs between the information advocated by the offence and the individual’s memories, a stress response in the injured self may result in the activation of the sympathetic nervous system via the limbic system and the hypothalamus (Newberg et al., 2000). Consequences of this, according to these authors (2000), are feelings of unpleasantness and being upset, which are reinforced by the physiological responses such as alternations in heart rate, respiratory rate and blood pressure. Furthermore, the realization of the aforementioned self-world incongruence is additionally stressful, which may cause the release of norepinephrine, which in turn may result in the variation of neuronal plasticity (Newberg et al., 2000). In addition, it may involve adrenal gland hypertrophy (swelling), thymus and lymph gland atrophy (shrinkage) (Rubin, 2005). When the stress responses associated with feelings of unforgiveness are continuous and occur without intervention, more permanent effects may ensue, such as the deterioration of the immune system, gastric inflammation and cardiovascular impairments (Newberg et al., 2000; Rubin, 2005).

Unforgiveness will occur when the offendeer fails to recognise the humanity in their offender, by not viewing the offender as someone capable of making mistakes (Newberg et al., 2000). According to these authors (2000), when an offendeer remains angry and holds onto the offence, he/she is returning the hurt he/she experienced, through the response of revenge. Unforgiveness may prevent the offendeer from perceiving his/her offender more authentically as well as from viewing himself/herself in a more truthful manner.

3.2.2 Developmental views of unforgiveness

The following section presents existing psychological views of human development in relation to unforgiveness.
3.2.2.1 Piaget's view of unforgiveness

The first mention of forgiveness in developmental literature can be found in Piaget's *Le Judgement moral chez l'enfant* (Mullet & Girard, 2000). According to Mullet and Girard, in this 335 page volume, only three-fourths of a page discussed the concept of forgiveness (2000). For Piaget the sociocentric concept of reciprocal forgiveness (do unto others as you would have them do unto you) is a complex cognitive process that can only occur in terms of the concrete operational stage of cognitive development (in Mullet & Girard, 2000). This cognitive development results in the ability to consider another person’s point of view (Kerig & Wenar, 2006). In Piaget's view, reciprocal forgiveness cannot be understood by an individual before middle to late childhood is reached (in Kerig & Wenar, 2006).

Unforgiveness, on the other hand, appears to be a cognitive process which can be understood in terms of Piaget's preoperational stage of cognitive development. During this stage of development, children are egocentric and therefore are unable to consider the viewpoints of others (Kerig & Wenar, 2006). Unforgiveness does not entail a consideration of the viewpoints or motivations of others (Newberg et al., 2000). Therefore, according to Piaget, forgiveness is a more complex cognitive operation than unforgiveness.

3.2.2.2 An object relations perspective of unforgiveness

Object relations theory describes the process of development as influenced by relationships in the environment, particularly the bond between the infant and his/her mother (Sadock & Sadock, 2007, p. 226). In this view, at the age of approximately 4 months, infants pass through the developmental stage referred to as the paranoid-schizoid position (Klein, 1926 in Gartner, 1988). Gartner (1988) explains that during this stage two conflicting experiences occur with regards to the mother’s breast. The mother’s breast is experienced as gratifying by providing food and comfort at times, while at other times it is experienced as unavailable (Gartner, 1988). This results in aggressive feelings (Gartner, 1988). Klein (1926) describes
the defence of splitting: the infant experiences the gratifying and unavailable breast as two separate objects, namely the good and bad object. In an attempt to find a way to reduce anxiety associated with the ego’s response to aggression, the infant splits reality and maintains the false view that it is not the infant that is not good, but rather the bad object that frustrates him (Klein, 1926 in Gartner, 1988). Furthermore, through the defence mechanism of projection, the infant reduces these aggressive feelings by attributing them to the same bad object, therefore allowing the self as well as the good breast to remain good object representations (Klein, 1926; in Gartner, 1988). For optimal development to occur, Gartner (1988) notes that the infant will need to gradually develop through that stage, to come to a more integrated and realistic view of himself/herself as well as of others. However, if feelings of deprivation and aggression are too intense, the infant may never feel secure enough to form an integrated view of himself/herself and of others (Klein, 1926 in Gartner, 1988).

Gartner (1988) explains mature forgiveness by applying this developmental theory. In this approach, mature forgiveness is an integrated and realistic view which is comprised of both the good and bad aspects of the self and others (Gartner, 1988). “Forgiveness allows us to absorb the full impact of the evil that men do, while not losing sight of their humanity” (Gartner, 1988, p. 315). For Gartner, unforgiveness is the failure to integrate, and results in a manifestation of splitting and projecting (1988). It is explained as follows:

Someone has behaved destructively towards me (bad object representation), stimulating feelings of aggression (connecting negative affect) in me (bad self-representation), thus the view of the other is an ‘all bad’ one. The bad self-representation is sure to be projected “I feel hate, but it is that person who is making me feel hateful feelings. It is his/her evil influence. The badness therefore comes from him/her (Gartner, 1988, p. 316).
According to Gartner, if a situation results in a painful experience, the person may regress back to the primitive defences of splitting and projection as identified in the paranoid-schizoid stage of development (1988).

Gartner (1988) also discusses immature forgiveness. For Gartner (1988), this type of forgiveness maintains the primitive defences of splitting and projection. The offendeer who forgives is represented as the good object who is idealised as possessing a desirable quality, while the offender is all bad, and is forgiven from his/her evilness. The offendeer’s act of forgiveness emphasises his/her moral supremacy and maintains the badness of the offender.

Klein’s psychodynamic view describes unforgiveness in light of early primitive defences, while the work of Anderson explains the forgiveness in relation to the development of attachment styles. This perspective will be discussed in the following section.

### 3.2.2.3 Attachment styles and unforgiveness

Anderson (2007) describes forgiveness as an active process which is primarily influenced by the development of one’s ability to forgive early caregivers. According to the author, the development of one’s ability to forgive, acts as an important indicator of psychological well-being (2007).

According to Anderson (2007), the inability to forgive early caregivers may result in an unforgiving disposition towards others (Anderson, 2007). Unforgiveness is described as a failure to alter one’s affect, “resulting from a full appreciation of psychic wounds; frustrations one had to bear which leads to the capacity for self-love and then the capacity to love others” (Anderson, 2007, p. 65). In this view, the capacity to forgive is fostered within the attachment that forms with the primary caregiver.

A secure attachment will develop when the relationship between the caregiver and child is stable, and the caregiver remains accessible and responsive to the child’s emotional and
physical needs (Ainsworth, Behar, Waters & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1988; Lawler Row, Younger, Piferi & Jones, 2006; Teyberg, 2006). An insecure attachment will develop when the relationship between the caregiver and child is unstable, and the caregiver remains unresponsive to the child’s emotional and physical needs (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1988; Lawler Row et al., 2006; Teyberg, 2006). These early childhood experiences set up internal working models that guide the child, and influence the child’s ability to regulate negative emotions within interpersonal relationships (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1988; Webb, Call, Chickering & Hesler, 2005).

Since an attachment style is considered to be a relatively stable and enduring pattern of relating, the attachment styles developed during childhood are thought to direct cognitive, emotional and behavioural processes in adulthood (Lawler Row, et al., 2006). This in turn may have an impact on the following aspects, both positively and negatively: the ability to regulate positive and negative affect, quality of relationships, relational and marital communication, conflict management, and the expression of anger (Lawler Row et al., 2006; Webb et al., 2005).

In the view of these authors, individuals with secure attachments styles may develop an internal working model which may maintain forgiving dispositions towards others, while individuals with insecure attachments may be less forgiving towards others.

Researchers have conducted various investigations that support the relationship between attachment styles and the capacity to forgive. An experimental study was conducted with 280 undergraduate students varying in ages from 18 to 44 years. An 18-item, self-report questionnaire was used to measures the person’s tendency to be forgiving (Webb et al., 2005). Results obtained from the Heartland forgiveness scale indicated that students with secure attachments achieved higher scores of forgiveness, whereas insecurely attached students displayed lower scores of forgiveness (Webb et al., 2005). Lawler Row et al. (2006) conducted a similar study with 108 undergraduate students, and their results supported the
study conducted by Webb and his colleagues. These results suggest a possible relationship between attachment styles present in adulthood, and the ability to forgive (2006). Therefore, a securely attached adult may have a greater ability to forgive an offender following an interpersonal offence, whereas an adult with an insecure attachment may be at a greater risk of struggling with unforgiveness.

Davis, Hook and Worthington (2008) applied the notion of attachment style to conceptualise individuals’ relationships with God. These authors conducted a study investigating the impact that attachment styles towards God have on unforgiveness (2008). The Spiritual Humility Scale was used to explore how victims perceive an offender’s humility in relationship with God, and how this appraisal affects their process to forgive (Davis et al., 2008). Results indicated that individuals with insecure attachment styles towards God displayed higher scores of unforgiveness (Davis et al., 2008). In addition, the students who presented insecure attachments were more likely to experience spiritual struggle and anger towards God. These authors (2008) speculated that the spiritual struggle may actually isolate the offendee, by making it more difficult to rely on God or his/her religious congregation (Davis et al., 2008).

According to psychological research, individuals with insecure attachments may be at greater risk of struggling with unforgiveness. These individuals may also experience anger towards God, and may find it difficult to rely on God following a perceived offence. A limitation of these studies that is to be considered, is that the preferred methodological approach implies a cause and effect relationship, and thus does not take into consideration additional variables that may have contributed to the findings.
3.2.2.4 Unforgiveness and Enright’s theory of the moral development of forgiveness

Enright’s theory of the moral development of forgiveness was modelled on Kohlberg’s theory of the development of moral reasoning (Mullet & Girard, 2000). For Enright, forgiveness is a reflection of an individuals’ cognitive ability to reason about morality. These two theories can be summarised and compared as follows (Mullet & Girard, 2000, p. 115):

Table 2.1

*Kohlberg’s theory of the development of moral reasoning and Enright’s theory of the moral development of forgiveness*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE NUMBER</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>STAGES OF MORAL REASONING (KOHLBERG’S THEORY)</th>
<th>STAGES OF FORGIVENESS (ENRIGHT’S THEORY)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Before 9 years</td>
<td>Heteronymous morality. Justice should be decided by an authority figure.</td>
<td>Revengeful forgiveness. Because the offender is punished I can forgive them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>9-10 years</td>
<td>Individualism. Justice maintained through a reciprocal exchange.</td>
<td>Conditional or restitutional forgiveness. What was taken from me has been restored therefore I can forgive you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>12-13 years</td>
<td>located between stage 2 and 3</td>
<td>Expectational forgiveness. When people place pressure on me to forgive, I forgive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>15-16 years</td>
<td>Mutual interpersonal. I turn to others to help me decide what is just.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>---</td>
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<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Young to middle adulthood</td>
<td>Social system and conscience. I rely on laws to uphold an orderly way of living.</td>
<td>Lawful expectational forgiveness. I am forgiving because my religion or life's philosophy requires it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Some adults</td>
<td>Social contract. I uphold just values because it honours my fellow human beings.</td>
<td>Forgiveness as social harmony. I forgive because it maintains interpersonal peace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Few adults</td>
<td>Universal ethical principles. I uphold justice by upholding everyone’s human rights.</td>
<td>Forgiveness as love. I forgive out of a deep sense of love for others. Reconciliation is a possibility.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table reference: Mullet & Girard, 2000, p. 115

Over time, Enright has modified his theory of development. Initially, unforgiveness represented an underdevelopment of moral reasoning in this view (in Mullet & Girard, 2000). However, he currently regards these stages of forgiveness as flexible forgiveness styles (in Mullet & Girard, 2000). Therefore, unforgiveness may represent an individual’s ideologies and preferences regarding moral reasoning, in this view (Mullet & Girard, 2000).

### 3.2.2.5 Narcissism and unforgiveness

Emmons (2000) has conceptualised personality across three levels (2000). He describes these three levels as follows: Level one refers to what a person has, this includes traits he/she exhibit. The second level refers to what a person does, and includes their personal goals (Emmons, 2000). The third and final level represents their identity (Emmons, 2000).

An individual who has a narcissistic personality trait may appear to lack empathy, they may also appear to be demanding and entitled (Emmons, 2000). These factors in combination may result in the exploitation of others (Emmons, 2000). According to Emmons, these responses are defending a deep interpersonal wound that had a negative impact on the
individual's self esteem, and may result in influencing his/her personal goals and shaping his/her identity (2000).

Psychological research has suggested a possible association between unforgiveness, vengeance and narcissism (Brown, 2004; Cha, Ra & Myoung-Ho, 2009; Emmons, 2000). Cha et al. conducted a psychological study designed to test the relationship between these concepts (2009). The study assessed how people with low scores in forgiveness, measured in terms of vengefulness and narcissism (Cha et al., 2009). The data indicated that the most narcissistic individuals displayed the highest scores of unforgiveness and vengeance (Cha et al., 2009). This study supported previous research that demonstrated that narcissists tend to be less forgiving (Brown, 2004). According to Emmons (2000), narcissism promotes and maintains an unforgiving response following an offence.

3.2.3 An existential perspective of unforgiveness

The term existential comes from the Latin word “existere” and means to step outside oneself (Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 2008). According to Meyer et al., (2008), existentialists view human beings as ones’ who can stand outside of themselves and self-reflect. Existentialists view human beings as having the ability to rise above their limitations, as well as having the ability to emerge into their authentic existence (Meyer et al., 2008). Therefore, for the existentialist, life is an expression of one’s choices (Meyer et al., 2008). A psychological theorist whose work reflects this philosophical position is Victor Frankl.

3.2.3.1 Frankl’s perspective of unforgiveness

The psychological existential perspective touches on unforgiveness briefly in the work of Victor Frankl. His therapeutic approach referred to as Logotherapy is rooted in the premise that individuals are ultimately self determining (Frankl, 1959, 1967, 1971). In other words, and individual’s life is not exclusively determined by his/her external environment. According to Frankl, life is about the search for meaning, and because suffering is a permanent
attribute of life, then so too does suffering carry meaning within it (1959, 1967, 1971). For Frankl, the search for meaning may be exemplified by a person who experiences personal development because they choose to forgive an offender for suffering caused (1971). On the other hand, when individuals resign from the opportunity to grow when presented with suffering, they are inevitably relinquishing their will for the search for the meaning of life (Frankl, 1959, 1967). According to Frankl, if individuals relinquish their will towards finding meaning, their lives become self-focused and empty (1971). This may be depicted in a possible scenario where persons turn their back on an opportunity to self-improve as presented in suffering, through preferring a response of unforgiveness. This refusal to search for meaning in the offence against them may leave the person feeling trapped in a meaningless existence, according to Frankl (1971).

Frankl (1958) uses the metaphor of living within an inner concentration camp to explain the experience of living with unforgiveness. Pattakos (2004) expounds upon Frankl's metaphor of the inner concentration camp, by explaining that the negative emotions of anger, resentment and hurt remain confined inside of individuals when they choose not to forgive. Through their self-preoccupation, these emotions become the centre of their attention. Pattakos (2004) continues by saying that this “imprisoned” experience may negatively alter how they perceive themselves and others. According to Pattakos (2004), unforgiveness may become like a covering or shroud and negatively influence how individuals perceive themselves, their own existence, others and God.

As indicated in the preceding section, psychological literature discusses forgiveness and unforgiveness in relation to self-interest and psychological well-being (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; Spy, 2004). In his book, *On Forgiveness*, Holloway (2002) argues that religion is one of the most reliable resources to consider when studying forgiveness. Religion can be defined as an institution which offers a different perspective on the world through its belief system and practises, and which thus serves as a meaning-making system (Tsang et al.,...
Its ability to shape individuals’ cognitions, emotions and behaviour through the offering of another set of values and moral standards, makes it a powerful structure for influencing people’s outlook and relations with their world (Tsang et al., 2005; Worthington, 2005). As a result, the Christian context and its perspectives on unforgiveness and forgiveness will now be considered.

4 THE CHRISTIAN CONTEXT

This section sets out to discuss the topic of the “Christian context”. Christianity is defined, and then broadly discussed. The Christian perspectives regarding forgiveness and unforgiveness are then presented.

4.1 Defining Christianity

Christianity is one of the world’s major monotheistic religions and is based upon Jesus Christ’s life and teachings (Holloway, 2002). These teachings are presented in the writings of the New and Old Testaments (Holloway, 2002; Paynter, n.d.). Believers of the Christian faith are referred to as Christians (Holloway, 2002). According to Holloway, Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, who saved humanity from the consequences of their sins (2002). Jesus saving act was demonstrated through his death on the cross, burial and resurrection (Paynter, n.d.). Consequently, Christians believe that Jesus is the Messiah as promised in the Old Testament (Holloway, 2002).

4.2 A brief history of Christianity

Christianity emerged during the first century in the Levant, the now Palestine and Israel (Ehrman, 2003). This faith spread all through the Near East, into places such as Mesopotamia, Syria, Assyria and Egypt (Paynter, n.d.). In the fourth century, Christianity was successfully adopted as a state religion in Armenia, Georgia, Aksmile and the Roman Empire (Ehrman, 2003; Paynter, n.d.). Christianity became recognised in Europe during the
middle ages and spread to the remainder of the world during Europe's Age of exploration (Paynter, n.d.).

In 1053, the Christian Church was divided into the Orthodox Church and Roman Catholic Church (Ehrman, 2003). The protestant reformation movement split the Catholic Church into many different Christian sects or denominations (Ehrman, 2003). The Methodist Church developed from this revival movement (Paynter, n.d.). Additional churches that developed out of the Methodist movement included the Pentecostal and the non-denominational Churches (Prothero, 2007).

Non-denominational Christian institutions reject the idea of established denominations, and believe that it is better for each congregation to remain officially autonomous (Paynter, n.d.; Prothero, 2007). They are often described as a denomination due to their similar doctrine and worship practices (Prothero, 2007). These Churches emphasize the authority and power of the Holy Spirit, and generally perceive themselves as reinstating the original Christian Church as described in the book of Acts, rather than restructuring one of the existing religious institutions (Paynter, n.d.; Prothero, 2007).

4.3 Current “Christian context”

According to a survey conducted by the Pew public forum on religion and public life, Christianity was identified as the world’s leading religion (2011). Today there are over two billion Christians followers, more than one third of the world’s population (Pew public forum, 2011). Christianity is a predominant religion in parts of South and North America, in Europe, in some areas of Asia as well as in Southern Africa (Pew public forum, 2011).

Statistics from the World Christian Encyclopedia estimate that in the year 2025, there will be 633 million Christians in Africa (Barrett, Kurian & Johnson, 2001). According to the Pocket guide to South Africa, Christianity is the leading religion in South Africa, with almost 80% of the population calling themselves Christians (2011/2012). Although there are various
denominations in South Africa, no single denomination predominates (Pocket guide to South Africa, 2011/2012). According to the Pew public forum study, a significant portion adheres to the non-denominational institutions (2011). As a result, this study employs the broadest definition of Christianity, namely the non-denominational Christians. These groups of Christian individuals employ the broadest definition of Christianity yet ascribe to Christian doctrine.

4.4 The Christian perspective of forgiveness and unforgiveness

For many years, a value that seems to have been esteemed and encouraged by religion is forgiveness (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; Tsang et al., 2005; Worthington, 2005). Enright and Fitzgibbons (2000) believe that this may be in part due to the fact that the monotheistic religions are founded upon the premise of forgiveness. Christianity is such a religion, in that it is centred on the value of forgiveness (Ransley, 2004). Scripture explains that God so loved the world, who had fallen away through their sin, that He offered Himself as a sacrifice so as to re-establish a relationship with them through the powerful response of forgiveness (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). The creation of man, as depicted in the book of Genesis, explains that man and woman are created in the image and likeness of God (Ransley, 2002), and therefore have the ability to forgive. This ability, in addition to the received forgiveness from God, encourages all believers towards the forgiveness of others (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000).

4.4.1 Forgiveness in the Old Testament

Jewish Rabbinic sources elaborate on the concept of forgiveness through the TeNaK or Old Testament in two ways: ‘Melicha’ and ‘Selicha’ (Anderson, 2007). Anderson explains that when an offendeeg reaches the decision that the offender no longer owes anything, Melicha has occurred. On the other hand, when an offendeeg realises the imperfect nature of the offender or in other words recognises his/her humanity, and is able to respond empathically
by forgiving him or her, Selicha has occurred (Anderson, 2007). Forgiveness is additionally encouraged through biblical story-telling, which elaborates upon the message of forgiveness.

### 4.4.2 Forgiveness in the New Testament

The New Testament uses the Greek word ‘aphiemi’ to express forgiveness (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). Enright and Fitzgibbons explain that aphiemi involves the removal of sin from the transgressor, in addition it involves the restoration of unity with God following their “repentance and acceptance of Christ’s saving act of redemption” (2002, p. 259).

Throughout the New Testament, God as Christ serves as the role model of forgiveness (Rye, 2005; Tsang et al., 2005). Luke 23:34 retells the scene where Jesus asks God the Father to forgive those who have persecuted Him while he hangs suffering upon the cross (Rye, 2005). John 3:16 expresses the purpose for His death on the cross, namely for the forgiveness of sin (New King James Version).

Despite the fact that scripture provides many of the better metaphors for forgiveness, religion is not a prescription for forgiveness (Holloway, 2002). Research conducted by McCullough and Worthington (in Tsang et al., 2005) suggests that religiousness has little or no effect on the actual act of forgiveness for specific transgressions.

### 4.4.3 Current Christian perspectives on forgiveness and unforgiveness

Christian churches are currently preaching varying messages associated with forgiveness (Murphy, 2005). The various perspectives as discussed in this study include the religion-forgiveness discrepancy, Butler’s theological perspectives and the double bind predicament. These perspectives are presented in the following section.

#### 4.4.3.1 The Religion-Forgiveness discrepancy

Tsang et al. (2005) noted that a major discrepancy exists between the religious doctrine’s approval of forgiveness and the actual implementation of forgiveness of a specific
transgression. This gap is referred to as the religion-forgiveness discrepancy (Tsang et al., 2005). Tsang et al. (2005) speculate that a possible reason for this religion-forgiveness discrepancy, is that it may be easier to approve of religious doctrines on forgiveness, than to practice them. As a result of the difficulty associated with implementing these teachings, individuals experiencing unforgiveness may concentrate on Scripture that supports their motivation (Tsang et al., 2005). Therefore an individual with a retributive motivation may make use of scripture that encourages revenge, whereas an individual with a forgiving disposition may select scripture that motivates their forgivingness.

A cross-sectional analysis investigated the perception of forgiveness among 785 married couples; reports demonstrated that even though 90% of the participants agreed that forgiveness is a necessary attribute of the marriage relationship (Orathinkal, Vansteenwegen & Burggraeve, 2008), 65% of the participants responded that the only reason they forgave their spouses is because their religion requires them to do so.

For a religious-forgiveness discrepancy to occur, two possibilities exist. Either the messages which are being preached regarding forgiveness are incorrect, or people are selectively attending to scripture for self-preservation. Whatever the reason, conflicting messages are preached within Christian churches with regards to forgiveness and unforgiveness (Murphy, 2005). Butler academically examined the traditional biblical perspectives of forgiveness and unforgiveness, and then presented them through his sermon; Upon resentment and forgiveness of injuries (Griswold, 2007; Murphy, 2005).

4.4.3.2 Butler's philosophical perspective of unforgiveness

Butler teaches on a more authentic expression of forgiveness in his sermon Upon resentment and forgiveness (Govier, 2002; Griswold, 2007; Murphy, 2005). The aim of Butler’s sermon on forgiveness is to challenge the faulty notions that are tied into the teachings of forgiveness and unforgiveness within religious institutions (Murphy, 2005).
In his sermon, Butler argues that unforgiveness, which is to be overcome, is not a bad thing (Butler, 1827; in Murphy, 2005). His premise is founded upon the biblical notion that God created all things to be good, including the implanted passions that are associated with unforgiveness (Butler, 1827; in Griswold, 2007; in Murphy, 2005). According to Butler, unforgiveness acts as a defence of important values such as self-respect, respect for others, and respect for moral order (Butler, 1827; in Griswold, 2007).

‘Hasty forgiveness’ is the term that Butler uses to describe the process during which people only forgive because of the pressure placed upon them by an overly enthusiastic pastor or a sin-conscious religious institution (Butler, 1827; in Griswold, 2007; in Murphy, 2005). According to Butler, these individuals never truly experience unforgiveness (Butler, 1827). The pressure to forgive may produce a fear of unforgiveness because of the associated consequences, such as eternal damnation (Butler, 1827; in Griswold, 2007; in Murphy, 2005). Hasty forgiveness may be the believers’ attempt at maintaining their salvation. Holloway (2002) suggests that the harshness of scripture acts as a warning against the refusal to forgive, and not against experiencing unforgiveness. Forgiving because religion tells you to is not really forgiveness at all (Holloway, 2002).

One the other hand, Butler does warn against the risks of unforgiveness (Murphy, 2005). This risk lies not in experiencing unforgiveness, but in acting irresponsibly on the basis of this unforgiveness (Butler, 1827; in Griswold, 2007; in Murphy, 2005).

4.4.3.3 Equivocalities: The ‘double bind’ predicament

Holloway introduces the concept of the double bind in his discussion of the theological influences on the experience of forgiveness. When someone has an inability to forgive an offender and the offence, guilt is added to the pain that already exists, through the failure in performing a Christian mandate (Holloway, 2002). This guilt highlights the individual’s inadequacy to forgive because he/she is struggling to release the pain associated with the
trauma (Holloway, 2002). The offendee then has to not only work through the pain of being psychologically impacted, but also to speed up the process so as to reach a state of forgiveness as soon as possible (Holloway, 2002). Holloway (2002) explains that people caught in this “excruciating double bind” (2002, p. 51) predicament are painfully aware of the trapped animal analogy.

Some may argue, then, that religion may be a contributing factor towards unforgiveness (Holloway, 2002). Forgiveness is a process that cannot be ordered or enforced by any institution (Holloway, 2002). Therefore, only when one practices forgiveness for one’s own sake and not because of obedience to certain decrees, is the purest and the truest form of forgiveness being enacted (Holloway, 2002).

Marriage and infidelity will be discussed in the following section.

5 MARRIAGE AND INFIDELITY

This section sets out to explore the topic of marriage and infidelity. Marriage and Infidelity are broadly defined, the various types of infidelity are identified and the statistics on infidelity presented. The causes and contributing factors of infidelity are then discussed. The consequences, the processes and the individual responses following infidelity are also presented. Lastly, a Christian perspective on infidelity is given.

5.1 Perspectives on marriage

Marriage can be described as the process whereby two individuals acknowledge their love for each other by declaring their relationship publicly (Coontz, 2005a). This legal institution involves the union between two people, their children as well as their families, and resources (Coontz, 2005a, 2005b; Gough, 1968).

The institution of marriage has existed since earliest civilization (Coontz, 2005; Gough, 1968). Researchers have attributed marriage’s resiliency over the centuries to the many
personal and social functions it has fulfilled (Coontz, 2005a, 2005b; Gough, 1968). Traditionally, marriages were arranged for economic reasons, social relationships, property benefits and producing children (Coontz, 2005b; Gough, 1968). Marriage was used as an institution to unify families and merge social connections between communities and people of powerful influence (Coontz, 2005a). Marriage also assisted families in the manner in which assets could be combined and work responsibilities shared (Coontz, 2005a, 2005b). The legally binding negotiations were facilitated by the parents, in-laws, siblings and even nobles (Coontz, 2005a).

During the fifth century the Catholic Church promoted the legal institution of marriage to that of a sacred union (Coontz, 2005a, 2005b). Marriage laws in most western countries were informed by this description of marriage (Coontz, 2005a).

The 18th century marked the beginning of the Enlightenment movement (Coontz, 2005a). This revolution shaped the way individuals reasoned about life (Coontz, 2005a, 2005b). In addition, freedom and personal fulfilment became important values (Coontz, 2005a). People began to consider marriage for reasons other than political and social benefits (Coontz, 2005b). By the end of that century, marriage was established as an expression of love between two autonomous individuals. According to Coontz, this love-based, male-headed model continued into the 20th century, and was considered by many as traditional marriage (2005a, 2005b).

Traditional marriage as understood by Christians is influenced by teachings within Scripture, according to Ephesians 5:21-32, marriage is considered as being intended by God (New King James Version). This passage in scripture also describes marriage as a covenant between God, the husband and the wife. Verse 32, describes the relationship between Christ and the church as a template to understand the relationship between a husband and wife. Adultery has been recognised as a violation of this sacred union, according to Hebrew 3:14 (New King James Version).
This study employs the Christian marriage as the context in which the experience of unforgiveness will be explored. This context is considered appropriate, because it explicitly recognizes extramarital infidelity as a violation of the sacred union of marriage.

5.2 Defining infidelity

The Oxford dictionary defines infidelity as the quality of being disloyal or unfaithful to a spouse or sexual partner (2013). This unfaithful act violates the rules and norms of the committed relationship (Barta & Kiene, 2005; Leeker & Carlozzi, 2012; Soanes & Stevenson, 2008). According to Barta and Kiene, exclusivity is a common understanding in a marriage relationship (2005).

Infidelity can be described as either emotional or sexual in nature (Feldman & Cauffman, 2000). Emotional infidelity occurs when a committed partner becomes emotionally involved with an individual outside of the committed relationship (Feldman & Cauffman, 2000; Roscoe Cavanaugh & Kennedy, 1988). Examples of emotional infidelity include flirting, spending time together, and falling in love (Roscoe et al., 1988). Sexual infidelity refers to sexual behaviours such as kissing, sexual fondling, and vaginal or anal intercourse with an individual outside of the primary relationship (Feldman & Cauffman, 2000; Roscoe Cavanaugh & Kennedy, 1988).

Psychological researchers have described infidelity as one of the most hurtful experiences that may occur within marriages (Allen & Atkins, 2005; Grissom, 2004; Wallerstein et al., 2000). Infidelity may result in extreme damage to a marriage relationship (Gunderson & Ferrarri, 2008; Kluwer & Karremans, 2009; Leeker & Carlozzi, 2012; Levine, 2005). Psychological studies have also shown that extramarital infidelity may cause serious harm to the offender's mental and physical health (Gunderson & Ferrarri, 2008; Kluwer & Karremans, 2009; Leeker & Carlozzi, 2012; Levine, 2005).
5.3 The different types of infidelity

Brown (1999) has identified five categories of infidelity, namely opportunistic infidelity, obligatory infidelity, romantic infidelity, conflicted romantic infidelity, and commemorative infidelity.

Opportunistic infidelity occurs when a partner who is still in love with his/her committed partner engages in an emotional or sexual affair with another individual due to lust, the presentation of the opportunity, or risk-taking behavior (Brown, 1999). Brown describes obligatory infidelity as an affair that occurs due to either the fear of rejection or the need for approval from the person advancing him/her (1999). When a partner is in the process of falling out of love with his/her committed partner and then engages in infidelity, romantic infidelity is usually the type of infidelity that occurs (Brown, 1999). Conflicted romantic infidelity involves a partner who is in love with his/her spouse and an individual outside of the committed relationship (Brown, 1999). Lastly, Brown describes commemorative infidelity as occurring when the partner engaging in the extramarital affair has no romantic feelings towards his/her spouse (1999).

5.4 Infidelity statistics

Psychological research has revealed that an increasing numbers of individuals are becoming emotional or sexually involved with partners outside of their primary relationship (Boekhout, Hendrick & Hendrick, 1999; Feldman & Cauffman, 2000; Greeley, 1994; Hansen, 1987; Spanier & Margolis, 1999). In a survey conducted by Wiederman and Hurd as cited by Gunderson & Ferrarri, 68% to 75% of the participants admitted to engaging themselves in some form of sexual cheating (2008). Studies on infidelity indicate that 20% to 40% of married individuals will have an extramarital affair during their life span (Greeley, 1994). A survey conducted by Kluwer and Karremans (2009) indicated that infidelity was one of the most cited reasons for divorce. Additional statistics show that approximately 49-59% of
Christian marriages end in divorce (Grissom, 2004). Specific statistics that outline the number of Christian marriages that end in divorce due to infidelity are not available from academic sources.

5.5 The causes and factors contributing to infidelity

Psychological studies reveal that both sexes most frequently cited marital dissatisfaction as the reason for infidelity (Sheppard, Nelson & Andreoli-Mathie, 1995). Other views of contributing factors include the sex-ratio and structural pluralism theories, the cultural and anthropological perspectives and lastly from the evolutionary and systemic perspectives.

5.5.1 Anthropological perspectives

Anthropologists recognise that marriage and infidelity are common occurrences throughout the world (Winking, Kaplan, Gurven & Rucas, 2007). Researchers (Tsapelas, Fisher and Aron) theorize a possible reason for the high incidences of infidelity, that being that monogamy (marrying one partner at a time) is only one idea incorporated in the human strategy for reproduction (2010).

Anthropologist Helen Fisher discusses the biological cause of infidelity for both males and females (1992, 2006). According to Fisher’s research (2006), the brain functions within two predominant systems. One brain system is primarily orientated towards love and the development of attachments, and the other brain system is dominated by sex drive (Fisher, 2006). For Fisher, when these two systems are well connected, the individual will not satisfy his/her sexual drive at the expense of love or attachment. However, when these two systems are not well connected, and the individual responds with his/her sex drive at the expense of love and attachments, infidelity will occur (Fisher, 2006).

According to this school of thought, a possible cause of infidelity is biological in nature, and influences both males and females (1992, 2006).
5.5.2 Evolutionary perspective

The parental investment theory is an evolutionary perspective that views sexual selection in light of parental investment (Trivers, 1972). According to this theory, the sex that has most parental investment in the offspring can be more selective of their mate, and therefore will desire a long-term relationship that promotes the survival of their offspring (Gangestad, Haselton & Buss, 2006; Peterson & Hyde, 2011; Trivers, 1972). On the other hand, the sex who has less parental investment may be more focused on sexual activities with multiple partners that increase the likelihood of producing as many offspring as possible (Gangestad et al., 2006; Peterson & Hyde, 2011; Trivers, 1972). Trivers suggests that individuals with the least amount of parental investment engage in sexual infidelity as a result of these evolutionary pressures (1972).

5.5.3 The strategic pluralism theory

The strategic pluralism theory relates the occurrence of infidelity to the influence of environmental stressors (Schmitt, 2005). According to this theory, monogamy is promoted in contexts with many environmental stressors (Gangestad & Simpson, 2000; Schmitt, 2005). According to Schmitt, these stressful environments encourage monogamy, as the protectiveness of dual-parenting promotes the survival of the offspring (2005). In contexts that present fewer environmental stressors, monogamy and its benefits of dual-parenting are less of a necessity, and therefore polygamy and infidelity are more likely to occur (Gangestad & Simpson, 2000).

5.5.4 Sex-ratio theory

The sex-ratio theory considers sexual infidelity to be related to the number of marriage-aged men to marriage-aged women within the same area (Fisher et al., 2009; Schmitt, 2005). High sex ratios occur when there are less men of marriageable age than there are women in a specific area (Fisher et al., 2009). According to researchers (Fisher et al., 2009; Schmitt,
infidelity is more likely to occur in areas with high sex-ratios as the demand for men is higher, therefore the opportunity to be unfaithful increases for men.

5.5.5 Gender differences and infidelity

A contentious issue in the field of psychology centres on gender differences and infidelity (De Steno, Bartlett, Braverman & Salovey, 2002; Miller & Manner, 2009). Some researchers (Greeley, 1994; Lalasz & Weigel, 2011) have demonstrated that gender differences may be accredited to the variations in marital affairs, with some studies having shown that 50% of all married men engage in extramarital infidelity, whereas only 25% of women commit infidelity (Greeley, 1994). Other psychological researchers claim that the only gender differences noted in the study of infidelity, is that men are more likely to engage in sexual infidelity, and women are more likely to engage in emotional infidelity (Buunk, Angleitner, Oubaid, & Buss, 1996; De Steno et al., 2002; Miller & Manner, 2009; Sheppard et al., 1995). Psychological research conducted by Blow and Hartnett has indicated that the rates between men and women and their attitudes towards sexual promiscuity are becoming increasingly similar (2005).

5.5.6 Cultural perspectives

A study conducted by Buunk and his colleagues, has linked infidelity and cultural factors (1996). According to this study, German and Dutch cultures have liberal attitudes towards sexuality, including marital infidelity, than the American culture (Buunk et al., 1996). According to Buunk et al., a culture's views on sexuality are generally linked to how liberal or conservative the societies' perspectives are on the matter (1996). Societies whose views are influenced by religious ideologies may present more conservative beliefs regarding infidelity (Buunk et al., 1996).

According to the above-mentioned perspectives, possible factors contributing to infidelity are varied, and include biological causes and evolutionary pressures. Environmental and cultural
factors are also discussed. The differences in gender and sex-ratios are also considered as possible causes for infidelity. The consequences of infidelity are henceforth discussed in the following section.

5.5.7 Intersystemic consideration

The intersystemic approach is grounded in the systemic perspective and attends to relationships within systems as interdependent and reciprocal (Fife, Weeks & Gambescia, 2007). When assessing infidelity and formulating interventions, this approach attends to the individuals who forms part of the relationship or system, their families of origin and the couple's relationship (Fife et al., 2007).

According to Fife and his colleagues (2007), the susceptibility of a relationship is influenced by many individual and relational risk factors. Individual risk factors may include mental and emotional illnesses such as depression or the presence of personality disorders (Fife et al., 2007). Illness and age-related disorders can also affect a partner's participation in their primary relationship (Fife et al., 2007). Whereas, relational risk factors include “communication patterns, conflict resolution style, problem solving strategies...emotional and physical intimacy” (Fife et al., 2007, p. 106). These authors also identified narcissism and anger as potential barriers to forgiveness (2007). These barriers permit the partners from accepting responsibility for their contribution in the relationship’s decline, and thus delay the resolution of infidelity (Fife et al., 2007).

5.6 The consequences of infidelity

The long and short term consequences following an affair can have devastating effects on the couple involved, their marriage, their children and extended family (Blow & Hartnett, 2005). Psychological research conducted by Blow and Hartnett indicate that only some couples attempt to repair their marriage relationship following infidelity (2005). The study also revealed that offencides who initiated a divorce were more likely to experience
depression (Blow & Hartnett, 2005). Other psychological researchers posit that repairing the marriage relationship can produce positive outcomes (Snyder, Baucom & Gordon, 2008). A response that promotes communication and recovery is marriage counselling (Snyder et al., 2008). According to Snyder et al., integrative couples’ therapy has proven to be successful in restoring trust and intimacy to the marriage relationship (2008).

Once a marriage relationship is impacted by infidelity, the couple experience a variety of psychological processes (Olson, Russel, Higgins-Kessler & Miller, 2002). These processes are described in the work of Olson and his colleagues. This model is considered here.

5.7 The processes following infidelity

Olson et al. (2002) have described the experience following infidelity as a process comprised of three stages, namely rollercoaster, moratorium and trust-building.

Rollercoaster refers to the initial phase following the news of the infidelity (Olson et al., 2002). This stage is characterised by intense emotional responses. Anger forms an integral part of this phase (Olson et al., 2002). Moratorium refers to the second stage, during this phase both partners are less emotional and therefore less reactive (Olson et al., 2002). According to these authors, this phase is characterised by the couple making sense of, as well as finding meaning for the infidelity (2002). These processes are facilitated through obtaining information and receiving support from others (Olson et al., 2002). The final, or trust-building, phase occurs when the couple is ready to confront the problems in their marriage and receive honest feedback (Olson et al., 2002). According to these authors (2002), acceptance and forgiveness form integral parts of this phase.

The previous model considered the psychological processes experienced by the couple, the following literature now discusses the psychological experiences of the offendedee.
5.8 Individual responses

Psychological research has identified a variety of factors which influence the psychological experience of the offendee. These aspects are discussed in the following section. The factors which impact the offendee’s experience of infidelity are identified, and the commonalities between infidelity responses and trauma and grieving are also explored. The emotional healing and growth associated with the experience of infidelity are then presented. Finally, the three stage synthesis model that discusses infidelity in light of the experience of unforgiveness is considered.

5.8.1 Factors which influence the offendee’s experience of infidelity

Psychological researchers state that offenders of marital infidelity experience considerable distress as a result of the impact of their spouses’ unfaithfulness (Allen & Baucom, 2006). According to Blow and Hartnett, the negative impact of the infidelity depends on a variety of factors (2005). These factors include the overall fulfilment of the marriage relationship as well as the level of conflict before the infidelity occurred (Blow & Hartnett, 2005). Additional factors identified by these authors include the offender’s motives for the infidelity, as well as both partners’ assumptions regarding infidelity (2005). Lastly, the offender’s experience is also determined by how absorbed the offender was in the extramarital relationship (Blow & Hartnett, 2005). For these authors, the above-mentioned factors have an impact on the offender’s experience following infidelity (2005).

5.8.2 Trauma and grief

5.8.2.1 Infidelity as a traumatic event

Infidelity has been described as a traumatic relationship event (Atkins & Christensen, 2006; Baucom, Gordon, Snyder, Atkins & Christensen, 2006; Gordon et al., 2005; Kluwer & Karremans, 2009). Research conducted by Gordon and Baucom (1998) suggested that the responses that were reported by offenders in extramarital infidelity paralleled the criteria for
Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Offendees reported feeling out of control, in disbelief, overwhelmed, powerless, distressed, angry, victimised, and experienced estrangement towards the offender (Gordon et al., 2005; Kluwer & Karremans, 2009). Feelings of abandonment, humiliation, jealousy and a motivation to seek revenge were also described (Gordon, Baucom & Snyder, 2000; Gordon et al., 2005; Kluwer & Karremans, 2009). This experience may negatively influence a person’s psychological well-being (Baucom et al., 2006).

When an individual is faced with a major life crisis or traumatic event, he or she will experience a common set of emotional responses (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005). These emotional responses have been constructed into a framework and termed 'the five stages of grief' (Kübler-Ross, 1969). These stages are discussed in the following section.

5.8.2.2 The five stages of grief

In an attempt to construct a framework of the terrain of grief, Kübler-Ross (1969) identified five stages of grief. These are denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance (Kübler-Ross, 1969; Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005).

Denial forms part of the first stage of the five stage model (Kübler-Ross, 1969; Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005). This refusal to accept the reality of a situation can look like disbelief; individuals may respond in shock or explain that they feel numb (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005). As the reality of the situation is accepted, the denial dissolves and the healing process begins (Kübler-Ross, 1969; Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005).

During the second stage a multitude of feelings are experienced, which may include sadness, hurt and loneliness, yet anger is at the frontline (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005). According to Kübler-Ross (1969), anger is a necessary stage in the healing process and indicative of one progressing through one’s grief (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005).
Kübler-Ross (1969) defined bargaining as the third stage in grieving, during which individuals become preoccupied with “if only” and “what if” statements. Depression marks the fourth stage and is characterized by heavy and dark feelings of sadness (Kübler-Ross, 1969; Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005). According to Kübler-Ross (1969), depression is an appropriate response to a major life crisis, and is a necessary step in the grieving process.

The final stage of healing occurs when the individual realizes the permanence of his/her new reality (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005). Here individuals cease to be angry at God, at others and even at themselves (Kübler-Ross, 1969).

5.8.3 Healing and growth in the context of infidelity

5.8.3.1 Factors that promote emotional healing

Gough has identified several strategies that, when utilized, promoted recovery following infidelity (2000). Gough explains that it is important for the offendees to recognize the fragile state that they are in, and that these individuals should focus on the positive steps which will help them (2000). Gough (2000) advises that offendees avoid finding out the details about the affair. Additional strategies mentioned in the literature include seeking support from others, as well as attending psychotherapy or educational classes (Gough, 2000; Weeks & Fife, 2009). Existing literature (Gough, 2000; Weeks & Fife, 2009) also encourages offendees to deal with their emotions, and cautions against avoiding these.

Researchers report that offendees can achieve growth following the experience of infidelity (Gough, 2000, Heintzelman, 2011).

5.8.3.2 Infidelity and posttraumatic growth

According to psychological research, a person’s ability to deal with his/her emotions is associated with the probability of his/her growth (Heintzelman, 2011; Tedeschi and Calhoun 1995, 1996). Posttraumatic growth refers to a “positive psychological change experienced as
a result of the struggle with highly challenging life circumstances” (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995, p. 2). It is often referred to as the transformative power of suffering (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995).

Researchers explain that the growth does not occur as a direct result of the crisis. Instead it is the individual’s struggle with the new reality following the crisis that facilitates growth (Heintzelman, 2011; Tedeschi & Calhoun 1995). A psychological study suggests that the experience following infidelity can result in posttraumatic growth (Heintzelman, 2011). Researchers (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995, 1996) have identified six general areas of posttraumatic growth. The first area of growth involves a change in one's priorities, the second area includes the recognition of the value of life (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995, 1996). According to these authors (1996), the third area involves the development of closer relationships, as well as the development of compassion towards others who experience suffering. Self-confidence and personal strength are qualities that develop in the individual as well (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). The final area of development noted by Tedeschi & Calhoun (1995) involves a spiritual growth, where individuals may experience a deepening of spiritual life (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995).

Previous sections have presented discussions on the experience of infidelity. Literature on the experience of the unforgiveness of infidelity is presented in the following section.

5.8.4 Factors which influence the experience of unforgiveness of infidelity

A review of literature on infidelity by Gunderson and Ferrarri (2008) surmised four possible factors that may have an influence on the experience of unforgiveness of infidelity: how the affair was discovered, the absence of an apology, the lack of remorse and guilt, and how often the cheating occurred. The highest ratings of unforgiveness were reported by offendees who caught their spouse in the act of sexual infidelity, or who discovered the affair via a third party (Gunderson & Ferrarri, 2008). Offendees who discover the infidelity via the
spouse’s admission report lower scores of unforgiveness (Gunderson & Ferrarri, 2008). Offendees also struggle to maintain positive views about the offender when the offender fails to apologise, as it implies the offender does not recognise the gravity of his/her offence (Gunderson & Ferrarri, 2008). Lastly, the more frequently the marital infidelity occurred, the less invested the offendee is in repairing the relationship (Gunderson & Ferrarri, 2008). According to Gunderson & Ferrarri, these factors complicate the process of forgiveness by making unforgiveness seem attractive (2008).

One of the most cited psychological research studies in the context of literature on forgiveness of infidelity was conducted by Gordon and Baucom (1998). This study is discussed in the following section.

5.8.5 Forgiveness of marital infidelity: Three stage synthesis model

Gordon and Baucom’s psychological study was based upon the premise that the experience of forgiveness of marital infidelities bears a resemblance to the characteristics of recovery from traumatic events (1998). Gordon and Baucom observed that theories on trauma suggested that the recovery response of a traumatic event includes three phases: impact, search for meaning and recovery (1998). Consequently, their three stage synthesis model of forgiveness parallel these identified stages (Gordon & Baucom, 1998).

The study mentioned above focused primarily on the experience of the offendee and measured the psychological ramifications associated with the infidelity, as well as the offendee’s level of forgiveness regarding the trauma inflicted. Using an instrument specifically designed to test this model, couples were categorised into one of the three stages (Gordon et al., 2000). Gordon and Baucom (1998) hypothesised that individuals in group one and two would yield higher scores of unforgiveness, while individuals within group three would report the highest scores of forgiveness.
5.8.5.1 Stage one: Impact stage

During the first stage, offendees are trying to comprehend the major implications of the affair upon their well-being as well as on their relationships (Gordon & Baucom, 1998). Offendees experience the most negative assumptions about themselves and their partners, as well as experiencing an overwhelming array of emotions, such as fear, powerlessness, hurt and anger (Baucom et al., 2006; Gordon & Baucom, 2003; Gordon et al., 2000). Their need to collect available information regarding the affair is an attempt to develop an understanding of what happened and ultimately increase their sense of control (Gordon et al., 2000).

According to the findings, offendees in the first stage reported the highest levels of unforgiveness, the poorest psychological closeness and marital adjustment, and the greatest amounts of powerlessness (Gordon & Baucom, 1998).

5.8.5.2 Stage two: Search for meaning stage

The goal of the second stage is to discover why the event happened and then to give meaning to the interpersonal trauma (Baucom et al., 2006; Gordon & Baucom, 1998). This search for meaning, according to Gordon & Baucom (1998, 2003), is the offendees’ attempt to make sense of the offenders’ behaviour, and thus gain a sense of control over their lives.

Results indicated that offendees within stage two reported lower levels of unforgiveness than stage one, but higher levels of unforgiveness than level three (Baucom et al., 2006; Gordon & Baucom, 1998, 2003). Findings further reported that those within this stage also displayed negative assumptions about themselves and their partners, poor psychological closeness and marital adjustment, and significant levels of powerlessness (Gordon & Baucom, 1998).

5.8.5.3 Stage three: Recovery or moving on stage

Research suggests that the offender has progressed into stage three once the individual is able to consolidate the new information into a decision to forgive (Gordon & Baucom, 1998).
In this stage, the offendee has a more realistic view of his/her partner (Gordon & Baucom, 1998, 2003). In addition, the offendee experiences less negative emotions, and more importantly realises that forgiveness is a way of coping (Baucom et al., 2006; Gordon & Baucom, 2003). In this stage, the offendee is ready to move on beyond the trauma of infidelity (Gordon, 2003).

Offended partners within stage three reported lowest scores of unforgiveness; in addition they reported the most amounts of positive assumptions about themselves and their partners, greatest psychological closeness and marital adjustment, and a greater balance of power within the marriage (Baucom et al., 2006; Gordon & Baucom, 1998, 2003).

### 5.8.6 Limitations to stage theories within the context of marital infidelity

Stage theories, such as the three stage synthesis model of forgiveness and the five stages of grief, assist as helpful templates which brings structure to the cognitive, emotional and behavioural responses following an interpersonal trauma (Baucom et al., 2006; Gordon et al., 2000). These templates may however also oversimplify a complex experience such as responses to extramarital infidelity, since this phenomenon is characterised by chaos and dysregularity (Baucom et al., 2006; Gordon & Baucom, 2003; Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005). Kübler-Ross (1969) stressed that the emotional process following an interpersonal trauma is as unique as the individual experiencing it. Individuals may repeat stages and/or cycle through the process (Gordon et al., 2000; Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005). Despite these limitations, researchers (Gordon et al., 2000; Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005) explain that these templates are useful as they present a general description of the psychological responses triggered by major life crisis.

The above-mentioned psychological research indicates that the offence of infidelity and the responses to this are characterised by dysregularity and disorder. When placed within a Christian context, the ideologies associated with the offence of infidelity, as well as the
unforgiveness associated with it, may additionally alter the experience. It therefore proves important to present the Christian perspective on infidelity and on the unforgiveness of infidelity. These aspects are discussed in the following section.

6 A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE ON MARITAL INFIDELITY AND FORGIVENESS

The seventh commandment, as outlined by Exodus 20:14, instructs believers that they are not allowed to commit adultery (New King James Version). Ross explains that this commandment, found in the book of Deuteronomy, is written as a general prohibition (2001). A general prohibition is a commandment or law set by God, which all are required to submit to, without exception (Ross, 2001). Simply put, from a Christian’s point of view infidelity is in direct violation of the will of God (Levine, 2005).

The Christian context is an environment which offers obvious boundaries in terms of the acceptable standards within a marital relationship, and as a result also in terms of infidelity. In addition, it is a system that is founded on the construct of forgiveness, and therefore prescribes the importance of forgiveness as a way of coping with any offence or trauma. The Christian perspective therefore presents both infidelity and the refusal to forgive infidelity as sin (Holloway, 2002).

Some teachings on forgiveness and unforgiveness within the Christian church communicate a message which places pressure on Christians to forgive (Holloway, 2002; Tsang et al., 2005) As a result, Christians who show an inability to forgive extramarital infidelity may experience guilt in addition to their already existing pain (Holloway, 2002). Christian individuals caught in this double-bind predicament may feel trapped between their inability to forgive and the religious pressure placed upon them to forgive.

Although various authors have noted the experience of forgiveness within the context of infidelity (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; Gordon & Baucom, 2003; McCullough & Witvliet, 2005; Seligman, 2005; Strelan & Covic, 2006), the subjective experience of unforgiveness
remains relatively unexplored. More specifically, the present study seeks to link the experience of unforgiveness to one of the most common forms of deception within a Christian context.

The aim of this study is to describe the personal or phenomenological experience of unforgiveness of extramarital infidelities within a Christian context, with particular focus on a non-denominational group of Christians. This study therefore further approaches this topic in two ways. From a theoretical frame of reference, this study makes a contribution in a relatively unexplored area of research. In addition, on a pragmatic level this research will assist clinicians in deepening their understanding of their clients who struggle with the intense personal experience of unforgiveness related to infidelity. The broad research topic is: Exploring the experience of unforgiveness of extramarital infidelity within a Christian context?

The methodological approaches employed in this study are explored in the next chapter.
Chapter 3

Methodology

1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves as a discussion of the methodological process undertaken in order to explore the research topic. It includes an overview of the qualitative and phenomenological research methodologies utilised in this study. The interpretive phenomenological data analysis procedures are also presented. Lastly, the ethical consideration pertaining to the study is discussed.

2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Qualitative research

Qualitative research is a set of principles or mode of inquiry which recognises that individuals attach meaning to their experiences (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009). Qualitative research is characterised by its aim, which is to gather an in-depth understanding of life, and of the meaning people ascribe to their experiences (Parker, 2002; Smith & Osborn, 2008).

Over the last few decades, a remarkable transformation has occurred within the field of psychology with regards to preferred research methods (Coyle, 2007). This transformation entailed a shift from the more conventional psychological perspectives offered by quantitative research methods, to an approach using more qualitative methods (Parker, 2002; Smith & Osborn, 2008).

During the early 1900’s, the theoretical ideas offered by positivism were rejected by some researchers (Lyons, 2007). The principles of positivism proposed that reality could be
studied and that this reality was ordered and logical (Lyons, 2007). Consequently, obtained information or data was verified through empiricism (Willig, 2008). Empiricism emphasises the importance of scientific evidence (Lyons, 2007). Given that the tenets of quantitative research are empiricism and rationalization, the study of human experiences and subjective realities were negated (Lyons, 2007; Willig, 2008).

Researchers, who asserted that reality was based on the individual and subjective experiences, embraced a qualitative research paradigm (Parker, 2002; Smith & Osborn, 2008). The qualitative approach to research recognises that reality changes based upon the perception of the individual; it therefore does not subscribe to claims regarding absolute truth (Ashworth, 2008). Instead, qualitative researchers “capture the sense that lies within, and that structures what we say about what we do, an exploration, elaboration and systemization of the significance of an identified phenomenon” (Parker, 2002, p. 2). For qualitative researchers, value is placed upon the intersubjective nature of knowledge (Ashworth, 2008).

In qualitative research, the collection and analysis of data are described as pivotal processes (Polio et al., 2006). The researcher forms a primary component of the data collection (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008a; Lyons, 2007). Since the primary focus is the search for psychological meaning, the participants’ individual accounts and descriptions form the database (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008a; Lyons, 2007). Participants’ subjective accounts are sourced through interviews, group discussions, questionnaires and observations (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008a). In order to ensure the accuracy of the gathered information, the qualitative researcher is required to be as unobtrusive as possible (Lyons, 2007). Qualitative researchers review and summarize the data in an appropriate way; they also interpret the data as seen in relation to relevant literature (Lyons, 2007).

Qualitative research studies endeavour to explore lived experiences of identified populations; therefore the outcomes of the qualitative research cannot be generalised. First
person representation of lived experiences is what makes qualitative research valuable (Moustakas, 1996).

This study seeks to describe the participants' subjective experience of unforgiveness of infidelity within a Christian context. This study aims to describe the meanings the participants attribute to their experience of unforgiveness of infidelity. The use of a qualitative research methodology with a phenomenological research design serves to facilitate the process required to achieve this aim.

2.2  Phenomenology as a research method

Phenomenology is rooted in the philosophical tradition espoused by Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger (Polio et al., 2006). Husserl, who founded the philosophical movement of phenomenology, proposed that the study of human life should not only centre on quantifiable data, but also focus on the analysis of phenomena as they are perceived in the human consciousness (Lyons, 2007; Polio, Graves & Arfken., 2006). Husserl was quoted as saying that “psychology should be concerned with direct experience” (Pollio et al., 2006, p. 254). This implies that individuals who have firsthand experience of an identified situation are sought out, in order for them to describe what actually took place in their lives.

Given that the phenomenological research method is heavily influenced by psychological philosophy, a thorough understanding of the fundamental concepts is required. The philosophical concepts that underlie phenomenological research are intentionality, epoche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation and essence (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008a; Lyons, 2007)

A central concept of phenomenology is the idea of intentionality (Langdridge, 2007; Moustakas, 1996). Giorgi & Giorgi (2008a) describe intentionality as the fundamental constituent of consciousness. Phenomenologists insist that being conscious implies that one is aware of an object, and as such, it is not the representations of the object that are held in
one’s consciousness (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008b; Lyons, 2007). The philosophical concept of intentionality is underlying to phenomenologists’ design for obtaining and collecting data (Langdridge, 2007).

Epoche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation and essence shape the main processes observed in doing research phenomenologically. Epoche, also referred to as the process of phenomenological reduction or bracketing, “involves the identifying and separating of knowledge about the phenomenon from our instances or indirect sources” (Giorgi & Giorgi 2008a, p. 33). This process results in the setting aside of judgment during the examination and analyses of the participants’ subjective experiences, in order to maintain purity. (Langdridge, 2007). The aim is to reveal the object of study as a pure phenomenon (Giorgi & Giorgi 2008a). Through imaginative variation, the researcher can derive structural themes (Moustakas, 1996). The final step is the fusion of meaning and essence. The essence is the “condition or quality without which a thing would not be what it is: it is the final truth” (Moustakas, 1996, p. 4).

Heidegger developed interpretive phenomenology by extending Husserl’s theory of knowledge to include the theoretical approaches of ontology and hermeneutics (Gavin, 2008; Smith & Eatough, 2007). Ontology refers to the science of being, where the experience of being in the world is valued above the idea of knowing about the world (Gavin, 2008). Hermeneutics or the philosophy of interpretation argues that all forms of human experiences are interpretations (Gavin, 2008; Smith & Eatough, 2007). The purpose of interpretive phenomenology is to uncover the interpretation an individual derives from his/her experience (Smith & Eatough, 2007). For Heidegger, this is the essence of human existence (Smith & Eatough, 2007).

Given that the purpose of the study is to understand the experience of “being in” unforgiveness of infidelity, the interpretive phenomenological approach is utilized.
Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is described in greater detail in the following section.

### 2.2.1 Interpretive phenomenological analysis

Interpretive phenomenology “accepts the impossibility of gaining direct access to the research participant’s life” (Willig, 2008, p. 56). This approach is preoccupied with the examination of the participant’s subjective or personal account of the phenomenon (Gavin, 2008; Smith & Eatough, 2007; Smith & Osborn, 2008; Willig, 2008). Interpretive phenomenological analysis also recognises that such an exploration will implicate the researcher’s own view of the world, as well as the nature of the interaction between the researcher and participant (Willig, 2008). As a result, the “phenomenological analysis produced by the researcher is an interpretation” (Willig, 2008, p. 57). The goal, according to Smith and Osborn (2008), is to describe in detail what the participants think about what is happening to them, and how participants are making sense of their personal and social world. In order to capture the quality and texture contained in the description of the lived experience, a process of engagement with the transcripts will occur (Willig, 2008).

On the other hand, IPA has been criticised as being overly subjective (Smith & Osborn, 2008; Willig, 2008). Critics also disapprove of IPA due to the researcher’s exploration having an impact on the participants’ experiences (Willig, 2008). The interpretation therefore involves a two stage process or a double hermeneutics: on one level the participants are trying to make sense of their reality, while on the second level the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world (Smith & Eatough, 2007; Smith & Osborn, 2008). Double hermeneutics illustrates the dual role of the researcher: in one way the researcher is likened to the participant who is encouraged into drawing from the cognitive abilities which they share. The researcher is different from the participant regarding the manner in which he or she has to engage to make sense of someone else’s personal experience (Smith & Eatough, 2007). Both these levels of interpretation are required to make
sense of the identified phenomena and lead to a richer analysis (Smith & Eatough, 2007; Smith & Osborn, 2008). In addition, the knowledge which is produced can be described as reflexive as it recognises its dependence on the researcher’s point of view (Willig, 2008).

The above-mentioned phenomenological process results in the gathering of rich subjective data which assists in the understanding of the nature and quality of the experience of the unforgiveness of infidelity. The basic methodological procedures associated with IPA are introduced in the following section.

3 RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 Population and sampling

Smith and Osborn (2008) state that the population and sample method required by a study are determined by the nature of the research. The nature of this research involves exploring the experience in question, and therefore purposeful sampling was applied (Smith & Eatough, 2007; Smith & Osborn, 2008). The SAGE handbook describes purposeful sampling as a sample technique based upon the researcher’s decision regarding the participants, and who he/she thinks will most likely be appropriate for the study (2006).

A definite characteristic of IPA is its assurance of a detailed interpretive account of each individual case (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Many researchers recognise the extensive analytic process involved, and therefore endorse the use of a small sample size (Langdridge, 2007; Smith & Osborn, 2008).

There were three principle criteria for the eligibility of a participant; the first being that the participants needed to have experienced the phenomenon of unforgiveness due to infidelity within a marriage relationship, the second being that the participants needed to be willing to talk about this phenomenon in an interview, and the third being that the participants define themselves as subscribing to a Christian belief system, specifically non-denominational.
Members from an infidelity and divorce recovery group within a non-denominational church were informed about the study. Participants who reported experiencing adjustment problems due to marital difficulty and who met the above-mentioned criteria were purposefully sampled for the study. The three individuals who were sourced for this study were given verbal and written information pertaining to the nature of the study.

3.2 Data collection and methods

The aim of the data collection method within qualitative research is to obtain a detailed description of the participants’ experiences, so as to gather information on how the participants perceive and make sense of their reality (Smith & Osborn, 2008). The most widely used methods of data collection for an IPA are through semi-structured interviews (Smith & Osborn, 2008; Willig, 2008).

A benefit of semi-structured interviews is that these facilitate the development of rapport between the respondent and the investigator, tending to produce richer data (Burman, 2002; Smith & Osborn, 2008; Willig, 2008). In addition, the flexibility in semi-structured interviews can often document perspectives that are usually overlooked (Burman, 2002). The aim of semi-structured interviews is for the interview to be shaped by the interviewees’ own understandings, and therefore to allow for the uncovering of the meaning the respondents attach to their experiences (Burman, 2002). Interviews that utilize a semi-structured interview format, were therefore conducted. This non-directive style of data collection ensures each participant’s personal experiences of unforgiveness of infidelity within a Christian context are described in detail.

3.2.1 The interview schedule

In order to maintain the general focus during the interview, a semi-structured interview schedule was compiled by the researcher beforehand. This assisted the interviewer in the consideration of possible difficulties which might have occurred during the interview.
This interview schedule consisted of open-ended questions that flowed from a general to a more specific level of inquiry. This system of asking open-ended questions allowed the interviewer to explore overlooked areas, as well as address possible contradictions in the data, thereby resulting in the collecting of rich subjective material (Willig, 2008).

Questions centred on the exploration of the experience of unforgiveness, with particular reference to the cognitive, emotional and behavioural consequences of unforgiveness from the participants’ frame of reference. Questions were neutral and not value-laden or leading. Jargon, stereotypical assumptions, and discriminatory language were avoided.

Additionally gentle nudges or probes were constructed which assisted with good interview technique. Through the use of prompts such as “please could you elaborate”, the researcher was able to encourage a richer description without leading the conversation (Polio et al., 2006). The researcher’s clinical training and competence also assisted with good interview technique.

### 3.2.2 Interviewing procedure and the transcription of data

Two meetings were conducted with each individual participant. During the first meeting, the participants were introduced to the study. The second meeting comprised of the audio-recorded interviews which were conducted within a comfortable and safe environment, where no disruptions would occur. Each participant was interviewed individually.

Initially, the interview involved putting the participant at ease, as well as establishing rapport and to set a slow and comfortable pace for the interview (Willig, 2008). The participants were always given sufficient time to complete their answer before the next question was phrased. One question was asked at a time. The participants were monitored throughout the interview regarding how they were being affected by the interview questions. Because the interview was recorded, the interviewer was freed to establish rapport and ensure the smooth running
of the interviews (Smith & Osborn, 2008). After the interview was concluded, the respective participants were free to ask questions (Willig, 2008).

Given that the phenomenological approach places value on the subjective experience of individuals, the transcriptions formed an integral part of the interviewing procedure. The recorded interviews were then transcribed verbatim (Willig, 2008). The audio recording of the interviews were played and re-played until the interviews were transcribed verbatim into written form (Appendices B, C and D). The transcribed interviews were then ready to be analysed.

3.3 Data analysis and interpretation

The basic assumption of IPA is that the researcher is interested in learning about the participants’ psychological experience as represented in their transcribed interviews (Smith & Osborn, 2008). In order to accurately extrapolate the essence of the experience, the researcher is required to engage with the transcriptions within an interpretive relationship (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

In accordance with IPA, the following steps were observed:

3.3.1 Step 1: Initial reading of transcripts

Data analysis utilising IPA started with a thorough reading of the transcript, with the intention of obtaining an overall understanding of the reported experience (Storey, 2007). This procedure was repeated with each participant. All details were regarded as equally important (Yardley, 2008).

An essential component of this process was the researcher reflecting on her personal assumptions and opinions regarding the phenomenon in question (Willig, 2008). This reflective procedure, in addition to supervision, enabled the researcher to maintain a stance
of neutrality, therefore allowing the true meaning of the data to emerge. These personal presuppositions are described within the self-reflection section of the final chapter.

3.3.2 Step 2: Identifying and labelling themes

The individual transcriptions were then categorised into smaller units of meaning (Polio et al., 2006). These units were then arranged chronologically (Langdridge, 2007). The identified units of meaning served as the basis for the sub-themes, and yielded a thematic description of each individual participant (Willig, 2008).

3.3.3 Step 3a: Linking sub-themes and identifying thematic clusters

Initial sub-themes were identified within individual interviews. The commonalities identified between the sub-themes were then amalgamated to form overarching themes (Polio et al., 2006; Storey, 2007). Themes were then grouped into natural clusters based on shared meanings across themes, and were also examined for connections between them (Storey, 2007).

3.3.4 Step 3b: Returning to the participant

After completion of the process, the newly developed thematic structure was presented to each participant. Respondent validation was utilized to ensure that the participants' personal experiences and descriptions were represented (Polio et al., 2006). Feedback from the participants validated the identified themes.

3.3.5 Step 4: Producing a summary table of themes with illustrative quotes

At the end of the analysis process, the clusters were presented in table form (Polio et al., 2006; Storey, 2007). These clusters were listed, together with their themes, sub-themes and illustrative quotes. A narrative account of these findings was then compared with existing literature.
4 PROCEDURES TO ENSURE QUALITY RESEARCH

4.1 Ethical considerations

Qualitative researchers “are guests in the private spaces of the world therefore their manners should be good and their code of ethics should be strict” (Stakes, in Willig, 2008, p. 83). The researcher ensured that the research process was conducted with honesty and respect, and that it was facilitated in a manner consistent with ethical guidelines.

Participants were fully informed of the research procedure pertaining to this study in the first meeting. These participants were provided with documentation informing them of the overall nature and purpose of the research study: gathering information regarding the participants’ role, the voluntary nature of their participation, their rights as participants including their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequence, and finally issues regarding confidentiality and anonymity (Brinkmann & Krale, 2008; Willig, 2008). The participants were also informed that their interviews would be audio-taped, and that the data from these interviews would be used for research purposes. During this first discussion, consent forms (Appendix A) were obtained from each participant. Informed consent is a contractual agreement between the researcher and the participants (Brinkmann & Krale, 2008).

Throughout the study, anonymity of the participants was upheld. The participants’ names were changed in the transcriptions. From the onset, the researcher deleted any identifiable information in the transcriptions and within the reports. Only the researcher has and will have access to any identifiable information pertaining to the participants.

The confidentiality of the information was safeguarded throughout the study. For the duration of the study, all the information pertaining to the participants was kept in a locked cupboard. On completion of the research dissertation, this information will be destroyed (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009).
In the event of the interviewing process having evoked an aversive psychological reaction, participants would have been referred to a registered psychologist and or an intern psychologist for a psychotherapeutic intervention. Finally participants will be given general feedback with regards to the findings of the study.

4.2 Demonstrating trustworthiness in qualitative research

Yardley believes that “the validity of research corresponds to the degree to which it is accepted as sound, legitimate and authoritative by people with an interest in research findings” (2008, p. 234). It therefore proves important to make a judgement regarding the manner in which the research was carried out, in addition to the trustworthiness of the findings (Yardley, 2008). In her article on the validity of qualitative research, Yardley (2008) identifies several guidelines which improve the trustworthiness of a qualitative study. These guidelines are now discussed.

4.2.1 Sensitivity to context: Literature and sociocultural contexts

Trustworthiness is tied to demonstrating that the study has important attributes, such as the exploration of new topics or discovering a new phenomenon (Yardley, 2008). Sensitivity is additionally achieved through an ethical relationship with the participants (Yardley, 2008).

Here, trustworthiness was achieved through the portrayal of relevant literature (Chapter 2) which demonstrates that this research question is exploring new topics, and therefore resulting in the description of an unexplored phenomenon. In addition, sensitivity was adhered to through the use of open-ended questions. These questions encouraged the participants to freely express themselves, without hindrance or pressure.
4.2.2 Respondent validation

Yardley (2008) addresses the notion of respondent validation as an important factor in promoting trustworthiness. Respondent validation formed part of the third step of the data analysis process of this study.

4.2.3 Paper trail

According to Yardley, it is important to provide evidence which links raw data to the final report, as it maintains the transparency of the study (Yardley, 2008). All information pertaining to this study has been safeguarded throughout the course of the study.

4.2.4 Coherence

Yardley (2008) defines coherence as the ability of the study to make sense as a whole. Coherence of a report refers to how well the report was constructed in order to present a convincing argument. The researcher believes coherency has been maintained throughout this research study.

4.2.5 Commitment and rigour

The researcher needs to ensure that a satisfactory level of insight on the topic of research is produced (Yardley, 2008). The researcher has ensured that the participants’ descriptions were recorded accurately and were not manipulated in any way. The themes identified across the transcriptions reflect the reality of the lived experience of unforgiveness of infidelity within a Christian context. A self-reflection section was also added, which maintained transparency and promoted the trustworthiness of the data.

5 CONCLUSION

The interpretive phenomenological method allows for an effective collection of subjective data, which results in an in-depth description of the identified phenomena. This description of
the research topic can only be achieved by exploring the lived experience. Therefore, this particular approach is appropriate to describe the experience of unforgiveness of extra-marital infidelities within a Christian context.

The intra-individual analysis of P1 is discussed in the following chapter.
Chapter 4

Intra-Individual Analysis for Participant 1

1 INTRODUCTION

The aims of this chapter are to present an overview of P1’s history as well as the researcher’s impression of P1, and then to provide an intra-individual analysis of P1. This chapter concludes with a summary of this participant’s development from the experience of unforgiveness to becoming more forgiving.

2 BRIEF HISTORY AND THE RESEARCHER’S IMPRESSION

P1 and her husband met in high school. P1 said that throughout their 17 years of marriage, her husband spent many years working overseas. As a result, she expressed feeling as if she had raised their 3 children and managed the household alone.

In January 2010, P1’s husband lost his job overseas and then returned home. On his return, he decided to take a trip to the bush. While vacationing there, he met someone and started a relationship with her. The interview was conducted approximately one year after P1 discovered the infidelity.

The researcher’s initial impression of P1 was that she was anxious, but willing to share her experience. She started her narrative from the moment she met her husband, as if the path to forgiveness needed to begin there too.
3 THE INTRA-INDIVIDUAL ANALYSIS OF PARTICIPANT 1

The intra-individual analysis of P1 resulted in the emergence of two predominant clusters. Her emotional experience related to the unforgiveness of infidelity was encapsulated in the first cluster. Anger, loss and dealing with emotions were additional themes discussed in this cluster. The second cluster centred on P1’s spiritual understandings regarding forgiveness and unforgiveness. The clusters identified and the corresponding themes and sub-themes are discussed in the following section.

3.1 Cluster 1: A difficult emotional experience

During the interview, P1 described the multitude of emotions she experienced after discovering the infidelity, as well as the ways in which these emotions affected her physiologically. P1 described her experience of these emotions as “difficult” and “horrible”.

“...and, um...it's all very hard...but I think it's just...ja...hard...and you know it is horrible...”

3.1.1 Theme 1: Range of emotions experienced

Although these emotions were triggered by the discovery of her husband’s infidelity, P1 described continuing to experience them for many months following the offence.

She described her initial experience as “shocking”. She added that it made her feel overwhelmed and sad. She expressed feeling rejected and abandoned. She explained that she was very angry, and that she wanted him to pay for what he did. P1 described that she felt blamed by her in-laws for her husband’s infidelity. She added that she also blamed herself.

“...it was the absolute shock of it...it felt like your whole world would fall apart...”

“...all I did was cry every single week.”

“...you feel rejected, unloved...you feel half a person...”
“...all the anger is still inside of me...I am so angry at him...I am angry at myself...”

“...I want him to pay for it, I want him to feel like I feel...”

“...when it first happened I blamed myself because I thought it was me...”

“...the in-laws called me and said if you made the house more homey and more inviting, and if you lost weight...so his whole family blames me...”

3.1.2 Theme 2: The physiological experience of emotions

P1 described unpleasant physiological symptoms associated with her emotional experience during this time. She stated that she experienced these physiological symptoms for many months following the offence.

“...You know I don’t sleep very well...I get terrible dreams...and I grind my teeth, and I have had to get a bite-plate...”

3.1.3 Theme 3: Anger

During the interview, P1 recognised that she had not yet dealt with all the emotions associated with the experience in question. In particular, anger was identified as an emotion which she had not yet dealt with. P1 therefore attributed her state of unforgiveness to the fact that she had not yet dealt with her emotions at the stage of the interview.

“...I am still angry with him and myself. I have not forgiven myself either.”

“...I don’t know if I will ever be able to forgive him...but I think it is just very raw at the moment. It has been a year.”

P1 also identified the experience of additional offences, besides the infidelity, which appeared to have intensified her anger. This included offences which occurred during the marriage which she had previously not acknowledged, as well as offences which occurred following the offence of infidelity itself.
According to P1, her spouse had a drinking problem. She stated that when he would go drinking she would be left home alone taking care of the children. She also added that she “resented” the fact that he never tried to get a job near home, and that he left her to manage the family alone.

“I am telling a fib if I say my husband and I never fought, cause I am lying, when we did fight it was when he had too much to drink...”

“I would ask him, can’t you find a job at home, and I resent the fact that he never even tried to find a job here...”

P1 also appeared to experience significant anger about her former husband’s failure to provide her with explanations for his choices and that she was blamed for the choices he made.

“...and, you know what angers me the most, they don’t even have the audacity to give you an excuse...”

“...the sister in law calls me and says if you made the house more homey and more inviting, and if you lost weight, then maybe he would not have...so his whole family blames me...”

While P1 was identifying the reasons which intensified her anger towards her offending spouse, she would often state:

“...another reason why I think I can’t forgive him is because...”

It appears that for P1, the factors which intensified her anger became her reasons for being unable to forgive her spouse. P1 appears to have associated this state of unforgiveness with emotions that she had not yet dealt with.
3.1.4 Theme 4: Loss

The fourth theme which emerged from the data centred on the theme of loss. P1 stated that her experience altered the perception she held of her husband. For P1, he was no longer the man that she married. P1 stated that this loss complicated her experience.

“...he is not the person I knew, and that is the worst, you thought he was someone you knew...he is not the person I married..."

“...it is so hard, you know why this is so chaotic, because this is so out of character for him.”

3.1.5 Theme 5: Dealing with emotions

Throughout the interview, P1 identified factors that encouraged the process of her dealing with her emotions. P1 stated that attending support groups, prayer and journaling were "cathartic" experiences for her. P1 also described other factors which helped her to express and understand her emotions. These included attending church, reading self-help books and listening to praise and worship music.

...and like I said I used to go to the support group...oh my the praying really helped, after we had talked about it, they say it was cathartic, and you spoke...like I said I joined NL church, and I go there every Sunday, and it just really helps me, it just helps me...and they have what you call the singing, and it is wonderful....and I think it is really helping me...I am reading a lot of self-help books, they have helped me...

While reflecting on the many factors which promoted the expression of her emotions, P1 explained that these were her attempts at helping herself emotionally recover from the experience of infidelity.

“...so in a way I think I am getting better, by helping myself...”
3.2 Cluster 2: Spirituality

During her interview P1 reflected on her spiritual beliefs regarding forgiveness. The first theme centres on her previous understanding of forgiveness. The second theme focuses on her current understanding of forgiveness and unforgiveness. The third theme discusses her experience of personal growth and the final theme reflects on the movement from unforgiveness towards forgiveness.

3.2.1 Theme 1: Previous understandings from Scripture

P1 described that for her, Jesus is the epitome of forgiveness. She used the story of Mary whom she believed was a prostitute, and who used her hair to wash Jesus' feet.

“...when that lady Mary washed Jesus’ feet, and you know she was a..., and he forgave her. I mean he did a lot of forgiveness, didn’t he? Beautiful forgiveness. It is lovely how Jesus forgave everyone...”

3.2.2 Theme 2: Defining forgiveness and unforgiveness of infidelity

P1 described growing in her understanding of forgiveness and unforgiveness as a result of her experience of marital infidelity. P1 explained that, according to her, forgiveness can be achieved, but only with God’s help. She described forgiveness as an emotional process which takes time and effort. Her experience taught her that forgiveness is more for the offendee than the offender. For P1, it is a process that enables the offendee to move forward with his/her life.

Forgiveness is...very hard work...I have definitely moved past, with God as my help...it takes time....They say it is better for you to get there in your heart...forgiveness is not for the other person but especially for you...to actually be able to look at them and love them and carry on like nothing is wrong.
3.2.3 Theme 3: Personal growth

During the interview, P1 made a connection between the process of forgiving and personal growth. For P1, her experience of unforgiveness of infidelity resulted in her finding meaning and achieving spiritual growth.

...I think what I am trying to do is make sense, find some meaning, you know, um... and I have never been this close to God before and NL church has helped me, I take notes on Sundays...no one says I have to read the Bible and scriptures but it makes me feel better, and when I sing those songs it makes me feel better, and I think with time, and I definitely have found meaning, and I am not saying it has been easy...but...I feel I have definitely found meaning.

3.2.4 Theme 4: The process of moving from unforgiveness towards forgiveness

While describing her experience of unforgiveness, P1 appeared to discuss her experience as a process of moving from unforgiveness towards forgiveness.

“Forgiveness is...very hard work...I have definitely moved past, with God as my help...it takes time....They say it is better for you to get there in your heart..."

“So in a way I think I am getting better...I am not where they want me to be...you really have to try hard...it will come...it will take a long time...”

I think what I am trying to do is make sense, find some meaning...I have never been this close to God...and when I sing those songs it makes me feel better, and I think with time, and I definitely have found meaning, and I am not saying it has been easy.

For P1, the process of forgiveness was characterised by a difficult emotional experience. This emotional process included experiencing a range of emotions with their associated
physiological symptoms. P1 particularly described the experience of anger and loss. For P1, a consequence of dealing with emotions was emotional healing. For her, the results of moving towards forgiveness included finding meaning and spiritual enrichment.

4 CONCLUSION

After 17 years of marriage, P1’s spouse committed the offence of extramarital infidelity. The interview was conducted approximately one year after having discovered her husband’s infidelity. An intra-individual analysis of the transcribed interview resulted in the emergence of four predominant clusters.

The first cluster which emerged centred on the theme of emotions. According to P1 she experienced intense emotions. She described unpleasant physiological symptoms associated with her emotional experience during this time. In addition she identified many factors that promoted the expression of her emotions; she also explained that these were her attempts at recovery.

The second cluster which emerged focused on previous offences experienced as well as additional offences experienced following the infidelity. These offences intensified the anger P1 was already experiencing, and became the reasons she remained unforgiving towards her spouse.

The third cluster represented P1’s experience of loss, while the fourth cluster focused on P1 spiritual beliefs regarding forgiveness and unforgiveness. In P1’s experience, forgiveness is achievable with the help of God, and it is a healing process that is primarily for the well-being of offender him/herself. She also added that this experience assisted her in growing closer to God. The data analysis also indicated that the experience of unforgiveness of infidelity, for P1, is characterised by a sequential movement from emotional distress and unforgiveness towards the experience of emotional healing, spiritual growth and greater forgiveness.

The intra-individual analysis of P2 is presented in the next chapter.
Chapter 5

Intra-Individual Analysis for Participant 2

1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to present the findings of the intra-individual analysis for P2. This chapter also briefly discusses P2’s history and the researcher’s impression of P2. An overview of the participant’s movement from the experience of unforgiveness to becoming more forgiving concludes this chapter.

2 BRIEF HISTORY AND THE RESEARCHER’S IMPRESSION

P2 and her husband have been married for 23 years. P2 described her husband as a restless man, and explained that he has had an extramarital affair during the early years of their marriage. She added that at that time her husband lived with his new girlfriend for several weeks. P2 stated that they reconciled and that she forgave him. She believes that throughout their marriage there were five more women with whom he had extramarital affairs.

According to P2, the extramarital relationship that ended their marriage occurred in 2010, after her husband had attended a school reunion. At the reunion he initiated a relationship with an ex-girlfriend. The interview was conducted approximately one year after this infidelity.

The researcher’s impression of P2 was that she was confident and controlled. As the interview progressed, P2 came across as angry. When the interviewer enquired about her
anger, P2 denied feelings of anger, and stated that she was experiencing feelings of sadness, rather than anger.

3 THE INTRA-INDIVIDUAL ANALYSIS FOR PARTICIPANT 2

The intra-individual analysis for P2 resulted in the identification of three natural clusters. The first cluster centred on P2’s emotional experience related to the unforgiveness of infidelity. This included the multitude of emotions she experienced. Themes of grieving and dealing with emotions were also discussed. Themes that centre on the family context formed part of the second cluster. P2’s spiritual beliefs regarding forgiveness and unforgiveness were the focus of the final cluster. These three clusters are discussed in greater detail in the following section.

3.1 Cluster 1: Emotions

During the interview, P2 described the range of emotions that she experienced when she discovered her husband’s most recent infidelity. Throughout the interview she also described the various strategies she utilised to deal with her emotions.

3.1.1 Theme 1: Emotions experienced

P2 stated that she experienced these emotions for many months following the news of the infidelity.

P2 explained that she initially felt shocked, angry and out of control.

...now I never, ever, ever believed he would do it again to me...I never, I couldn’t believe it...I feel like sometimes I have been in the washing machine. But in the first year I was running around like I was in a washing machine, so your anger...and unforgiveness is all grouped together.
She expressed that she felt sad, ashamed and betrayed. She also explained that she felt worthless.

“...it is a little like the sea, with waves of sadness, cause sometimes you will think of something and you will feel sad...betrayed, ashamed...and you will think of it, and you are sad.”

“...I felt...ashamed for the family, all those kinds of feelings come up.”

“...feel...not good enough...”

3.1.2 Theme 2: Anger

At the beginning of the interview, P2 stated that she was not angry. However as the interview progressed she did express some anger towards her husband’s new girlfriend.

“..and as far as the woman is concerned, well I am very, very, very anti, well she could rot in hell for all that I care...”

For P2, working through her anger meant that she was working through her unforgiveness.

“...you are not working through anger...you are not working through unforgiveness...”

3.1.3 Theme 3: Grieving

P2 compared her experience of unforgiveness of infidelity to a grieving process. For P2, the experience of unforgiveness was comprised of different stages. In P2’s experience, she progressed through the various stages as she dealt with her emotions. She referred to one of the stages as sadness. According to P2, the best way to deal with unforgiveness of infidelity is to deal with the emotions associated with the experience.
“...it’s grieving...grieving that process...you feel sad, so sadness is a part of the grieving process. It is a tearful stage...It’s all made of many different stages....Unforgiveness is the naming of the process you go through...”

“...I do think some people do get there, after a lot of work...but that you can deal with the emotion...It’s, it’s...living with what happened in the best possible way you can...”

“...as the heartache decreases, I am more able to forgive...”

3.1.4 Theme 4: Dealing with emotions

Throughout the interview P2 stated that she had to deal with all the emotions that she experienced, and identified various strategies she utilised to deal with these emotions. She also added that in dealing with her emotions she was becoming more forgiving.

“...all those kind of emotions come up and you have to work through.”

“...I am trying to work through the unforgiveness,...It’s, it’s...living with what happened in the best possible way you can...”

P2 stated that the first strategy that assisted her in dealing with her emotions was refusing to become fixated on unforgiveness. P2 stated that this awareness occurred as a result of her becoming aware of the consequences of unforgiveness. She described this awareness as fuelling her desire to recover from the offense.

It also pointed out for me what would be the consequences if I took the road of bitterness where I would land up, and if I took the road of forgiveness, where you would land up, and by taking the road of forgiveness, it is better for you, because you are only doing harm to yourself if you don’t.
P2 stated that she created a support system for herself. In addition she engaged herself in various therapies and settled into a new routine. She also found things to be grateful for, and was gentle with herself.

“...I am seeing psychologists, reading books, attended a support group, so I am working through my anger...I’m dealing with my anger in a very constructive, planned...way...I am trying to be gentle on myself..."

I’m doing lots of talking, lots of therapy, lots of writing. I am trying to work through the unforgiveness, I don’t think...I haven’t healed. I think I will be able to forgive once I have healed, and now possibly it is just too soon...

3.2 Cluster 2: Family Context

The second cluster centres on themes within the family context. P2 described that the relationship she shared with her parents had a positive impact on her in later life. She believes that, because her parents raised her to believe in herself, she has developed a good self-image, and was therefore able to deal with problems effectively in adulthood.

“...fortunately I was brought up with a very good self-image, I realised that um...the reason why we were so long together was because I could put up with his problems.”

During the interview, P2 stated that she felt betrayed by her father when he placed pressure on her to forgive her spouse. She described this experience as traumatising, for her.

“My dad tried to pressure me to forgive, and I felt like there was no loyalty, but with all respect he has no idea what this feels like, and that is like another trauma.”
3.3 Cluster 3: Spirituality

During her interview, P2 reflected on her spiritual beliefs regarding forgiveness and unforgiveness.

3.3.1 Theme 1: Previous understandings of Scripture

P2 described that, for her, forgiveness was best illustrated through the example of Jesus on the cross.

“...I think God at the crucifixion. I think that was an absolute epitome of forgiveness.”

3.3.2 Theme 2: Defining unforgiveness and forgiveness

For P2, her experience of unforgiveness of infidelity was a unique experience.

All I can say is you don’t know, until you have been through it yourself. Meantime when it actually happens to you, you have completely different idea, different emotions coming up that you didn’t even know they were there. Until you are in it yourself, you don’t know how you are going to act, and that I have realised definitely.

According to P2, unforgiveness occurs when you are still dealing with your emotions. P2 stated that it was challenging to deal with her difficult emotions.

“Unforgiveness is very real...more complicated as there are emotions involved.”

“...it’s so hurtful and painful that you can’t let go of that thing happening...”

“...the hurt comes in with the unforgiveness, the fact that you are still hurting...”

For P2, forgiveness is impossible to achieve without God. Forgiveness, for her, does not involve the condoning of the deed. Her experience appears to have taught her that forgiveness is for the offendee him/herself. According to P2, forgiveness is an emotional
process which takes time, because one is working through difficult emotions. She described it as a grieving process, as forgiveness occurs when healing occurs.

“...I wouldn’t be sitting here without God.”

“...and now possibly it is just too soon. Thirty eight years later, you can imagine I need some time...as the heartache decreases, I am more able to forgive.”

“...you have gone through your grieving process...”

“...I think I will be able to forgive once I have healed...”

### 3.3.3 Theme 3: Personal growth

P2 stated that a consequence she experienced as a result of progressing through various stages of unforgiveness was personal growth. P2 appears to have experienced personal growth through the development of her character, an increase in self-awareness and through self-acceptance.

“...if you go through all the stages you come through a stronger person...”

...it strengthens your character, so you come out with pillars that are your strengths, because your strengths are what keep you standing as opposed to jumping off the nearest bridge. Your um...they become your crutches to move on. If you go through all the stages you come though a stronger person, and I feel I am stronger, I am quite proud of myself of that, I am a stronger person...but I have grown a lot...and I have always had a good relationship with God, and I wouldn’t be sitting here without God.

“...but I have grown a lot...and you analyse yourself more...but I think at the end of the tunnel you end up thinking I am not so bad after all..."
3.3.4 Theme 4: The process of moving from unforgiveness towards forgiveness

During the interview while P2 was discussing her experience of unforgiveness of infidelity, she appeared to describe her experience as a process.

“...it’s grieving...grieving that process...you feel sad, so sadness is a part of the grieving process. It is a tearful stage...It’s all made of many different stages....Unforgiveness is the naming of the process you go through..."

“...I do think some people do get there, after a lot of work..."

“...I have grown a lot...”

For P2, the experience of moving from unforgiveness of infidelity to becoming more forgiving was a process. This process was characterised by the experience of a multitude of difficult emotions. P2 compared this emotional experience to that of a grieving process. To this effect, for this participant the grieving process resulted in a movement away from anger and unforgiveness towards emotional healing and personal growth.

4 CONCLUSION

P2 and her husband were married for 23 years. During this time, P2 verbalised that she experienced many infidelities. According to P2, the multitude of infidelities influenced her and her children in a negative way. The most recent affair occurred in 2010.

The intra-individual analysis resulted in the emergence of five natural clusters. Cluster 1 discussed the emotions P2 experienced once she heard the news of the infidelity. According to P2, this experience was emotionally difficult and overwhelming. She also identified the various ways she worked through her emotions, one such example being counselling. For P2, dealing with her emotions resulted in her becoming more forgiving.
The second cluster centred on experiences of additional offences which intensified her anger. P2 expressed anger towards her husband’s new romantic partner. She also added that the consequences following the infidelity are intertwined, and additionally intensified her anger. The third cluster centred on the theme of loss.

The fourth cluster was comprised of data which reflected the influence her family context had on her experience. The final cluster encompassed P2’s spiritual views of forgiveness and unforgiveness. P2 believes that forgiveness can only be achieved with God’s help, and that unforgiveness is an indication that the offendee is still experiencing emotional distress. According to P2, progressing through stages of unforgiveness results in personal growth.

Finally, the intra-individual analysis of P2 revealed a sequential movement in the data. For P2, the experience of unforgiveness of infidelity was characterised by a movement from unforgiveness towards the experience of emotional healing and personal growth. According to P2, this process resulted in her becoming more forgiving.

The intra-individual analysis of P3 is presented in the next chapter.
Chapter 6

Intra-individual Analysis for Participant 3

1  INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to present the intra-individual analysis of P3. This includes a brief overview of P3’s history, the researcher’s impression of P3 during the interview, and a reflection on the data-analysis process.

2  BRIEF HISTORY AND THE RESEARCHER’S IMPRESSION

P3 met her husband during early adulthood, and she described falling madly in love with him. During their marriage they parented three daughters. Several years ago P3’s husband had a sexual affair with a work colleague.

The interviewer’s initial impression of P3 was that she appeared eager to share her experience, yet anxious. She was able to speak openly about difficult emotions.

3  THE INTRA-INDIVIDUAL ANALYSIS FOR PARTICIPANT 3

Three predominant clusters naturally emerged as a result of the intra-individual analysis for P3. The first cluster centred on P3’s emotional experience. This included discussing the range of emotions she experienced, identifying additional offences which intensified her anger, as well as exploring the theme of loss. Themes related to P3’s family context comprised the second cluster. P3’s spiritual points of view regarding forgiveness and unforgiveness were encapsulated in the final cluster. These three clusters and their corresponding themes are discussed in the following section.
3.1 Cluster 1: Emotions

The first cluster which emerged from the data centred on the emotions P3 experienced related to the experience of infidelity. The many ways in which P3 attempted to seek relief by expressing her emotions, are also described.

3.1.1 Theme 1: Emotions experienced

P3 discussed experiencing a variety of emotions in response to the news of the infidelity. These feelings were experienced immediately after she discovered the infidelity. She described still experiencing some of these emotions at the time of the interview.

P3 stated that she felt overwhelmed and at times even numb. The experience made her feel angry as well as afraid. She described that she felt bitter.

“...everything all at once...it just makes me angry...ja it just feels... ja...scary...”

“...sometimes I will watch really sad movie so I can just cry, cause I just want to know I can feel things.”

“...makes you bitter...it hardens your heart.”

P3 stated that she felt betrayed. She also felt rejected. She recalls feeling “used up”. She also remembers wanting to die.

“...the rejection, that was huge, huge, huge....like almost like I'm used up....and I just wanted to die, aagh. I actually wanted to die.”

3.1.2 Theme 2: The physiological experience of emotions

P3 stated that she felt exhausted. She described experiencing these symptoms for an extended period of time following the offense.

“it’s very, hard, very hard...so tired and exhausted...”
3.1.3 Theme 3: Anger

For P3, the infidelity had a destructive impact on her family. She added that the infidelity magnified any other offences committed by her husband as they intensified her anger, and therefore complicated an already difficult process. These additional offences were described by P3 as reasons she remained unforgiving towards her spouse.

It just smashes through a family, and hurts people, and destroys everyone. It’s like just one person...his infidelity had an effect on my family, his family, the girls, it touched everything around me. If I look at the point before the infidelity, if I remember all the stuff was tough and all then because of his one stupid thing he did, it magnified all the other bad things, and destroyed everything.

I have gone through the forgiveness process, like when things were going ok, but then it’s when things don’t go so well, that I feel so angry at him...and I have to forgive him again. Then it all comes back again...

“...and this anger builds up, and then I don’t forgive him anymore...”

3.1.4 Theme 4: Loss

During the interview P3 reflected on what she had lost as a result of the infidelity. She described how her perception of her former husband has changed. For P3, he is no longer the person she married. She expressed that for her the person she knew has died.

It is like I don’t know my...I mean when I look at him I am...who he is now...I just can’t even recognise him, he has changed. It’s... like the person I knew died, and I feel I don’t feel anything. I completely... you know. When I look at photos from our wedding, and photos from a
while back, it reignites the person, if I see him now it’s he’s not like that. It is not the same person, he is not the person I knew him to be. Even though he looks quite the same...that is not what I had, that is something else.

3.1.5 Theme 5: Dealing with emotions

P3 stated that her support system assisted her in dealing with her emotions. P3 described being able to express her emotions in her church support groups. She explained that turning to others for support was emotionally healing for her. For P3, dealing with her emotions promoted forgiveness.

“It requires a lot of support...the church was like my hospital...I think...um...the recovery group was very important. I just cried through the whole thing...”

“...as you let go of...forgiveness...becomes easier and you actually feel it...”

3.2 Cluster 2: Family Context

This cluster centres on P3’s family context. During the interview, P3 stated that her father’s rejection contributed to her lack of self-worth. According to P3, this may have complicated her experience of the infidelity. She also stated that this had a negative impact on her relationship with God.

“...It is also the rejection and I also think that it was because of the place that I was at, I was already insecure about myself, my whole life...and I never dealt with my father’s rejection, and then he rejected me...”

“...I find it very difficult to feel God, and some people say it is because of my own father...”
3.3 Cluster 3: Spirituality

Throughout the interview P3 discussed her spiritual viewpoints regarding forgiveness and unforgiveness. She also described experiencing a spiritual crossroad and achieving spiritual growth. The experience of unforgiveness as a movement or process is reflected in the final theme.

3.3.1 Theme 1: Previous understandings of Scripture

P3 described that for her, Jesus is the epitome of forgiveness. She expressed that the primary teaching she received through Jesus’ death on the cross, is that she is required by her faith to forgive.

“Jesus forgave when they were crucifying him and torturing Him...and He said I forgive you, so that is what I have learnt we need to do...”

3.3.2 Theme 2: A spiritual crossroad

For P3, her experience of infidelity resulted in her encountering a spiritual crossroad. She felt presented with two choices: rely on God or turn her back on Him. P3 reported that she eventually realised she needed God, and when she realised she wanted to know God more, she turned towards Him again.

...and like I was at this road...I had a choice to make am I going to follow God or am I going to follow the world...I went off the path for a while, for a few months. I was just so desperate to know that I was pretty, and that another guy would think that I was pretty. There was this desperate need to know that I was...but I was wrong...

3.3.3 Theme 3: Defining forgiveness and unforgiveness of infidelity

P3 described her experience of unforgiveness of infidelity as a unique process.
“I realised people will never understand what you walk through until they walk through it themselves.”

According to P3, unforgiveness hurts the offendee more than the offender. She continued explaining that her experience of unforgiveness was like being held captive. For P3, the captive experience was maintained by not dealing with her emotions, and instead harbouring them.

“It is harmful to yourself...”

“It’s like I am harbouring bad feeling...”

“It just feels like I have been locked in a cage and I can't get out...It just feels like umm... limited and sad...and put me into this cage and conform me into this box...”

For P3, forgiveness now is an emotional process through which one works with the help of God. According to P3, forgiving takes time and requires effort. She also stated that forgiveness is important, especially for the offendee, because it sets the offendee free from difficult emotions.

“...as you let go of...forgiveness...becomes easier and you actually feel it...”

“...it is giving it to God...because...I can't forgive...in my own abilities...”

“I know it is important to forgive.....so I am really gonna try harder to forgive to set myself free.”

“...I mean it has been very hard...it has been four years now, and I am still not in a place of forgiveness.”

3.3.4 Theme 4: Spiritual growth

For P3, her experience of unforgiveness of infidelity resulted in spiritual development. P3 described having grown spiritually, because she grew closer to God.
“...I mean, if it didn’t happen, I can see that I have grown closer to God...”

3.3.5 Theme 5: The process of moving from unforgiveness towards forgiveness

P3’s journey to forgiveness was described as an emotional process.

“...I mean it has been very hard...it has been four years now, and I am still not in a place of forgiveness. I really thought I was...and this anger build up, and then I don’t forgive him anymore...”

“...I have gone through the process...”

“...I can see that I have grown closer to God...”

This emotional process was characterised by P3 experiencing a variety of emotions. P3 also experienced anger and loss. Turning to others for support was one of the ways in which P3 dealt with her emotions. Emotional healing resulted in a movement towards forgiveness and spiritual growth.

4 CONCLUSION

P3 was married to her husband for over 20 years. Approximately four years ago, P3’s spouse committed the offence of extramarital infidelity. An intra-individual analysis of the transcribed interview resulted in the emergence of five predominant clusters.

Cluster 1 describes P3’s emotional experience. According to P3, the emotions she experienced were overwhelming and painful. The emotions persisted for many years after the offence, for P3. She also explained that this time was physiologically exhausting for her. One of the ways she expressed her emotion was in turning to others for support. She described this process as healing.

The second cluster discusses the additional offenses she experienced. For P3, these additional offences intensified her anger and complicated her experience. The third cluster
reflects her experience of loss. Cluster four centres on her relationship with her father, while the final cluster discusses her experience from a spiritual point of view.

Finally, it is important to consider that a chronological movement was observed in the intra-individual analysis of P3. For P3, her experience of infidelity was characterised by a movement from emotional distress and unforgiveness towards becoming more forgiving. P3 verbalized that she experienced emotional healing and achieved spiritual growth during this process.

The following chapter presents the findings of the inter-individual analysis.
Chapter 7

The Inter-Individual Analysis

1 INTRODUCTION

Chapters four, five and six presented the intra-individual analysis of each participant, while this chapter seeks to provide the inter-individual discussion. An inter-individual discussion reflects the overall experience of the participants by means of integrating the results (Polio et al., 2006; Storey, 2007). Therefore this chapter focuses on the commonalities in the descriptions presented in Chapter four to six, with the intention of presenting the common essence of the phenomenon of unforgiveness of extramarital infidelity within a Christian context.

2 INTER-INDIVIDUAL ANALYSIS

An integration of the findings resulted in the identification of three overarching clusters. The first cluster centres on themes reflecting the emotional experiences of the participants. This includes the experience of anger as well as the theme of dealing with emotions. The theme of loss and grieving also forms part of the first cluster. The second cluster comprises of themes focusing on the participants’ family contexts. The assumptions of P1, P2 and P3, regarding forgiveness and unforgiveness are reflected in the final cluster.

2.1 Cluster 1: A difficult emotional experience

The numerous emotions experienced by the participants make up the first cluster. In accordance with this, the participants also referred to the manner in which these emotions affected them physiologically. As mentioned in earlier chapters, the participants continued to
experience the emotional and physiological responses for many months following the news of the infidelity. P1 described the experience of these emotions as “difficult” and “horrible”.

2.1.1 Theme 1: Range of emotions experienced

All the participants described their initial emotional reaction to the discovery of the infidelity as that of shock. Feelings of being overwhelmed and out of control were also verbalized. P2 compared her experience of feeling overwhelmed and out of control by using the metaphor of a washing machine. This metaphor compared her experience to that of being caught in a washing machine. P1 stated that it felt as if her world was falling apart, and that there was nothing she could do about this. P2 explained that this feeling of being out of control made her experience even more difficult for her.

In addition to feelings of shock, the participants also discussed their feelings of sadness. Sadness was one of the predominant emotional responses discussed by all the participants. P2 likened the sadness she experienced to waves, as sometimes she would find herself drowning in the sadness, and at other times found it easier to cope. P1 stated that, at the start of her experience, she cried every single day for weeks.

P3 was the only participant who expressed having suicidal thoughts. For P3, there were times where she wanted to die.

Feelings of rejection, abandonment and worthlessness were also experienced by the participants. As a result of the experience of rejection, P2 and P3 described feeling worthless. P1 and P3 stated that the rejection they experienced was difficult, while P2 said that it made her feel humiliated and ashamed.

P1 was the only participant who stated that the experience made her feel like she was to blame for her former’s husband’s infidelity. P3 was the only participant who described feeling afraid.
2.1.2 Theme 2: The physiological experience of emotions

During the interviews, the participants each indicated that the experiences in question were emotionally difficult. P1 and P3 verbalised experiencing unpleasant physical symptoms. For P1 some of the physiological symptoms that she experienced included sleeping problems and having terrible nightmares. She also started grinding her teeth. P3 stated that she often felt physically exhausted.

2.1.3 Theme 3: Anger

The participants all referred to their experience of anger. All the participants experienced anger for many months following the infidelity. Offences which intensified the participants’ anger were also identified.

For P1, her husband’s drinking problem intensified her anger towards him. She also experienced resentment as she felt she managed the home and took care of the children alone. In addition, P1 experienced frustration for having being blamed for her former husband’s choices, as well as for the fact that her former husband failed to provide her with an explanation for his actions. For P2, her anger was intensified by her husband’s new romantic partner.

These offences, which intensified the participants’ anger, complicated an already difficult experience. According to the participants, the angrier they were, the harder it was to forgive. In addition, the participants described these offences as being the reasons they couldn’t forgive their spouses. P2 and P3 respectively stated “I am trying to work through the unforgiveness...” and “…I am still not in a place of forgiveness...”. It appears that the participants associated their state of unforgiveness with emotions that they had not yet dealt with. Therefore, these offences made the process of forgiving more difficult, because the additional offences triggered emotional responses which needed to be dealt with in addition to the emotions associated with the infidelity.
2.1.4 Theme 4: Loss and grieving

P1 and P3 described experiencing loss. According to P1 and P3, the infidelity altered their perception of their former spouses, and this loss complicated their experience, as it triggered additional emotional responses which needed to be dealt with.

All the participants referred to the experience of unforgiveness as an emotional process, for them. P2 compared this process to grieving. For P2, moving from unforgiveness to forgiveness was a grieving process that was made up of many stages. She stated that for her one of the stages was sadness. According to P2, progressing through the various stages occurred when she was dealing with her emotions.

2.1.5 Theme 5: Strategies for dealing with emotions

The participants all described employing various strategies that assisted them in dealing with their emotions. The participants stated that dealing with their emotions resulted in emotional healing and formed an important aspect of the process of forgiving.

From the descriptions, the participants appear to have attempted to deal with their emotions by utilizing four broad approaches. The first approach included utilising strategies which accessed social support for the participants. For all the participants this included joining support groups as well as attending church regularly. The second approach promoted verbal or written expressions of feelings. P1 described prayer and journaling as cathartic exercises. For P2, this included consulting a psychologist.

P1 and P2 identified a third approach, which was accessing information. P1 accomplished this through reading self-help books, as well as learning about forgiveness and unforgiveness from her church support groups. P2 also became aware of the consequences of unforgiveness through people she met as well as through other therapies she attended. The final approach consisted of strategies such as finding a new routine, listening to praise and worship as well as being gentle with oneself.
2.2 Cluster 2: Family context

Themes which centre on the family context comprise the second cluster. During the interview, P2 discussed her positive relationship with her parents. She verbalised this secure relationship as one that has had a positive effect on her development and in resulting in a good self-image. She stated that it also assisted her in managing her problems more effectively later on in her life. P3 also discussed her relationship with her father, verbalising that he had rejected her. She described that the relationship she had with her father had a negative impact on her. According to P3, the consequences of this rejecting relationship included her feeling that she was lacking in confidence as an adult, finding it very difficult to relate to God, and further complicating her experience of infidelity.

P2 also stated that she felt betrayed by her father when he placed pressure on her to forgive her spouse. She described that this experience felt like "another trauma" for her.

2.3 Cluster 3: Spirituality

The spiritual beliefs held by the participants regarding forgiveness and unforgiveness comprised the final cluster.

2.3.1 Theme 1: Previous assumptions from Scripture

During the interviews, the participants all discussed their spiritual understandings of forgiveness. P1, P2 and P3 all identified Jesus as being the epitome of forgiveness for them. For all the participants, Jesus’ death on the cross exemplified forgiveness as forming a fundamental aspect of Christianity. However, P3 was the only participant to report viewing forgiveness as a requirement or commandment.

2.3.2 Theme 2: Spiritual decision

P3 stated that she faced a spiritual decision after the offence of infidelity. She verbalized experiencing two choices in that regard: she could either turn away from God or turn towards
Him and deal with this difficult experience. P3 was the only participant to articulate this as a spiritual decision. However, it appears that all the participants may have had a similar experience, since all of the participants respectively expressed reliance on God to assist them while they were in a state of unforgiveness.

### 2.3.3 Theme 3: Personal growth

During the interviews, all of the participants described experiencing personal growth as a result of moving from unforgiveness towards forgiveness. P1 verbalized having found meaning, and developing a more intimate relationship with God. P2 found her character to have developed. She also mentioned that she became more aware of her emotional processes, and learnt to accept herself for who she is. P2 also expressed feeling proud of herself for coming through this experience as a stronger person. P3 stated that she developed spiritually, as she grew closer to God.

### 2.3.4 Theme 4: Moving from unforgiveness towards forgiveness of infidelity

According to P2 and P3, unforgiveness occurred when they were still experiencing emotional distress. P3 stated that unforgiveness was maintained when she became stuck in her emotions, and did not deal with them. She likened her experience of unforgiveness to being held captive. According to P2 and P3, the state of unforgiveness is more harmful for the offende as than the offender. Finally, P2 and P3 both stated that the experience of unforgiveness of infidelity was a unique experience for them, that could only be understood once a person had gone through it personally.

All the participants expressed that they could not forgive from their own abilities and expressed their reliance on God to help them. P2 noted that, for her, forgiveness did not involve the condoning of the offence. All the participants described forgiveness as an emotional process, and all emphasised it requiring time and effort because it involved them having to work through difficult emotions.
P2 referred to this emotional process as a grieving process, for her. She verbalized her experience of unforgiveness as being made up of many stages. Progressing through the stages, or dealing with the emotions, resulted in her becoming more forgiving and in personal growth. According to P3, emotional healing implied that she was set free from her difficult emotions. P1 added that she was “able to move on” after being set free from her difficult emotions.

2.3.5 Theme 5: The process of moving from unforgiveness towards forgiveness

For all of the participants, the forgiveness process was seen as a difficult emotional experience, and was characterised by a range of emotions and physiological symptoms. Participants verbalized feeling shock initially. Anger appeared to have formed an integral part of the emotional experience. They also described feeling sad and worthless. This emotional process was compared to the grieving process by P2. For all three participants, the process was comprised of stages. Dealing with the emotions which were triggered by the infidelity as well as by additional offences appeared to assist the participants in their process of forgiving. Emotional healing or a movement towards forgiveness was described.

3 CONCLUSION

Three participants volunteered their narratives of unforgiveness of extramarital infidelity for this research study. An inter-individual analysis resulted in the emergence of three predominant clusters.

Cluster 1 describes the emotional and physiological impact experienced by all the participants. The participants identified factors that assisted them in dealing with their emotions; these included turning to others for support and accessing information through various therapies. Additional offences experienced by the participants, which intensified their anger, were discussed. Themes of loss and grieving were also encapsulated in this cluster.
The additional offences as well as the losses suffered appeared to have complicated the participants' abilities to deal with their emotions.

The participants' family contexts were the focus of the second cluster. According to P2, her secure relationship with her parents promoted the development of a good self-image. P3 reflected that a rejecting parental relationship produced negative consequences for her. It appears that relationships with their parents had an impact on the experience of unforgiveness of infidelity for two of the three participants.

The third cluster is comprised of the spiritual aspects of the participants' experiences. All the participants described Jesus as the epitome of forgiveness. Their personal descriptions of forgiveness and unforgiveness were also discussed within this cluster.

All the participants described a process of moving from the experience of emotional distress and unforgiveness towards emotional healing and becoming more forgiving. The experience was described as an emotional grieving process by P2, who stated that dealing with her emotions promoted emotional healing. This movement towards emotional healing and forgiveness resulted in achievement of personal growth and spiritual enrichment for all of the participants.

The discussion and conclusion of this study are presented in the following chapter.
Chapter 8

Discussion and Conclusion

1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter sets out to discuss the data analysis in view of the literature presented in previous sections. The limitations and strengths of this study are considered, and potential areas for future research are also discussed.

2 DISCUSSION

The literature presented in earlier chapters of this study, is discussed here in light of the three overarching clusters, namely those of a difficult emotional experience, family context, and spirituality.

2.1 Cluster 1: A difficult emotional experience

The first cluster comprises of the numerous emotions and physiological responses described by the participants. According to the participants’ descriptions, they experienced these emotional and physiological responses for many months following the offence. Additional themes including loss and grieving, as well as the various strategies utilised by the participants in dealing with their emotions are also discussed.

2.1.1 Theme 1: Range of emotions experienced

The participants in this research study described experiencing a wide range of emotional responses following the offence of infidelity.
All of the participants expressed that the experience in question was initially overwhelming for them. The participants described experiences of feeling both shocked and out of control.

The existing psychological literature highlighted that the initial emotional responses following a major crisis are shock and denial (Kübler-Ross, 1969; Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005). Psychological literature exploring the experience of unforgiveness of infidelity described the occurrence of feelings of powerlessness and disbelief (Baucom et al., 2006; Gordon & Baucom, 2003; Gordon et al., 2000).

In addition to feelings of shock, the participants described their intense feelings of sadness. P3 verbalised feeling as if she wanted to die. Feelings of rejection and abandonment were also experienced by the participants. Participants stated having felt ashamed and worthless. P1 was the only participant who verbalized that the experience made her feel as if she was to blame for her former’s husband’s infidelity. P3 was the only participant who described feeling afraid.

Existing literature on unforgiveness has identified feelings of shame, resentment, anger, fear and powerlessness as predominant emotional responses experienced by an offender following a perceived offence (Lansky, 2009, Kluwer & Karremans, 2009; Worthington & Wade, 1999; Worthington et al., 2002). Feelings of helplessness, hopelessness and sadness have also been described (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; Kübler-Ross, 1969; Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005; Worthington & Wade, 1999). Other psychological responses associated with unforgiveness include low self esteem, anxiety and depression (Seligman, 2005; Witvliet, 1999, Witvliet et al, 2001). Gordon & Baucom suggests that the emotional responses that were reported by offenders of extra-marital infidelity parallel the criteria for PTSD (1998, 2003).

The emotional experiences described by the participants echo the descriptions in existing literature. This overwhelming array of emotions are described as intense, by all the
participants. These negative responses may influence how the individuals view themselves and others, as well as how they interpret reality (Seligman, 2005; Witvliet, 1999, Witvliet et al., 2001). According to some psychological researchers, these responses mirror the criteria for PTSD (Gordon & Baucom, 1999, 2003).

2.1.2 Theme 2: The physiological experience of emotions

Some of the physiological symptoms reported by the participants included sleeping problems, nightmares, and teeth grinding. P3 stated that she often felt physically exhausted.

According to Newberg et al. (2000), a stress response related to a perceived injury results in the activation of the sympathetic nervous system via the limbic system and the hypothalamus. This stress response results in the release of stress hormones norepinephrine and cortisol (Newberg et al., 2000). Accompanying this stress response are the physiological responses, such as alternations in heart rate, respiratory rate and blood pressure (Newberg et al., 2000).

The participants verbalized experiencing a variety of physiological responses following the offence of the infidelity. These physiological symptoms that were experienced may be associated with physiological alterations triggered by the stress response following a trauma, as described in existing literature (Gordon & Baucom, 2003; Newberg et al., 2000).

2.1.3 Theme 3: Anger

The participants all described experiencing intense anger for an extended period of time following the offence. According to psychological literature, anger is a natural emotional response which can be experienced by offenders after a perceived offence (Enright and Fitzgibbons, 2002). Anger has also been described as associated with the experience of unforgiveness (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; Frankl, 1971). Offenders experiencing unforgiveness of marital infidelity identified anger as an important component of their emotional processes (Gordon et al., 2000).
Perceived offences identified by the participants which intensified their anger included being blamed for the former husband’s choices, as well as the fact that the former spouse failed to provide an explanation for his actions. P1 described experiencing frustration with her husband’s drinking problem. She depicted feeling resentment towards the fact that she managed the home and took care of the children alone. P2’s anger was intensified by her husband’s new girlfriend. These intensifying factors were described by the participants as the reasons they couldn’t forgive their spouses, and these therefore may have complicated their forgiveness process. The participants associated this state of unforgiveness with the additional emotions they had to deal with in addition to the emotions experienced as a result of the infidelity.

Gunderson & Ferrarri identified several factors that appear to have intensified anger in offendees in extra-marital infidelity (2008), the first of which being the absence of an apology or remorse in the offender (Gunderson & Ferrarri, 2008). Additional factors included are when the offendees has discovered the affair via a third party, as well as the presence of previous offences of infidelity throughout the marriage relationship (Gunderson & Ferrarri, 2008). According to Gunderson and Ferrarri, these factors promoted unforgiveness in offendees of extra-marital infidelity (2008).

The participants described the factors which intensified their anger as the reasons they couldn’t forgive their spouses. Existing literature indicated that these factors may have complicated the forgiveness process for them.

Furthermore, existing literature resonates with the participants’ described experiences. According to the participants’ descriptions of their experiences, anger forms an integral part of their emotional experience. Kübler-Ross describes anger as a necessary stage in the healing process; it also indicates that a person is progressing through his/her emotions (Kübler-Ross 1969, Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005)


2.1.4 Theme 4: Loss and grieving

All the participants described experiencing loss. The participants stated that the experience altered the perceptions they held of their respective husbands. According to the participants, this loss complicated their experiences and triggered additional emotional responses which they all described as requiring to be dealt with.

All the participants described the experience of moving from unforgiveness to forgiveness as an emotional process. P2 compared her process to that of grieving, which is made up of many stages, for this participant. She verbalised that, for her, one of the stages was sadness. According to P2, progressing through the various stages in her case was accomplished by dealing with her emotions.

According to Kübler-Ross (1969), the grieving process is a normal reaction to loss or to any major life crisis. The grieving individual may experience a series of emotional stages; the five stages of grief include denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005). Kübler-Ross (1969) stated that the emotional process of grieving is as unique as the individual experiencing it, therefore not everyone will experiences all five stages. Moreover, individuals may progress through the stages differently (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005).

All the participants verbalized feeling the various stages of grief, namely shock, anger and sadness. The experience of unforgiveness of infidelity as described by the participants appears to share similarities in experience to the grieving process, as identified in existing literature.

2.1.5 Theme 5: Strategies for dealing with emotions

All of the participants described employing strategies that assisted them in dealing with their emotions. According to the participants’ descriptions of their experiences, utilising the
strategies resulted in emotional healing, and aided them in their movement from unforgiveness towards forgiveness.

The participants’ respective descriptions indicate that they dealt with their emotions by employing four broad strategies. The first strategy involved the participants accessing social support. The second strategy involved employing a verbal or written expression of feelings. The third strategy involved accessing information, while the final approach consisted of strategies such as establishing a new routine, listening to praise and worship, as well as being “gentle” with themselves.

Psychological literature has identified several strategies that, when utilized, promoted emotional healing following infidelity (Gough, 2000; Weeks & Fife, 2009). Offendees were encouraged to seek support from friends and family (Gough, 2000). Attending psychotherapy and educational classes were also described as advantageous (Gough, 2000; Weeks & Fife, 2009). According to Gough, the purpose of establishing this support is to create a safe environment for the recognition and expression of feelings (2000). Gough (2000) also encourages individuals to consider how fragile they are, to focus on positive steps which promote healing, and to avoid the negative details of the affair.

According to the participants’ descriptions, the techniques they utilized assisted them in dealing with their emotions and aided them in their movement from unforgiveness towards forgiveness. These strategies echoed descriptions in existing literature. Psychological literature also associates the utilizing of these strategies with emotional healing.

2.2 Cluster 2: Family context

The second cluster is comprised of themes which centre on the family context. According to P2 and P3, their family context influenced their respective experiences. These descriptions of influence are now discussed.
P2 described a secure relationship with her parents. She ascribed a positive effect on her development, and having a good self-image, to this relationship. She expressed the belief that, in later life, she was able to manage problems more effectively as a result.

According to psychodynamic literature (Anderson, 2007; Lawler Row et al., 2006), a secure attachment to a primary caregiver influences the child's self-perspective and development in a positive manner (Anderson, 2007; Lawler Row et al., 2006, Teyberg, 2006). Research conducted by Webb et al. (2005) concludes that individuals with secure attachments appear to be more forgiving following a perceived offence.

In contrast, P3 verbalized having experienced rejection from her father. She described this relationship as having had a negative impact on her self-confidence. Anderson (2007) and Lawler Row et al. (2006) explain that an insecure attachment to a primary caregiver influences the child's self-perspective and development in a negative manner. Psychological studies conducted by Webb et al. (2005) indicated that insecurely attached individuals may be less forgiving towards others following a perceived offence.

P3 explained that because of this experienced rejecting relationship, she found it very difficult to relate to God in a positive way. According to existing literature, insecurely attached individuals may have a negative or unstable perception of God (Davis et al., 2008). Davis et al. (2008) reported that these insecurely attached individuals may be more likely to experience spiritual struggle and anger towards God, and therefore may experience difficulties in seeking support from fellow believers, and may consider converting to another belief system.

P2 also verbalised having experienced pressure from her father to forgive her spouse. She described this experience as feeling like “another trauma”. Butler (in Govier, 2002) suggests that offenders may experience hasty forgiveness when subjected to external pressure. Hasty forgiveness occurs when offenders only forgive because they are told to do so, and
therefore do not experience the benefits of true forgiveness (Govier, 2002; Murphy, 2005). This pressure may cause physiological and psychological harm to the offendee (Govier, 2002).

In summary, the participants' described experiences echo that which is discussed in psychodynamic literature, namely that the type of attachment individuals share with their primary caregivers appears to have an influence on how they perceive themselves and others as well as God. According to psychological literature, this may also impact the experience of unforgiveness following an offense. In addition to an insecure attachment, the participants described that the pressure to forgive appears to have complicated their experience. This description was also supported in existing literature.

2.3 Cluster 3: Spirituality

The final cluster is comprised of four themes, namely: previous assumptions as taken from Scripture, spiritual experience, personal growth, moving from unforgiveness towards forgiveness of infidelity and the process of moving from unforgiveness towards forgiveness of marital infidelity. The themes described are now discussed.

2.3.1 Theme 1: Previous assumptions from Scripture

All the participants described Jesus as the epitome of forgiveness for them, and as viewing Jesus’ death on the cross as demonstrating God’s forgiveness. Existing literature with a focus on forgiveness (Rye, 2005; Tsang et al., 2005) supports the view that Christ serves as the role model of forgiveness within the New Testament, and that Christ’s forgiveness of sin empowers believers with the freedom they require to practise forgiveness in their lives.

P3 was the only participant to report experiencing forgiveness as a commandment. Enright (in Mullet & Girard, 2000) explains that this style of forgiveness is associated with moral reasoning which is dependent upon lawful expectation. In other words, religious individuals forgive because their religion requires it (Mullet & Girard, 2000).
Existing literature discusses the pressure placed upon Christians to forgive (Holloway, 2002; Tsang et al., 2005). Holloway introduces the concept of the double bind in his discussion of the theological influences on the experience of forgiveness. According to Holloway, an individual of Christian faith who is unable to forgive an offender and the offence, may experience guilt in addition to the pain that already exists through their failure in performing a Christian mandate (Holloway, 2002). People caught in this “excruciating double bind” predicament are painfully aware of the trapped animal analogy (Holloway, 2002, p. 51).

According to existing literature, the perception of forgiveness as a commandment or condition for salvation may place pressure upon offendees to forgive, as with P2’s described experience. This pressure may complicate their experience of moving from unforgiveness towards forgiveness, as they may not be able to perform that which their religion requires them to do (Govier 2002; Murphy, 2005). This aspect will be explored in greater detail later in this chapter.

2.3.2 Theme 2: Spiritual experience

P3 verbalized having felt as if she faced a spiritual decision after the offence of marital infidelity. She described the spiritual decision as either turning away from God, or relying upon Him throughout her experience. Even though P3 was the only participant to discuss this, it appears that all the participants may have had a similar experience. All the participants expressed the experience of reliance upon God for assistance while they were moving from unforgiveness towards forgiveness of marital infidelity.

Frankl explains that all suffering presents a type of spiritual crossroad, where every individual can either choose to search for meaning or to forsake it (Frankl, 1959, 1967, 1971). When one chooses to search for meaning, one is responding to the suffering in such a way that it causes changes in oneself in a positive manner, while choosing to relinquish
the will for the search for meaning results in life becoming empty and without purpose (Frankl 1971).

P3 verbalized experiencing a spiritual struggle following the infidelity, as she felt that she turned her back on God for a while. P3 also described her relationship with her father as being of a rejecting nature. According to psychodynamic literature, individuals with insecure attachments may experience spiritual struggles and anger towards God (Lawler Row et al., 2006). Lawler-Row et al. added that these offendees may also find it difficult to seek support from other believers, and may possibly consider resigning from their current religious orientation (2006).

Not all of the participants verbalized experiencing a spiritual decision following the infidelity; however, all expressed reliance upon God in their experience of unforgiveness. Turning from God may possibly represent forsaking the search for meaning, while the reliance on God may possibly represent the will to search for meaning. According to psychodynamic literature, an insecurely attached individual may view God in a negative light and may experience a spiritual struggle following the offence of infidelity; this may have been the case for P2.

2.3.3 Theme 3: Personal growth

All the participants described experiencing personal growth as a result of moving from unforgiveness towards forgiveness. They described experiencing personal growth in a variety of ways. P1 verbalized finding meaning in her experience, while P1 and P3 stated that they experienced more intimate relationships with God. P2 expressed that she experienced growth through the development of her character. The way in which she described the experienced growth, was by saying that she achieved a deeper awareness of her emotional processes, and learnt to accept herself.
Heintzelman suggests that the experience following infidelity can result in posttraumatic growth (2011). Tedeschi and Calhoun refer to this development as being a direct result of an individual’s struggle with the new reality following the crisis or offence (1995, 1996).

These authors (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995, 1996) explained that this growth occurs in six general areas. The first area of growth involves a change in one’s priorities, the second area includes the recognition of the value of life (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995, 1996). According to these authors (1996), the third area involves the development of closer relationships, as well as the development of compassion towards others who experience suffering. Self confidence and personal strength are qualities that develop in the individual as well (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). The final area of development noted by Tedeschi & Calhoun (1995) involves a spiritual growth through the deepening of spiritual life (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995).

The participants expressed that they experienced growth in dealing with their emotions. The areas of growth noted in the literature as well as by the participants, included the development of a greater sense of self confidence and personal strength (Tedeschi and Calhoun, 1995, 1996). Spiritual progression was also identified as an area of growth (Frankl, 1959, 1967, 1971; Tedeschi and Calhoun, 1995), as the participants verbalized experiencing a deepening of their spiritual lives.

2.3.4 Theme 4: Moving from unforgiveness towards forgiveness of infidelity

All the participants described the experience of moving from unforgiveness towards forgiveness of infidelity as a unique experience which can only be understood once a person has gone through it personally.

The participants all described the experience of unforgiveness occurring while they were still experiencing emotional distress. P3 likened this experience to being held captive. P2 verbalized her notion that unforgiveness may possibly occur when a person does not “work
through* his/her emotions. According to the views of all of the participants, the state of unforgiveness is more harmful for the offendee than the offender.

Psychological literature describes unforgiveness as a difficult emotional experience (McCullough et al., 2000; Kluwer & Karremans, 2009; Olson et al., 2002; Pattakos, 2004; Worthington et al., 2002). Unforgiveness has also been described as a negative mindset (Seligman, 2005; Witvliet et al., 2001).

According to existing literature, when individual experience unforgiveness, they become preoccupied with their negative emotions (in Gartner, 1988; Murphy, 2005). This preoccupation results in the person feeling trapped or confined (Pattakos, 2007). Holloway (2002) offers an alternative viewpoint regarding the experienced entrapment through the description of the double-bind predicament. According to Holloway, the double bind predicament results in a trapped experience, when Scripture is used to apply pressure upon an offendee to forgive when he/she is not yet able to do so (Anderson, 2007; Holloway, 2002). P3 was the only participant to express viewing forgiveness as a commandment and also the only participant to state that she felt trapped within her experience of unforgiveness. Accordingly, then, if P3 experienced forgiveness as a religious requirement, this may have added pressure upon her to forgive. This pressure may have influenced her description of unforgiveness as a captive state, as she may have experienced the double-bind predicament. A similar situation was described by P2 upon verbalising that the pressure placed upon her to forgive her offending spouse was additionally traumatising.

The participants’ descriptions of the experience of unforgiveness due to infidelity echo existing literature.

All of the participants expressed that, for them, the movement from unforgiveness to forgiveness could only be achieved by relying upon God to help them. P2 verbalized that, for her, forgiveness does not involve the condoning of the offence. She described forgiveness
as an emotional process which she compared to a grieving process, as in her case it was comprised of many stages. P2 described one stage as sadness. She added that upon dealing with her emotions, she was ultimately progressing through her stages. The participants all described the movement from unforgiveness to forgiveness as being a lengthy process, for them. All the participants expressed having found meaning and having achieved personal and spiritual growth as a result of progressing from unforgiveness towards forgiveness.

Gordon et al. (2005) describe the movement from unforgiveness to forgiveness as a process whereby individuals seek to understand their feelings so that they are not dominated by them. In other words, the progression towards forgiveness is an emotional process through which individuals not only become aware of, but also deal with their associated feelings such as anger, sadness and fear (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000).

According to psychological literature, an individual can only express forgiveness once emotional healing has occurred (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; Govier, 2002; McCullough and Witvliet, 2005). According to Enright & Fitzgibbons, forgiveness does not involve condoning, denying, excusing or minimizing any offence (2000). The psychological consequences of dealing with one’s emotions within the process of forgiveness are advantageous, as individuals are then able to move on with their lives (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; McCullough et al., 2000; Ransley, 2004).

The participants’ descriptions of their movement from emotional distress and unforgiveness towards emotional healing and towards becoming more forgiving, have been reiterated in existing literature. Existing literature has also offered an alternative viewpoint to the captive description of unforgiveness, and the participants’ descriptions have emphasised the harmful effects associated with the pressure to forgive.
2.3.5 Theme 5: The process of moving from unforgiveness towards forgiveness

All the participants described a movement from unforgiveness towards forgiveness in their experience. They described this progression as an emotional process during which they experienced a wide range of emotions. This process was accompanied by personal development and spiritual growth for all of the participants.

Existing psychological literature describes the emotional progression following a crisis (Olson et al., 2002; Gordon & Baucom, 2003; Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005). Descriptions relevant to this particular study include the work of Olson and his colleagues regarding the processes following an affair, Gordon and Baucom’s three stage synthesis model and Kübler-Ross’ five stages of grieving.

Olson et al. (2002) have described the experience following infidelity as a process comprised of three stages, namely rollercoaster, moratorium and trust-building. Rollercoaster, or the initial stage, is characterised by intense emotional responses (Olson et al., 2002). Moratorium refers to the phase were couples attempt to make sense of, as well as find meaning for, the infidelity (2002). According to these authors (2002), the final phase is characterised by trust-building. Acceptance and forgiveness also form integral parts of this phase (Olson et al., 2002).

Olson and his colleagues’ model emphasises the experience following infidelity as a process which is made up of different stages (2002). Progressing through these stages results in emotional healing, acceptance and in becoming more forgiving. This processional quality, as identified by Olson and his colleagues, is reiterated in the participants’ descriptions. The participants described their experience as a process, P2 described her experience as made up of stages.
Gordon and Baucom’s three stage synthesis model describes the experience of unforgiveness following infidelity as a process which is made up of three stages, namely the impact stage, the search for meaning stage and the recovery stage (1998, 2003).

According to these authors, the first stage, or impact stage, occurs while participants are still trying to comprehend the major implications of the affair upon their lives (Baucom et al., 2006; Gordon & Baucom, 1998, 2003; Gordon et al., 2000). During this stage, individuals exhibit an overwhelming array of emotions; they also verbalise the most negative assumptions about themselves as well as those of their offending spouses (Baucom et al., 2006; Gordon et al., 2000).

Stage two of the three stage synthesis model of forgiveness is characterised by a search for meaning (Gordon & Baucom, 2003). According to Baucom et al. (2006), offendees gather information so as to make sense of the offender’s behaviour as well as to try to gain control over their lives. The final stage or the recovery stage is where offendees have consolidated the new information, and are finally at a place where they are ready to forgive (Gordon & Baucom, 1998, 2003).

The three stage synthesis model draws attention to the experience of unforgiveness of infidelity as an emotional process, which is made up of three stages (Gordon & Baucom, 1998). According to these authors, moving from stage one to stage three stages results in emotional healing and forgiveness (Gordon & Baucom, 1998, 2003). This processual quality as identified by Gordon and Baucom (1998, 2003) is reiterated in the participants’ described experiences of unforgiveness of infidelity. For them, this process was characterised by a movement from emotional distress and unforgiveness towards emotional healing and forgiveness.

Kübler-Ross’ research has produced a detailed description of the emotional responses involved in the grieving process. The first stage of grief is denial; during this stage grieving
individuals respond to their loss or major life crisis with feelings of disbelief (Kübler-Ross, 1969). The second stage is anger (Kübler-Ross, 1969; Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005). During this stage individuals may experience a wide range of emotions; however, anger is on the frontline (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005). Kübler-Ross (1969) termed the third stage bargaining, as it is characterized by “what if” and “if only” statements. These tactics are the individual’s attempt to try and make sense of the loss (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005). Sadness forms the fourth stage of the five stages of grief (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005). According to Kübler-Ross, this stage is characterized by intense feelings of sadness and possibly depression (1969). The final stage is acceptance; during this stage individuals realize the permanence of their new reality (Kübler-Ross, 1965).

The experience of unforgiveness of infidelity is an emotional process. All the participants described experiencing a variety of emotional responses including denial, anger and sadness. Their experience may be akin to the process of grieving.

The participants emotional and/or grieving process entailed a movement from emotional distress and unforgiveness towards emotional healing and forgiveness, as described by the participants. The participants also described finding meaning, experiencing personal growth and achieving spiritual progression, as a result of their experience. Although these descriptions are echoed in psychological literature, the impact stage of the three stage synthesis model doesn’t account for much of the emotional processes experienced by offendees. A strength of this study is that it presents a broader description of the emotional responses experienced by offendees during the impact phase following marital infidelity. This broader description explains the movement from unforgiveness towards forgiveness as a grieving process comprised of different emotional stages, as described by the participants.

The participants also described factors that assisted them through their process, as well as factors that complicated their process. According to P2’s and P3’s descriptions, attachment styles and the pressure to forgive influenced their process from unforgiveness towards
forgiveness. These descriptions appear to have been overlooked in psychological literature, and are therefore recommended for future research.

According to the participants’ descriptions, the participants did not pass through their individual process systematically but instead repeated or recycled through the different stages in a unique way. These descriptions are reiterated in psychological literature (Gordon et al., 2000; Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005).

A self-reflection section has been included in this chapter in order for the reader to share in the researcher’s experience of exploring the experience in question. This self-reflection is now discussed.

3 SELF-REFLECTION

I chose to make my opinions, thoughts and feelings visible and an acknowledged part of the research process by being aware of my reflective process and being able to write them down in this chapter (Willig, 2008). The aim of this section is to create transparency in the research process; in this way readers will have some insight into who I am and how this research has changed me. This process also assists the trustworthiness of this study.

One of the added benefits of being aware of my personal reflections during the research process is becoming aware of the changes that occurred within me as a result of it. Initially, upon considering a research topic of unforgiveness, I automatically assumed my research was going to describe the associated psychopathologies of individuals experiencing unforgiveness. This initial perspective reveals my then theological opinions, namely that forgiveness is an established commandment, and that those who experience unforgiveness will not be forgiven by God.

I was often taught that forgiveness is a decision that one makes. In my mind I perceived forgiveness as a cognitive process, I didn’t factor in the process of unforgiveness; nor did I
consider the associated emotions elicited by the offence. Clearly my previous assumptions were naive.

Through the process of data analysis I was confronted with the associated emotions elicited by an offence. During my supervision sessions, my naive assumptions began to surface. The process whereby I began to recognise my personal beliefs about unforgiveness and forgiveness was a threatening one. I often felt confused, because I felt caught between my former convictions and the data which was suggesting an alternative perspective.

Over time I realised that the fault was in me, not God or in the data. I had incorrectly understood Scripture. I then began to confront my theological understanding of unforgiveness and forgiveness. After some extensive research I encountered a different theological message, which preached grace without condemnation. This truth radically changed my life.

While this process of change was occurring within me, I ran into a friend with whom I had studied at Bible College. I told her that I was currently working on my research exploring the experience of unforgiveness. She looked straight into my eyes, and told me she was struggling with unforgiveness. I began to share the findings of this study with her. I told her that I had learnt that unforgiveness was a grieving process, and that she should allow herself the time to mourn that which happened to her. I also encouraged her to ignore any pressure placed upon her to forgive. She told me that what I had shared with her had a massive impact upon her. When I walked away I felt my eyes well up with tears, because this study impacted one person in a powerful way.

This incident helped me to recognise that some, if not many, Christian believers are experiencing complications in their unforgiveness process because they feel that they are not performing that which their religion is requiring them to do. I have also come to realise
the value of this study for all Christians who are within the process of unforgiveness, and who may be experiencing additional guilt due to the double-bind predicament.

This research has ignited a fire within my soul to encourage sound doctrine with regards to unforgiveness and forgiveness within Christian contexts. I am grateful for this research process because it has become a ‘holy ground’ experience for me. Parts of me that were based on falsehood were removed, and replaced with truth instead. I did not anticipate this experience, but I am deeply grateful for the fact that while I worked on my research, my research was working on me. I sincerely believe that this profound change was facilitated by the methodological approach implemented in this study. IPA created an opportunity for the stories of the participants to have an impact on me. I am convinced that their stories have the potential to influence many others.

4 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

The limitations of this study can be acknowledged as follows:

A limitation of this study is its small, non-representative sample size that cannot be extended to wider populations.

Intergenerational differences between the participants and researcher may have impacted the generation of data. These differences may have resulted in difficulties reaching a common understanding.

All the participants were females; this could be limiting as a differing perspective offered by males could have enriched the descriptions.

There were noteworthy discrepancies in the age of the offendees, the types of affairs which occurred as well as the state of the marriage relationship before the affair occurred. These variances may have resulted in heterogeneity of the participants’ described experiences of unforgiveness.
Although attempts were made to reduce researcher’s bias, it is still possible that the researcher’s presuppositions and point of reference may have exerted an influence on this study.

5 STRENGTHS OF THIS STUDY

The strengths of this study are acknowledged as follows:

A strength of this study is that its focus on a small group has resulted in the experience being examined in detail and in-depth.

The employment of semi-structured interviews facilitated the collection of detailed, rich subjective data, from which the experience of unforgiveness of infidelity could be described and better understood.

This study gave a voice to an experience not often focused on, namely the experience of unforgiveness of infidelity within a Christian context.

A review of existing literature revealed a gap in the field of research pertaining to the experience of unforgiveness of infidelity within a Christian context. The data obtained on the experience of unforgiveness of infidelity is powerful and is a foundation upon which future studies can be based, therefore contributing to the addition of information for the benefit of clinical practice and the field of psychological research.

This study highlights aspects that are potentially helpful in therapeutic interventions with clients experiencing unforgiveness of marital infidelity: the importance of family context and attachment styles, strategies that assisted with the dealing of emotions, the double-bind predicament, and that the process following infidelity maybe akin to the grieving.
6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

A thorough review of psychological literature has revealed that the experience of unforgiveness has been relatively overlooked within the study of the process of forgiveness itself. The studies exploring unforgiveness focus on the refusal to forgive, and not on the experience of unforgiveness during the movement towards forgiveness. This deficit may be restraining clinicians’ views of their clients and formulations of how to assist them in psychotherapy. Therefore the recommendations that follow may serve to further the exploration of unforgiveness.

It is suggested that future studies differentiate between the refusal to forgive and the experience of unforgiveness. This differentiation will reduce the pressure placed upon offendees to forgive, thus allowing them the time to grieve.

It is also recommended that future studies focus on the possible factors disrupting the movement from unforgiveness toward forgiveness, with the view of identifying aspects that may serve to facilitate the movement towards emotional healing.

Given the cultural diversity of South Africa, research into the experience of unforgiveness for people from a variety of backgrounds is recommended. This research will add to the understanding of the experience of unforgiveness in the South African context.

Lastly, due to their therapeutic implications, the following require future research, namely the importance of family context and attachment styles, strategies that assisted with the dealing of emotions, the double-bind predicament, and that the process following infidelity maybe akin to the grieving. It is also recommended that a methodological approach be utilized that allows for the findings to be extended to wider populations.
7 CONCLUSION

This research study sought to describe the experience of unforgiveness of extramarital infidelity within a Christian context. The interpretive phenomenological method allowed for an effective collection of subjective data, which resulted in the in-depth description of the identified phenomena. The experience of unforgiveness of infidelity was described as a difficult emotional experience. This emotional experience was compared to a grieving process, which was comprised of various emotional stages. Dealing with one’s emotions forms an integral part of the experience in question, and assisted the participants involved in moving through the various stages of emotional distress and unforgiveness towards emotional healing and forgiveness. The participants expressed that dealing with their emotions caused them to achieve personal growth and experience spiritual progression. This study has also revealed that the emotional grieving process of unforgiveness is separate from the refusal to forgive.

The limitations and strengths of this study were discussed, and recommendations for future studies were also considered.


APPENDIX A: DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH AND INFORMED CONSENT

Psychology Department

Description of Research

In recent literature a lot of attention has been given to the topic of forgiveness (Anderson, 2007; Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2002; McCullough & Witvliet, 2005; Merolla, 2008; Seligman, 2005; Strelan & Covic, 2006), on the other hand the concept of unforgiveness remains relatively unexplored. As a result the notion of unforgiveness needs to be explored further.

In this study infidelity within Christian marriages as a source of unforgiveness will be explored. An individual living with unforgiveness clings to the past and resents both the offence and the offender (Seligman, 2005; Worthington, 1999). Research indicates that the psychological ramifications of unforgiveness are negative and impact cognitions, emotions, physiology and health (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2002; McCullough & Witvliet, 2005; Witvliet et al., 2001).

The broad research question for this study is: What is the experience of unforgiveness regarding extra marital infidelity within a Christian context? The aim of this study is to describe and enhance the understanding of the experience of unforgiveness related to extra marital infidelities within a Christian context. This may contribute to clinical practice and to the field of research.
Participation in the research is entirely voluntary and will require you to answer a number of questions relating to your experiences. There are no right or wrong answers. This should take approximately 1hr to 1hr30min.

Anonymity will be assured as your name and any other identifying details will not be recorded. The information provided will be treated as highly confidential.

**Informed Consent**

In order to participate in this research study, it is necessary that you give your informed consent. By signing this informed consent statement you are indicating that you understand the nature of the research study and your role in that research and that you agree to participate in the research. Please consider the following points before signing:

- I understand that I will be provided with an explanation of the research, in which I participated in, and be given the name and telephone number of an individual to contact if I have questions about the research.
- I agree to being audio-taped during the interviews, and that the data from these interviews will be used for research purposes.
- I understand that my identity will not be linked with my data, and that all information I provide will remain confidential. In addition the safe keeping of the data transcripts and recordings will guarantee confidentiality and anonymity.
- I understand that participation in this research study is entirely voluntary, and that after the research project has begun, I may refuse to participate further without penalty
- In the event of the interviewing process evoking an aversive psychological reaction, a registered psychologist and or an intern psychologist can be made available for a psychotherapeutic intervention.
I understand that I will be given general feedback in regards to the findings of the study.

Sign……………………………………… Date……………………………

If you have any further questions or require feedback on the progress of the research, please feel free to contact me. My contact details are:

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APPENDIX B: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

1. How do you define unforgiveness?  
   (If an alien had to ask you what unforgiveness is, what would you say to explain it to him/her)

2. How do you define forgiveness?

3. (If an alien had to ask you what forgiveness is, what would you say to explain it to him/her)

4. Is there a particular story in the bible that exemplifies forgiveness for you?  
   (If so, please elaborate...)

5. Please could you tell your story of UNFORGIVENESS regarding extra marital infidelity.   
   (This is your story so please include all the facts, good and difficult feelings, memories, and thoughts that make this story your story)

6. What influence (good or bad) has the church played in your experience of unforgiveness regarding extra marital infidelity?  
   (Please elaborate...)

7. Is there anything else that you feel is important, that you may not have said or emphasised enough, regarding your experience of unforgiveness regarding extra marital infidelity?  
   (If so, please elaborate...)
Interviewer: “How do you define unforgiveness?”

Participant 1: “I think it is actually, when you can’t forgive the action that someone has done to you, and then you should try to with prayer and all that, but it is someone who has hurt you so bad and you find it hard to forgive them.”

Interviewer: “How do you define forgiveness?”

Participant 1: “To forgive them, to actually be able to look at them and love them and carry on like nothing is wrong. Shew, it is very hard to forgive, I find it very hard to forgive. Forgiveness is a very hard work, but you pray a lot and hopefully you will get there. They say it is better for you to get there in your heart, not for the other person but especially for you.”

Interviewer: “What story in the bible best depicts forgiveness for you?”

Participant 1: “Um, I do know of all stories of forgiveness, I mean I do know of all the stories of forgiveness, um when that lady Mary washed Jesus’ feet and you know she was a, prostitute, and he forgave her. I mean He did a lot of forgiveness didn’t He, beautiful forgiveness. It is lovely how Jesus forgave everyone.”

Interviewer: “What is your experience of unforgiveness of extra-marital infidelity?”

Participant 1: “I knew my husband for 30 years, he was my childhood sweetheart since the age of 16, so I have known him my whole life, my best friend. My husband and I were married for 17 years, I can’t say it was an easy marriage, we got on really well and we were really good friends. We had three beautiful children, but it was kind of hard because he could never find a job here so he would work overseas, so he would work, and this time her worked eight years overseas. I always managed the children on my own, I always raised the children up on my own, and the children were always without him. I feel, not to blame, with the circumstances he was always on his own, and I think he liked being on his own. People would always say to him that he has the best of both worlds, you are a single man with married benefits, so we all used to joke. It was very hard. He used to come home every three weeks, only for
four days, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday. It was very stressful for me and I think he used to find it very stressful, and he is used to being alone and then he comes home and its “Dad, Dad, please do this” and I was like “please help with that”. Anyway, um, the sad thing was last year January he lost his job, and he always loved going to the bush, so we would always go there. He met someone there and he started seeing her and um, and that was it. He just kept going out without me, and um, as a woman you know, cause it is all peculiar, and then, he left me. It’s been about a year now. I was then introduced to recovery group at NL church and my two youngest went as well, my eldest couldn’t go, cause it was only for a certain age, but it really helped. They always laugh at me because when I first started going all I did was cry every single week. Every week there is a topic you need to discuss and the one week was you have to forgive your partner, and um, and I sought of said, I suppose it was a bit raw at the time and I said I can’t, and they said you will, you will be able to, it takes time, you have to pray, and you will be able to, and they say it can take years, sometime two years, but then one day you wake up and it’s gone, and you are happy with yourself, and you will be able to say, okay I can forgive him. I don’t know cause it’s quite hard. My favourite thing is that book Eat, Pray, Love. Her husband also cheats on her, and then one time she climbs to the top of this temple and shouts at the stars and forgives her husband like that, and I kind of like that, but she did a whole year of meditating, a whole year of travelling around, Bali and India, and a whole year of working in the monastery before she finally came to that point, and she divorced her husband, he didn’t divorce her, and she finally came to that place of forgiving him, it is a beautiful section, and um, I know one day I am going to have to do that, but he has no consequence, he moved in straight afterwards with the girlfriend, straight away, the minute I kicked him out. Straight away he moved in with the girlfriend and has been with her ever since. Another reason why I think I can’t forgive him is because he is not doing right by me, he is not giving me the divorce papers, he said he would divorce me ages ago. Shocking story, I was travelling on a 12 hour plane journey to Australia and he told me he wants a divorce, and he is not giving me the divorce, he is living with the girlfriend, but doesn’t want to give me the divorce. I don’t know why, and he doesn’t want to give me maintenance, and he doesn’t want to support me, or the children. My situation is different cause I am moving to Australia with my children, all my family is there, I think it is
better for all of us because I don’t have to pay for education, medical aid, and he is not helping out here, so I think it is better. I don’t know if I will ever be able to forgive him, I just am gonna pray, and hopefully I can get there, but I think it is just very raw at the moment. It has been a year. I mean someone said to me at least you can move forward because you know he doesn’t want you, ja I can, but I can’t because he isn’t giving me the divorce, and it is all up and down. I am having terrible problems with my middle child, he hasn’t been to school this whole week. I just think the whole situation is terrible and horrible and bitter, he just breaks up a whole family, um, we were both staunch Catholics our whole life, and we were sweethearts from 16 years, and we were friends for 10 years, and we were married in a Catholic church, and we raised up our children Catholic, they were baptised and confirmed and their Holy Communion, and we did all the right things. You know in the Catholic Church you are not allowed to divorce at all, it is a sin to divorce. I know now at NL church I was so worried about that, and they helped me with that, but it’s all, he is not the person I knew, and that is the worst, you though he was someone you knew and he, but anyway, there is nothing you can do about that, and he is happy and, um, I just don’t like the irresponsibility, they just cut you out of their lives, and people say that is men, and they don’t want anything to do with you, and they sort of can’t bear to be near you, and that is the worth, because one minute you think you are in love, and the next you have to turn off the clock and not be in love. Um you know you it is very hard.

The worst was when it first happened, and thank goodness for that recovery group, because it felt like your whole world would fall apart, he was all I had ever known, we were the best of friends, we did everything together, and um, and you think you are going to retire with this better, and you think you are going to be with that person forever, and um, he was a very good dad, he is a very gentle and nice person, now he isn’t even that, my poor daughter, he doesn’t even see her, my eldest son is very bitter, he actually hates his dad. I actually have to get him to see someone, and the middle one is upset all the time, and he just wants us to get back together, and I keep saying he is with his new girlfriend now and, um, it’s all very hard, and like I said I used to go to the recovery group every week and I used to cry and cry, and I think you just start, oh my the praying really helped, after we had talked about it, they say it was cathartic, and you spoke, then they made us pray, and we prayed for
long. Like I said I joined NL church, and I go there every Sunday, and it just really helps me, it just helps me when I pray, and they have what you call the singing, and it is wonderful. I used to go to the Catholic church, and it is not the same I just can’t explain, and I also think it’s the head pastor, he addresses relevant things, and don’t get me wrong I loved the quiet in the Catholic church, you feel the reverence, and you know, that was nice, that part, but they would always talk about things over your head. You know. Like, like at the moment the pastor is taking about Born for this, and I think that is just wonderful, I think we are born for this, we are born to help people, and I think it is really helping me. That is one thing I am sorry about, some say that HLS church in Australia is similar to NL church, so we will see. I think I will go, cause I am really enjoying, and I never miss, ja and it is really, it really helps me. I would cry when I spoke about it, I cried every time I spoke to someone about it. I just forgive him at the moment, everything he has done, and it all just so out of character, and it’s just not him, and one thing I always say to my kids which I shouldn’t is that your dad is revolting, he is revolting, but ja, So in a way I think I am getting better, by helping myself, I am reading a lot of self help books, they have helped me, and I have done a lot of reading, and I have stated going to church, and listening to Christian music, and unfortunately I am not where they want me to be, like when we did the forgiveness week, um, you know, you know, you really have to try, and funny enough two after that, Pastor C spoke about unforgiveness, how you can’t let someone, you um, cant love God as much as you want to, you can’t let someone into your heart, if your heart has not forgiven. My friend and I were, she is also divorced and we were talking and saying what are we going to do, that means I am not a very religious person, so she said no Participant 1. We spoke to someone from the recovery group and she was like no don’t worry it will come, and she also left her husband, she left her husband and she said it will come, and she said she had to forgive herself, never mind her husband, and she said it will take a long time, and she had to pray, and she said I mustn’t expect it to just happen, but one day it will, and I will just be happy in myself.

To better understand myself I went to do that marriage seminar NL Church held, I wanted to go, and he was talking about bitterness being destructive in a marriage, but when someone divorces you, doesn’t want to be with you
anymore, you feel bitter, you feel rejected, you feel resentful, unloved, you feel half a person. Like I said the church has helped me be a better person. But you just feel, aagh. He also said you must respect each other, and love each other and never put the husband down, which I never did, I was listening really carefully, and you have to show acts of kindness, and that is the hardest part because he was never ever horrible to me, he never fought with me, he was never cruel to me, we never did not get on, so I think in a way for me it was a bigger shock, that he left me for someone else, because there was no warning, um, you know, I'm a bit overweight and my husband would say to me, I would say ooh I really want another lamb chop, and he would say oh well have one, he would never say oh you must never have one, um, you know he was always nice to me, and that's why I also think how could he have done this to me, we didn't fight, we didn't not get on, but then you know, he was away for eight years and I was here, and we speak every night on the phone, and he would always say I love and miss you and I would say I love and miss you, but I think it's just, ja, hard, and it is going to be hard to carry on, and well basically for any divorcee, because you have to start a whole new life, and I am really starting a new life in another country. You know I am lucky, you pray for small miracles, I think I am lucky she doesn't have children, that my poor children don't have to compete with them, and, I am glad about that for my poor children, and I am glad she is not this young hottie, I just have all those things, it's just makes this all more bearable, and I know he is going to marry her, and well at least I won't be here, and I know that's a cop-out but at least I won't be here. When I am there in Australia in my new life, and he is here, then maybe I can forgive what he has done. I just never expected, I never ever expected I would be a divorced person, a single person raising three children, and I resent him for that, I resent him for breaking up my family, in fact I hate him for doing that to my family, my kids, I hate him for that, and also for moving in straight away with the new girl, I mean he didn't even try to find himself, he didn't even he just moved in straight away with someone else, I just find that fickle.

It doesn't, it just doesn't make sense to me, we were never unhappy. It was the absolute shock of it. You know those couples who fight with each other and don't get on with each other, you know we were never like that, and a, I think it was just that, the absolute shock about that, and I will tell you the part
that I resent the most, he lived for eight years away from us, and the minute he comes home, he doesn’t want to live with us, and I just find that horrible, I mean, when he was away he used to say, I am lonely, I miss you, it was hard. I mean 10 days after I had my daughter he left, and, and, I would ask him, cant you find a job at home, and I resent the fact that he never even tried to find a job here, and I resent the fact that he was never really a family man, so people say, what did you expect, well I didn't expect him to do this to me. When he finally lost his job and had to come home, and then he come home and he finds someone else, and I resent that, it was like oh my golly, he thought I don’t like looking after my wife and kids and the responsibility, and I think he just doesn’t like responsibility, and the unfortunate thing which I have not said once to you is that he is a very heavy drinker my husband, and I don’t drink or smoke, and my husband is a very heavy drinker and a very heavy smoker, and he would like to go out to pubs, and I could think of nothing worse, all I could think of was staying at home with my children, and being with my children and, in a way that’s why it ended as well, because I chose to be with my children, and I think a lot of women are homey persons, I love, I am the kind of person that likes to cook, my daughter and I do baking. One of the self-help books said you should do new things with your children, things that they will remember, so every Saturday morning my daughter and I bake. When he would come home on the weekend I was this wonderfully understanding wife, and I am not trying to puff myself up, and I would say to him, why don’t you want to go and drink and smoke with your friends, don’t get me wrong I never stopped him drinking and smoking here, he just didn’t because he knew I didn’t like it, and off he would go, and I stupid, I could hit myself in the head, and I would say why don’t you go away for the weekend with your friends to the bush, and no children are allowed to come, and I could never take my children so I would let him do it, and that is where he met her, and I think I am so resentful and unforgiving and cross because I feel like I did all the right things, but obviously if you hear his side of the story, maybe I didn’t do all the right things, but I felt like I was this good mom, who ran the household, who paid all the bills, and who had a husband working away, and then he lost his job and came home and was like oh my golly I don’t want to do this, a wife and three kids, and he still hasn’t found a job, and it has been a year, and he has gone through all his pension money to keep us alive, and how he is going through all his life insurance, and I think she is nuts. I would
never get involved with a guy who doesn’t have a house, and, do you know what I mean, she has allowed him to move in with her. I am telling a fib if I say my husband and I never fought, cause I am lying, when we did fight it was when he had too much to drink, and I would say I am driving us home. He doesn’t know when he is drunk, or when he has had too much to drink, so we did use to have fights then. Those were the only fights we used to have. Which were few and far between because I never used to go out with him, and when I did go out with him to a braai, or we would go to friends, he would drink and he would always drink too much until he passed, and the kids would get tired and I would say the kids are tiered can we go home, and he would get all upset and say he doesn’t want to go home, so I would ask someone to drive him home, and I would drive the kids home alone at night and come into this house alone, and my daughter would be sleeping and I would have to carry her in, and I don’t think it is safe and not safe to drive home alone. I would leave him there. So maybe in a way, sigh, we were destined to not be together because of his drinking, and when I met him he was not such a heavy drinker and he wasn’t a smoker at all, so I don’t know.

I think what I am trying to do is make sense, find some meaning, you know, um, I found the hardest part, and it was also said at the recovery group, about not being able to divorce, you know in the Catholic religion it is frowned upon, um, you can’t, and you know, my sister asked me to do it, to divorce him, and in a way I wished I did divorce him so I could get my things in order and I don’t want to because I felt like it was against religion and against God. My sister told me to get a book, and this book explained, I have never been this close to God before and NL church has helped me, I take notes on Sundays, in the catholic church I would do the catholic church, and did the good deed, and now I look forwards to it, no one says I have to read the bible and scriptures but it makes me feel better, and when I sing those songs it makes me feel better, and I think with time, and I definitely have found meaning, and I am not saying it has been easy. Last night I went to bed, you know it is not easy and I had a good cry, and I wished I had my husband, it was so cold, and now I am getting tearful, but NL church has really helped. And I feel I have definitely found meaning.”
Interviewer: “It sounds like your heart is divided, a part of you sounds angry at him for all the bad things, and another part of you misses him and longs for all the good times, could you tell me more about that?

Participant 1: “It is very hard, sometimes I will go to church and I think I was okay, and then I cry in church, and I think, ooh, um, and you know it is horrible, you know my attitude it just to get on that plane I can't wait to get on that plane, and never see him again, and never talk to him again, and just get away. You know I have been very good cause when I see him I am never ugly or horrible to him, and I want to be so horrible to him. I do feel like saying all these horrible things to him. You know I don't sleep very well, I have had to be put onto anti-depressants, all the anger is still inside of me and I used to take it on my children, shame. I never have been a person who takes tablets, so I have tried to come off them, I get terrible dreams and I grind my teeth, and I have had to get a bite-plate. I am still so angry at him, I want him to pay for it, I want him to feel like I feel. I want her to break up with him, (Giggles), I am just saying, I am want him to have nothing, I want him to have no home to live in, no home, no kids, and I want to make him feel like he made me feel, how I felt when he walked out on us and just left us, I would like him to, ja, but it will probably never happen, and I hate it when people say to me that he will regret what he has done, he will regret? And I say when, when, I want him to regret it now, and they say one day when he is on his deathbed. I don't want him to regret it on his deathbed that is too late, I want him to regret it now, well I feel. Um, but ja that's why I still feel angry. You know what it is you can scream at them, and feel angry but they are completely dissociated from you, they actually don't care what you are feeling, or how angry you are, or anything. He is a hard-hearted person, the more I get angry, or cry, or resentful, and get upset, and yes I know what the church is saying that all this is hurting me, and he is hard-hearted and he dissociated and it's not hurting him.

His mother wanted to spend Christmas with her son, not me or her grandchildren, her son. The next thing the sister in law calls me and says if you made the house more homey and more inviting, and if you lost weight, then maybe he would not have left you. So his whole family blames me, my sister's don't blame me. I also think in a way, I also resent that that everyone blames, finds you at fault. My husband and I, we are both laat-laametjie, don't get me wrong I feel we were both spoilt, I feel that his mother spoilt and
ruined him. Instead of them saying its absolute nonsense how you treated
your wife and kids, no they blame me, if I had made the house more homey
and lost weight, that is nonsense. Now he is in his element they go away and
drink and smoke, every second weekend. I can't do that my kids have sports
and school I have responsibilities, he does whatever he wants, he has no
concern for responsibilities, that's why I also feel angry and resentful. He
goes away and I can't go away."

Interviewer: “Do you ever feel guilty for feeling angry and resentful?”

Participant 1: “I think I do, when, you know, it does affect me and I take it out on my
children. I never feel guilty in how I feel towards him, I feel justified, only in
how I take it out on my children, when I have had a hard day.”

Prompt: “Could you tell me more about the longing that you mentioned earlier?”

Participant 1: “Like you know, I think it is just, I was always like, I think lots of girls are like,
my daughter is even like mommy I am a princess, and I always watch those
romantic movies, when they are always in love, and I always wanted that. I
wanted the fairytale romance and marriage, and my sister said it’s not like
that in real life, and um, I now have three children and all of a sudden you
have to stop having sex, when you are having sex with someone you feel so
close to them, and you know all of a sudden it is taken away from you, cause
you miss being so close to someone. Not longing, cause you know women
don’t feel the way men feel about it, women like the way looks after them and
care for them. I am going to cry and I don’t want to cry, and you don’t have
that anymore and you don’t have anyone to be with you, just eat supper with
someone. All of a sudden you have to stop longing for someone. I find it very
hard on the weekends, like Sunday nights, you miss talking to an adult. I also
find it so hard because we were such good friends, we were such good
friends for 10 years before we got married. We got married late in life I was
29, and he was 31, we had known each other all our lives, we travelled
together. When I say we were religious, I mean we were religious I had not
slept with him before we got married, and I think that is also very hard, he is
the only man I have ever slept with, ever been with. I don’t know how I can
ever be with someone else. I just think, that will be me again, you see I can’t, I
have never been that person, in fact I never was I never slept around, I don’t
know, I have never had different boyfriends, I could not do that to my children,
and um, there is definitely longing, you realise you are 45 years old, and you want someone still, you know you are still young, well I feel like I am still young. It is very hard for someone else to take you with three children, well I think, and it is all things, you know you don’t like anyone else disciplining your children, cause they are mine. But anyway, some women do find, I read this book that she found someone after her divorce and she is so happy again. So you never know, but ja, I used to look at my poor sister, it is a hard life being on her own, I mean her husband died, but before she divorced him and I used to think, shew thank goodness that is not me. I had someone to do everything, and now I spend the whole weekend on my own, it is so hard, it is hard. The emails I get tell me that you have to be very careful with your children you don’t want to expose them to many men, you don’t want your daughter to grow up like that, you need to set good examples all the time, and they just go and leave you, and off they go, and they couldn’t care about that kind of responsibility. The other day I had a flat tire and I couldn’t fetch the kids, and he was so nice, he didn’t even shout at me, and it finished my son off for a week seeing them together. He didn’t shout at me, he didn’t tell me off. That part of my husband I still long for, he was a gentle Afrikaans man, he had excellent manner, he would still pull my chair out for me, and give me my drink first, but you want that again, and you think how will you. I just think it is hard to meet people, but anyway.

I wrote a list, with regards to what you want in someone, I wrote I want someone to love my children I want someone to love me, I want someone to respect me. That is also what helped me, journaling, I used to read it and cry, and now I read it and I am okay, I have gotten past. I have definitely moved past, with God as my help. The longing is really hard, and you miss it. The longing is really hard. I look at my sister and she is all alone, she has had to raise her two kids on her own, and she struggles with her works, and it is hard, and it is not going to be easy for me. You don’t know when you are going to meet someone, and that is also very hard.

I tell you, just after her birthday, I suppose it was a bit raw still, when my daughter broke her leg and I called him, he was there, and that was good of him, and I looked at him, and he was mine, and he was holding her, and he is not mine anymore. You still want him to be yours, but you can’t, and you still care about them, but they don’t care about you, so that longing is still there,
but now I am much better. I don’t cry when I see him, and I know it is over, but you still long for affection.

It is so hard, you know why this is so chaotic, because this is so out of character for him. This is gonna sound so funny, but he is not my husband anymore, well he is not my husband, he is not the person I married, but he is not, cause he doesn’t want to be with me. I think it is also, you feel the anger and resentment because no one wants to be rejected, or told oh I don’t love you anymore, and, and, and, you know what angers me the most, they don’t even have the audacity to give you an excuse for why they walked out the marriage. His mom asked him and he said no mom it was just circumstances, and I agree, if he had not met her, I think we would still be together, you know, a, a, it makes no sense, because we were not unhappy. But you know people say maybe you never knew you were unhappy, because he lived away. You know what upsets me the most, my sister would say to me the distance puts strain on a marriage, and I would say that I was fine, and I was fine, and my friend was getting a divorce, and my son asked his dad, “dad are you gonna do that,” and we were all laughing, he said I love you he would never do that to us. I was so confident, because there was never, any, doubt. Maybe that is why I am resentful and bitter, because it’s not like it was coming. But I don’t know I suppose it was coming, my sister said I should stop him working overseas, and I am resentful he didn’t even try come back home and find a job, what if he had, why didn’t I force the issue, maybe he would not have met her. I am angry at myself, when it first happened I blamed myself because I thought it was me. I, I used to let my husband go out all the time because I was scared I would lose him, and my friends would say you let him do whatever. I would always let him go. Like he was a spoilt brat, I would say sure, go. I would spend all those times at home. When he would come home, I would get butterflies I was so excited to see him. My sister said I should never let the kids sleep in my bed, and I did, so I blame myself for that, and I blame myself for putting on weight. I think maybe it is why he left me. I am very angry with myself, so I am trying to lose weight, I am doing it for myself and the kids. But also, I am also angry with myself because I don’t want to get involved with a fat man, so why have I done this to myself, why would a man want to be involved with me, and I work myself up about that. I also think about what my mom-in-law said and you know this is a house filled
with kids, and I think why didn’t I fix the garage door or the kitchen, now I am fixing it to sell it, why didn’t I do those things? Why didn’t I? It used to bug him and I don’t know why, he is a good handyman, the minute he moved away overseas, I suppose he would come home tiered and I still expected him to be a husband fixing the house, and we would have our arguments about that, I think our personalities were clashing, why was I expecting him to do those things. He is revolting, my poor son is fixing the washer, and so he goes, oh okay big boy if you can’t do it get a plumber, he takes no responsibility for anything. I am angry with, myself and blaming myself, I think I realise through church and the recovery group, I think I realise it is not me. Maybe if you hear his side of the story.

He used to love cooking, and I would leave it for him, and I don’t know maybe he didn’t want to do that, we didn’t communicate. I can’t say we didn’t communicate cause we would talk on the phone for hours, so I can’t say when we stopped talking.”

Participant 1: “I made this difficult for me, for myself. Well not I, but when they told me at the recovery group, when it was raw. This guy in my group cried, and all of a sudden he just stopped, and he came to the realisation that God is here for me. It hasn’t helped me that I have got there, but I think it will cause I am praying. I just think it is cause he hasn’t divorced me, I am still angry with him and myself. I have not forgiven myself either. I think the underlying thing is he liked to smoke and drink and I don’t, I think that is an underlying factor, so when he went overseas he could do that every night. When he has a wife that he doesn’t do that, I felt much better when I learnt what the bible really says about divorce and God.”

Participant 1: “I think I realised that before, I used to think it was l me, and all my fault, I think I just came to the realisation, and also through the church and all the people, that you are not alone, and until you are in that party like in the cancer party you realise you are not the only one. We are not the only ones it’s just our society. I still want the happily ever after, and in a way I thought you know we were not happy for a long time, I would be so excited for him to come
home, I can't wait for him to come home, and then he would come home and I would be deflated, and maybe this happened for a reason, you know. There is this show about a lady who when she is diagnosed with cancer she finally starts living, and she kicks her husband out, and she says you have always been a child, who I had to look after, you know she is trying to reconnect with her children, and I am finding a lot of pleasure with my children. When I was with him, I run my own business, I felt apologetic and fearful around him, and with him I never felt like that. I am a principle, I am strong, a mother, and I never felt like that around him. He recently has not made me feel loved and wanted. He would sit with all the adults and drink, and I would sit with the kids, he worried about me, but recently, we didn’t spend time together. It’s just, ja, I just never felt cherished recently.”
APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT 2 TRANSCRIPT

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 10 JUNE 2011

Interviewer: “What is your definition of unforgiveness?”

Participant 2: “My definition of unforgiveness would be holding a grudge, feeling so angry that I can’t let go of that thing happening. Um, it’s so hurtful and painful that you can’t let go of that thing happening. I think um, that once um, you have thought about it and gone through your grieving process over the incident, then maybe then you will be in a space to forgive. So that is how I describe unforgiveness, that you are still holding onto the hurt, not because you want to carry it around for the rest of your life, it’s just perhaps that the hurt in the moment is too prevalent to release it.”

Interviewer: “What is your definition of forgiveness?”

Participant 2: “Forgiveness is letting it go, of what was done to you, being able to let go, um, and forget about it.”

Interviewer: “What story in the bible best describes forgiveness for you?”

Participant 2: “Um, I think God at the crucifixion. I think that was an absolute epitome of forgiveness. Look what they did to Him, and how He handled it, I think that is huge forgiveness, huge, huge forgiveness.”

Interviewer: “What was your experience of unforgiveness of extra-marital infidelity?”

Participant 2: “Okay, I have had quite a long road, um, I was 23 years married and my husband went off with a mistress, lived with her for about 12 weeks, he then came back to me and I forgave him. He was always restless, so probably there were another five women, since then um, only two I didn’t know about, and which I heard later off. The biggest one for me, happened last year when he had a school reunion, he met up with a girlfriend who he went out with for three years before he met me, and then moved in with her, they have been together for a year, and she got divorced last Friday. So I have had, had a long road of infidelity in my marriage.”
Interviewer: “Could you tell me more about the experience of the unforgiveness of the infidelity?”

Participant 2: “Well I, I, think I had, could have, not have taken him back had I not forgiven him. He wasn’t overly repentant but he was grateful to me for holding the fort, keeping the children together, and, and all that kind of thing. Um, as a result of the first infidelity, I think it did give um, one of my children an eating disorder, because it did happen at kind of that puberty stage, so I find um, that that first time I would forgive him no matter what because I wanted him back. When I look back now, I, um, I can't forgive him, because first of all of the repercussions of the first infidelity, I can see hugely. I often say I would rather go down my road of difficulty of walking than her road of eating disorder and mental instability, which I believe was created by the first infidelity. Now I never, ever, ever believed he would do it again to me, 35 years later, so the fact that he has done it to me and left me at my age, remember that when I met him I was 19, um, and suddenly thrown me a situation when I am on my own and having to find myself at the age of 58, um, I can't forgive him, I can't forgive him at the moment about that. Um, I am very tolerant of him, I am very kind to him, um I think I may too, too nice about the whole thing, um, but it is not how I feel, um, and as far as the woman is concerned, well I am very, very, very anti, well she could rot in hell for all that I care, um, because she has also broken up her marriage, and he is 75 and she just walked away. It is really awful, really, really awful, no morals, no, I thought we were all Christian people, so I am quite devastated about the whole thing. So forgiveness is very much prevalent in my life currently, not so much angry, I am working quite nicely through that, so certainly not ready to let go.”

Interviewer: “How do you know you are working through your anger?”

Participant 2: “I am seeing psychologists, reading books, did a recovery group programme, so I am working through my anger, I don’t want to carry anger because I know it can manifest as illnesses in your body. Um, I also did body talk, which is a modern way of releasing anger and fear, and any kind of emotions you might be feeling, because that is important, because that’s how I think people land up with cancers, because they don’t deal with stuff and then their body manifests it in a certain way. I certainly don’t want to be there, so um, so I’m
dealing with my anger in a very constructive, planned kind of way, I'm doing lots of talking, lots of therapy, lots of writing. I am trying to work through the unforgiveness, I don't think, I haven't healed. I think I will be able to forgive once I have healed, and now possibly it is just too soon. Thirty eight years later, you can imagine I need some time, I don't have time on my side so I'm not going to stay stuck, I'm not going to stay a victim, so I'm working very, very hard to not stay hooked."

Prompt: “Would you elaborate more on your ideas behind the idea of a victim?”

Participant 2: “Well a victim is like woe is me, I am almost dead, look what he did to me, oh I'm going to die. I am not going to do that. I have always been a winner, and I will remain a winner, so I am not a victim at all. In fact my psychologist said it was a waste for me to see her, because I am not in victim mode anymore. I know with um, that, victim analogy, you are not working through anger, and you are not working through unforgiveness, while you give up on being a victim, or not remaining a victim.”

Prompt: “Could you tell me more about never believing he would do it again?”

Participant 2: “I never, I couldn’t believe it. He told me he was so thankful for all I did, and told me how much he loved me every day, in fact he still tells me he loves me on sms, and was so grateful we stayed together as a family and, he seemed to be quite settled and happy. I, I didn’t see it coming at all, I never thought for a second he would do it again, go off and live with another woman, and it's costing major bucks to do it, so I was either in total denial, or just so, trusting and innocent, that's it probably too trusting. A leopard never changes his spots clearly.”

Prompt: “Could you elaborate on the feelings you carry towards yourself?”

Participant 2: “I am trying to be very gentle with myself. You know it is thrown at you by no doing of yourself, you, um, I know what sort of a wife I was, what sort of a mother I was in this family, and I don't have any regrets. I am not saying I am Mrs Perfect, naturally, I am saying, under the circumstances, I, me, couldn't have done anything different, uh, because I just tried to be the best person I could be everyday, so I don’t have any anger towards myself, sadness, but not angry. Sadness with all the effort, and um, um, um, the taking back and forgiving. It would have been better to let it go in '87, I was much younger and
I could have managed life far easier with myself back then, I do have sadness that it didn’t work. You can imagine your whole life has changed, and there were wonderful sides of it, naturally, and the good sides of it is gone, otherwise you wouldn’t have been together for so long, so that’s what I find sad. It’s a grieving, it’s grieving that process, that something has come to an end that was your life for so long.

Even though you don’t want that person back in any way, you still feel sad, because of the good times. The sadness is triggered off by letters, as in emails or, phone call, um, um, or actions, reminders would trigger off sadness, because it used to be like that and it no longer is like that. You feel sad, so sadness is a part of the grieving process. It is a tearful stage, that is how I would describe anger and unforgiveness, anger can bring tears, and then there are no more tears, but you can still feel the unforgiveness, buts it’s not the tears stage. It’s all made of many different stages. I think anger and unforgiveness are two different emotions. Anger is, that, that, is something physical, that you can get cross and almost violent about, and, whereas, unforgiveness is an emotion that you decide where you are at, it’s not a, it’s not a, an active reaction. Anger is more a physical action where unforgiveness is more of a feeling. Anger is also a feeling, you know what I am saying, anger is more physical, than an emotion. Unforgiveness is the naming of the process you go through. There is also the hurt.”

Prompt: “Could you please elaborate?”

Participant 2: “The hurt comes in with the unforgiveness, the fact that you are still hurting. Let me give an example. If I met a man tomorrow, who I could marry the next day, I could forgive the situation far quicker that literally coming home every day on your own, and trying to make a life for yourself on your own. So as the heartache decreases, I am more able to forgive.

When reality kicks in, you realise your whole world has changed, as that is the reality of the situation. The consequences are huge of the actions. Your whole life has disintegrated. The only aspect that has not disintegrated is the fact that he left me with my home. Some people don't even have that, they have to move out of their home, but at least I don't have to do that. Everything about life has really altered, it has changed, it is not the same.”
Interviewer: “So it sounds like, you have accepted the change, now you are morning the loss?”

Participant 2: “Exactly, exactly. I am just not at that stage where I can say, oh it’s ok, just quite fine what you have done to me.”

Interviewer: “Do you think that stages exists?”

Participant 2: “I do think some people do get there, after a lot of work. It doesn’t mean that I am going to condone the deed, I am just going to get rid of the emotion, it doesn’t mean that you are saying the deed was ok, but that you can deal with the emotion, and not stay bitter, and a, and not embrace bitterness as opposed to, to, comfort, do you know what I am saying. It doesn’t mean to say that the action was right, the action will never be right, certainly not in my eyes, I could not do this to my enemy, never mind to someone you profess to love. It’s, it’s, living with what happened in the best possible way you can, I am still in the process of getting there, it’s getting to know a new me, I was 19 when I met him, I have never lived on my own in a flat. It’s a whole new me. I can look at it and say what an experience, or I can shrivel away, and I certainly am not going to shrivel away.”

Prompt: “Would you explain what you mean by ‘what an experience’?”

Participant 2: “It could be positive, you may learn and grown from it and embrace a new life, a new life. Sometimes you feel fine and then you feel daunting. It all depends on your day, and how you are coping, and you depend very much on your support system.”

Interviewer: “How has church influenced this experience for you?”

Participant 2: “I know I would not be standing here if it wasn’t for my church. They created an environment for people in a similar boat. I do feel it is very different experience if you are dumped, or if you are dumping. If you are dumping you have left the person, and you have made the decision a long time ago, and you are getting to the process where you are actually leaving, and it is your decision and you are in control. When you are dumped and it is out of the blue, there are different emotions, reactions and feelings that you have to deal with, because it was not what you wanted, if you could have it differently you would have it differently. What the recovery group did, it enabled one to
realise that there are people in the same boat, who are worse off than you, where the husband decides he is going off with a mistress who is your best friend and then leaves you with no money, so it made me feel wonderful that I still have my home and the support of all my friends, so from that point of view not a lot has changed. It also pointed out for me what would be the consequences if I took the road of bitterness were I would land up, and if I took the road of forgiveness, where you would land up, and by taking the road of forgiveness, it is better for you, because you are only doing harm to yourself if you don’t. Take any aspect of anger, and all the different emotions, rejection, separation, living in loneliness, new sexuality, all kinds of things and how your life is as a divorced person and how to work through it. It is a huge support. It created a support system for you so you know you are not alone, and you can pick up the phone, and the person on the other side of the line understands cause they are in the same boat. All I can say is you don’t know, until you have been through it yourself. Meantime when it actually happens to you, you have completely different idea, different emotions coming up that you didn’t even know they were there. Before I said I would, could, should, but you never know until you go through it yourself.

People try and sympathise with you, but meantime they go home to their normal life, their married life, and they give you all sorts of therapies, and all sorts of solutions. Until you are in it yourself, you don’t know how you are going to act, and that I have realised definitely. In the beginning, you don’t even know how you are going to react, in the first hour, in the first instance, so it’s all a big shamble. I feel like sometimes I have been in the washing machine. Now I am getting more stable, cause I know Monday nights I do this, Tuesday nights I do bible study, so I am getting more planned and therefore I am getting more settled, but in the first year I was running around like I was in a washing machine, so your anger, sadness and unforgiveness is all grouped together.

I remember feeling disgust, because I remember being worried about him and he was busy with the affair, so I felt disgust, ashamed for the family, all those kinds of feelings comes up. In my simple mind I was not aware of any problems, so you kind of, feel betrayed, um, cheated on, not good enough, all those kind of emotions come up and you have to work through. Fortunately I was brought up with a very good self image, I realised that um, you know the
issues he has brought up are his own, his issues are his relationship
problems, and the reason why we were so long together was because I could
put up his problems. It strengthens your character, and you analyse yourself
more, um, but I think at the end of the tunnel you end up thinking I am not so
bad after all. So you come out with pillars that are your strengths, because
your strengths are what keep you standing as opposed to jumping off the
nearest bridge. Your um, they become your crutches to move on. My life feels
more structured, it is a little like the sea, with waves of sadness, cause
sometimes you will think of something and you will feel sad, like mother’s day,
I don’t know and you will think of it, and you are sad. You learnt to live with
the past, you can’t alter the past. There is a lot you have to let go of, and I am
determined to do just that. I have such an example. My daughter in laws’
and married her, and they have been married I think for 18/19 years now, and
she is still stuck. She is still in love with the man. I don’t think you must waste
time falling out of love with anyone, because when you stood and made the
covenant, you said it for life, and you still mean it. The fact that you had this
thrown at you, my psychologist said don’t waste time trying to change how
you feel about him, leave it there in a box an move on. Along the lines, he
does not want me, so I am not going to allow myself to want him, it’s a waste
of energy because he doesn’t want me. It doesn’t alter what I feel for him, but
it changes the way I look at it, so I can shift and move on. I think I am doing
pretty well, cause it is not easy. I have to consciously make an effort to move
on. She even said to me that her family member went through the same thing,
and when the mistress died, he went back to his first wife, so I think she is
waiting for that, but I said to her the mistress is 15 years younger than you, so
the chances are you will die first. She has given me an illustration of where I
don’t want to be, because she has wasted her life, 20 years that is crazy,
crazy, crazy. Tragic, tragic, tragic, it is not good for her health, she can’t walk,
she is in a wheel chair, cause of not dealing with those emotions, never mind
what it has caused to her children.

One of the things that I am still battling with is my children are split in it, my
one child doesn’t want anything to do with it, with the father, is disgusted,
deleted the number doesn’t want anything to do with him. The other child is
very involved with the father and the woman, and in the first three weeks I
had to deal with my daughter inviting them over to her house for dinner, and I found that very difficult. It was difficult because I had to face my fears and confront it, and maybe it has shifted me quicker than other people cause in eight years they still have not had to deal with this. I don’t want a fall out with my daughter, because she is doing that, I don’t want to lose her for doing that, and I could cause I am very angry, and I still don’t like it. It feels never ending, I believe one day you wake up and you don’t think about it anymore and it gets less, definitely. In the beginning I had no future, now I feel like I have a future. All the old plans have gone out the window, and you have to make new plans. I believe death is easier, because you suffer the loss without the heartache of betrayal, divorce, of what if, that huge rejection. He is not out there hurting you if he is dead, and continues hurting you in the present. It gets easier and you go along. I think that the act of infidelity and the consequences that follow infidelity make unforgiveness so hard because they are so intertwined. The repercussions are huge, to people, to family, even my father of 89 was affected. It spreads throughout the family, and you constantly have to be aware that it doesn’t affect you negatively, and I could have a massive fight with my daughter, and then give him the power. I have to constantly forgive so that I don’t cause conflict with the people I love. I could have lost my daughter and my husband, and I had to change my mindset straight away.

I am not saying he is innocent, but us women have power, and she could have stopped it. If she had stopped it, it would never have happened. I am still very angry with her.

I don’t think people understand the simplicity of forgiveness and unforgiveness has happened, so move on, cause it detrimental to your well-being. It’s is however more complicated as there are emotions involved. Unforgiveness is very real. Don’t judge until you are in it yourself, cause I hadn’t a clue what divorce was. I wouldn’t wish this on anyone, if I could take away other’s pain I would, be gentle on yourself, take baby steps, baby, baby steps, there is no short cuts. You have to work through it gradually as it works, because if you do it will come back and bit you. My dad tried to pressure me to forgive, and I felt like there was no loyalty, but with all respect he has no idea what this feels like, and that is like another trauma. It is a horrible, horrible process, where you are not in control. It is like a seesaw, it’s
like a washing machine, one hour you feel like this and another hour you feel like that. It’s quite exhausting and aging.”

Interviewer: “Is there anything else you would like to add?”

Participant 2: “If you go through all the stages you come though a stronger person, and I feel I am stronger, I am quite proud of myself of that, I am a stronger person. People say it will be better, but at this stage I can’t say better yet, but I have grown a lot and the church helped me through that, I have always had a good relationship with God, and I wouldn’t be sitting here without God.”
APPENDIX E: PARTICIPANT 3 TRANSCRIPT

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 15 JUNE 2011

1 Interviewer: “How do you define unforgiveness for yourself?”

2 Participant 3: “Unforgiveness is harbouring bad feeling towards another person, for something they have done to you.”

3 Interviewer: “How do you define forgiveness for yourself?”

4 Participant 3: “Forgiveness is forgiving them, like letting it go, like saying, basically for me it is giving it to God and letting Him deal with it. That is how I feel, because I think I can’t forgive some in my own abilities, I think it is more, well that is what I know in my head. I don’t think it is that easy to feel that in your heart though.”

5 Prompt: could you please elaborate on that?

6 “It is knowledge, it is a head thing. When I had to learn to forgive, I was like what is that? Is it like telling someone it is fine, they can do whatever they want and you will just forgive them, but then I learnt it is not actually telling them that, it is letting it go because it is harmful to yourself, my whole way that I see it, is when Jesus is dying on the cross, they were hurting Him and torturing Him, and He said I forgive you, so that is what I have learnt we need to do, so that is it.”

7 Interviewer: “What picture in the bible best portrays forgiveness to you?”

8 Participant 3: “When people ask me, you have to forgive, Jesus forgave when they were crucifying him and torturing Him. He forgave them, and I know that is freedom for us. It is easy to know and then difficult to apply it, it is a very difficult thing, and you think you have done it, and you hope you have done it, and there is no one leading you like how, you know. Like you really need a lot of support, and when people are like you, in a Christian way, and people like my family who are not born again, and they are like he is such a this and such a that. And I know that I need to forgive, and then I realise what I haven’t, so then on a daily basis I have to do it, like he does something and then I am like oh my gosh he did something again, and then I have to forgive him again.”
Sometimes when you stop, it's like what is the point because we have to do it every day, and then it becomes easier and you actually feel it, then it becomes your choice."

Interviewer: “What is your experience of unforgiveness of extra-marital infidelity?”

Participant 3: “My experience is um, I mean it has been very hard, I mean it has been four years now, and I am still not in a place of forgiveness. I really thought I was, but I have started to go through consequences to actions of my ex-husband leaving, and this anger builds up, and then I don’t forgive him anymore. I sort of blame him for everything, it is like because he did this and he did that, and because he left us, and because he wasn’t working, and because he wasn’t bothered, you know what I mean and then it all builds up, and then I have been holding onto it for too long, and then I have to go back through the process again, and I am like I must forgive him, because it is making me sick if I don’t. It does, I feel it, it hardens your heart, it makes you bitter, it makes you so many different things, like jealous. You like look at other people and they have this and they have that, and you like have a pity party, then unforgiveness comes back like major. So I have gone through the forgiveness process, like when things were going ok, but then it’s when things don’t go so well, that I feel so angry at him for leaving, and I have to forgive him again. Then it all comes back again, it’s like oh my gosh it’s been like four years, and um, I am really desperate to move on with my life, and it’s like I can’t, sorry I am very emotional today.”

Prompt: could you please tell me more about that?

“This feels, unfair, I am sorry. It's just like, makes me angry, sorry. It just feels like I have been locked in a cage and I can't get out. It just feels like um, limited and sad, and ja. I think that um, it is also um, I am allowing the situation to control me and put me into this cage and conform me into this box, and I am like a single mom with three kids, and that is my life, so, ja, and um, ja it just feels, ja, scary, but I have to stay in it, mean I love my girls and I love being a mom to my girls, but sometimes it's really hard doing it on my own, and I actually find, well I have moved twice in one month, so I went through a lot of stress, and he kept short paying maintenance, and things with finances, and we have to um, go without stuff, because that is just the way that it is. When friends of mine say come lets go to movies, when the girls are
with their dad, and I am just so tiered and exhausted, so I don't think I can
have another life right now, except for my children, and that is fine its hard
though, I am committed my girls come first. People say I need a life, but my
life is my girls, isn’t that right, or isn’t it, I don’t know, um I mean I have to be
the responsible one, cause my ex will pay his R6000.00 or whatever he pays
and that’s it, and he gets them every second weekends, and some
Wednesdays, and between that then when he phones he tries to be in
control, and he isn’t even there, I mean he doesn’t even try and fetch the girls.
I think I have become so angry with um, with a lot of people, because I have
been going through so many things, and I am like help, can anyone hear me,
and that is why I get really angry with my ex, it’s because why is that fair. I
know life is not fair, but what gives him the right, why is he just allowed to
walk away, that is wrong, and you know he is um, ja, and um, but he still likes
to be in control and tell me when I am doing a bad job, so I am like, because
you know what it is, maybe it is like the bits of me that will never forgive, it is
like the scars, the repercussions and the consequences of what we have to
live in everyday. I am sure he has them too, but I have to try focus on my girls
and me, because it is God and us, and that is it. It’s um, I think it’s just like,
um, how could you ever forgive someone for destroying your family. That’s
why it is a daily thing.

I think when you have children involved, and you see how messed up their
lives get, it is very different. That makes me so mad. I mean I don’t really
know my dad, but if there are no children involved and you just have to
forgive the act, then I could. I have forgiven him for the infidelity, I am finding
that my children and I have been victimised by the infidelity in the
consequences we face. I mean your children, for me, when you have children
they are your priority. You have to become unselfish, you have had you life,
you have chosen this, they are now here and it is your job to raise them, in a
healthy life, and care for them and nurture them.

Um, I don’t miss the intimacy with my ex, when he left, the way he left was
just so traumatic, the mental and the emotional and some physical abuse,
and um, that is how I will remember him. All that so, I miss intimacy, and the,
just a man protecting me, and loving me and keeping me safe, I thought that
is what my ex what doing. The desire gets less and less, and that is worrying
me. Once you have been married and have been sexually active and then it is
like, it’s like gee, you just can’t switch that button off. I miss someone just
loving me, and touching you and loving you, and that hurts me. My three girls
need me so much, and it’s like I need recharging that I am dry, so as a way to
protect myself as a defence mechanism, when I got through stuff I just
come really hard, I feel dry and dead. That's um, it’s good to talk about it
cause at times you can’t even cry, sometimes I will watch a really sad movie
so I can just cry, cause I just want to know I can feel things. I love watching
dramas, and romantic dramas, and comedies, and I love romance, and I love
love. I still have hope though to not lose my fairytale. I feel like, I mean like
with my ex and he is with his new girlfriend. When someone comes into my
life it's like they have to be a miracle or a gift, from God because he has to
accept, it’s not just, me, he has to accept my girls. I feel like it’s going to be
like a sacrifice for them cause like, they have to raise someone else’s children
and still put up with that other person’s nonsense. I still feel like um, like
almost like, like almost like I’m used up. People also from long time ago used
to refer to my kids as baggage and I’m like, I don’t have baggage, I have
three children and they are not baggage. I feel like if I met someone who
never had kids or was never married that I was being selfish, I would almost
feel like they are going to miss out on their chance who hasn’t walked down
that road. But I don’t think, I don’t speak to my ex, it is not by choice, so it is
like we are strangers so I have to speak with his new girlfriend, otherwise
there will be no communication. Which was really hard for me, but it is the
only way. It is like I don’t know my ex anymore, I mean when I look at him I
am like thank God, I am not with him, who he is now and who he was in
Christ, and maybe he is coming back to God, but when I see the way he is
with his new girlfriend, I just can’t even recognise him, he has changed. It’s,
like the person I knew died, and I feel I don’t feel anything. I completely, you
know. When I look at photos from our wedding, and photos from a while back,
it reignites the person, if I see him now it’s is not like that. It is not the same
person, he is not the person I knew him to be. Even though he looks quite the
same, I mean he has puffed out quite a bit, I know that sounds terrible, but I
feel the spirit and I can feel the spirit, it is like this greedy look. That is not
what I had, that is something else.

I do miss what I had. We had some stuff we needed to sort out, but um, it
could have been sorted out. I miss, um, I miss, who he was in God. He was a
strong man of faith, I mean he lead me to God. I didn’t even want to come to church, and I wasn’t raised Christian, so when we came here for so many years, I didn’t want to be here, or be around the people, because I felt imperfect, and like I didn’t want to be round that, and so it was very, very hard for me, and I didn’t like it. But then he left me and like I was at this road, um, I had a choice to make am I going to follow God or am I going to follow the world. I went off the path for a while, for a few months. I was just so desperate to know that I was pretty, and that another guy would think that I was pretty. There was this desperate need to know that I was, but I was wrong and you know, it was the worldly side. I went out dancing and drinking and stupid things, and I realised I needed to stay on, and I wanted to, you know, know God. I find it very difficult to feel God, and some people say it is because of my own father, and whatever and whatever, there are many people who don’t have a father and feel God and know God, but it has taken long and I have learnt to trust, because I think that is also something you hold onto, the trust cause that was broken and that is huge. It is also the rejection that was huge, huge, huge, and I also think that it was because of the place that I was at, I was already insecure about myself, my whole life. Um, and I never dealt with my father’s rejection, and the he rejected me. It was everything all at once, and I just wanted to die, aagh. I actually wanted to die, really, it would have been easier, I know now it wouldn’t have been, but then it just would have been easier.

It just smashes through a family, and hurts people, and destroys everyone. It’s like just one person, his new girlfriend, was not my husband she made no commitment with me, his infidelity had an effect on my family, his family, the girls, it touched everything around me. If I look at the point before the infidelity, if I remember all the stuff was tough and all then because of his one stupid thing he did, it magnified all the other bad things, and destroyed everything. Not that God can’t fix it. Sometimes I fell like my mom suffers more than I do, it’s just completely destroys everything, it destroys everything. If people, guys or girls realised, I mean really understood, and realised the damage it was going to cause, they would cut it before anything.

I know it is important to forgive, I have big responsibilities now, and I need to be healthy and focused, and get my but into gear and get myself sorted out, I
know it has turned inside me like poison, all the bitterness, so I am really
gonna try harder to forgive to set myself free.”

Interviewer: “Did you feel any pressure to forgive by the church?”

Participant 3: “The church was like my hospital, no, in fact some of the people who were
with me at church were also so angry with him. You know, it was almost like,
he was just like a aagh! I think, um, I think, um, the recovery group was very
important. I just cried through the whole thing, I didn’t like all the rules. It
would have been nice if it was more, I realised people will never understand
what you walk through until they walk through it themselves, ja.