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AN EXAMINATION OF THE PROCESS OF FORGIVENESS AND THE RELATIONSHIP AMONG STATE FORGIVENESS, SELF- COMPASSION, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING EXPERIENCED BY BUDDHISTS IN THE UNITED STATES

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AN EXAMINATION OF THE PROCESS OF FORGIVENESS AND
THE RELATIONSHIP AMONG STATE FORGIVENESS,
SELF-COMPASSION, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING
EXPERIENCED BY BUDDHISTS IN THE UNITED STATES

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
Requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
College of Education
at the University of Kentucky

By
Masami Matsuyuki

Lexington, Kentucky

Co-Directors: Dr. Pam Remer, Associate Professor of Counseling Psychology
and Dr. Rory Remer, Professor of Counseling Psychology

Lexington, Kentucky

2011

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ABSTARACT OF DISSERTATION

AN EXAMINATION OF THE PROCESS OF FORGIVENESS AND THE RELATIONSHIP AMONG STATE FORGIVENESS, SELF-COMPASSION, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING EXPERIENCED BY BUDDHISTS IN THE UNITED STATES

The purpose of this study was to investigate the process of forgiveness and the relationship among state forgiveness, self-compassion, and psychological well-being experienced by Buddhists in the United States. An integral feminist framework was developed for this mixed-method study.

For the quantitative component of this study, a convenience sample of 112 adults completed an online survey. Multiple regression analysis was performed to examine: (a) the impact of gender, age, and the years spent in Buddhist practice on state forgiveness and self-compassion; (b) the outcome of psychological well-being in relation to state forgiveness and self-compassion; and (c) self-compassion as a mediator for the relationship between state forgiveness and psychological well-being. Quantitative results indicated: (a) state forgiveness positively predicted psychological well-being; (b) the years spent in Buddhist practice positively predicted self-compassion; (c) self-compassion positively predicted psychological well-being; and (d) self-compassion partially mediated the relationship between state forgiveness and psychological well-being. Age did not predict any of the three primary variables. Gender did not predict state forgiveness.

For the qualitative component of this study, this researcher purposefully selected four adults from a local Buddhist community in central Kentucky and conducted two in-depth interviews to explore their subjective experiences of forgiveness within their own contexts. A holistic-content narrative analysis revealed unique features of each interviewee's forgiveness process interwoven with the socio-cultural, family and relational contexts. From a phenomenological analysis, common themes and elements of the interviewees' forgiveness processes emerged. Qualitative findings corresponded to the quantitative results concerning state forgiveness as a route to psychological well-being, the positive relationship between Buddhist practice and compassion, and the role of self-compassion in the relationship between state forgiveness and psychological well-

being. Qualitative findings also suggested the following. First, two-way compassion toward self and the offender was a facilitating factor for forgiveness that may be unique to Buddhists. Second, one's actual experience of forgiveness may encompass not only cognitive, affective, and behavioral changes, but also transformation of self and perspective on meaning and purpose in life. Third, Enright and his colleagues' (1998) stage and process models of forgiveness were useful to understand Buddhists' experiences and processes of forgiveness.

KEYWORDS: Forgiveness, Self-Compassion, Psychological Well-Being, Buddhists, Mixed-Method Feminist Research

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November 11, 2011
Date

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Chapter One: Introduction

Forgiveness caught my attention for the first time in my life when I participated in a workshop entitled “Unconditional Love and Forgiveness” at the conference of the Association for Advancement of Psychosynthesis held in San Francisco in 2003. I witnessed a female survivor of childhood sexual abuse volunteering to be guided to forgive her brother and going through the seven steps of forgiveness process (Lingo, 2003) in front of the group. Coming from my academic and clinical training backgrounds in women’s studies and counseling psychology, I was cautious and apprehensive about the situation. The therapist part of me was concerned about a risk of her being re-victimized while processing such a traumatic experience of interpersonal violence with a group of strangers. The feminist part of me did not quite understand why she wanted or needed to forgive. As I vicariously experienced her forgiving her brother, however, I realized that forgiveness has something to do with one’s own healing.

Psychology of Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a relatively new topic in psychology. Although its history can be traced back to some discussions in relation to cognitive development and pastoral care between the 1930s and the 1960s and a few relevant studies about attributional principles and human values between the 1950s and the 1970s, a substantial increase of theoretical exploration and empirical investigation of forgiveness occurred in the 1980s and the 1990s (McCullough, Pargament, & Thoresen, 2000). Since empirical research on human strengths was advocated in the positive psychology movement (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), forgiveness was acknowledged as one of such psychological constructs (McCullough & Witvliet, 2002). In the rapid growth of psychological

literature on forgiveness, researchers and clinicians raised some concerns about methodological and clinical implications of forgiveness research.

Concern 1: Definitions of forgiveness. To conduct quantitative studies on forgiveness, psychological researchers defined forgiveness in many different ways by referring to philosophical and religious texts and psychological theories. As a consequence, a large number of measures were developed based on various conceptualizations and operationalizations of forgiveness (Thompson & Snyder, 2003). In fact, some researchers (Mullet, Girad, & Bakhshi, 2004; Younger, Piferi, Jobe, & Lawler, 2004) suggested that laypeople only partially agreed upon the conceptual definitions of forgiveness used in prior quantitative research, and that notable individual differences existed in how laypeople actually understood and experienced forgiveness.

Concern 2: Generalizability of forgiveness research. Generalizability of psychological research on forgiveness is of concern among forgiveness researchers. With some exceptions (Freedman & Enright, 1996; Hebl & Enright, 1993; Mullet, Houdbine, Laumonier, & Girard, 1998), most published psychological studies on forgiveness were conducted with samples typically consisting of undergraduate psychology students. Furthermore, relatively few psychological studies have been conducted with religious participants, even though forgiveness has a religious connotation for the majority of people in the United States. Also, non-Christian perspectives on forgiveness have rarely been empirically investigated.

Concern 3: Gender and forgiveness. In the context of gender socialization in which females are discouraged from expressing anger and tend to learn to suppress it, reclaiming anger for empowerment, particularly in response to social injustice, was one

of the agendas in feminist movements in the United States. Feminist activists warned that forgiving perpetrators of abuse and violence might jeopardize physical and psychological safety of survivors and contribute to blaming survivors (Bass & Davis, 1988). More recently, feminist clinicians expressed a caution against promoting the use of forgiveness in therapy, especially with female clients (Lamb, 2002). Feminist philosophers criticized the absence of gender in the dominant discourse and research on forgiveness (Norlock, 2009).

Psychological research that directly investigated the impact of gender on forgiveness is indeed scarce. Among prior quantitative studies in which gender was included as a variable, the findings are mixed: females were found to be more forgiving than males in some studies, while no gender difference was found in other studies. One qualitative study (Black, 2003) described how a woman's experience of forgiveness could be intertwined with traditional feminine gender roles. To clarify gender differences in forgiveness, it appears that offense-specific forgiveness and the context of forgiveness need to be examined.

Concern 4: Forgiveness as a route to psychological well-being. As much as psychologists have debated the conceptual and operational (i.e., theoretical and quantifiable) definitions and the construct (i.e., the structure and components) of forgiveness, they have also debated those of psychological well-being. Two major branches of research on psychological well-being can be categorized as emotional well-being and positive psychological functioning (Keyes & Magyar-Moe, 2003). This divergence reflected two contrary philosophical views that influenced researchers' conceptualization of psychological well-being: hedonism and eudaimonism (Ryan &

Deci, 2001). A hedonic view of psychological well-being is characterized by increased experience of pleasant feelings and thoughts, and decreased experience of unpleasant feelings and thoughts. A eudaimonic view of psychological well-being pertains to discovering and deepening the purpose and meaning of life and facilitating self-growth.

A link between forgiveness and mental and physical health has attracted much attention in psychological research (McCullough, 2000; Thoresen, Harris, & Lusk, 2000). In forgiveness research, psychological well-being has often been considered equivalent to global satisfaction of life, minimal psychological distress or absence of psychopathology, or a combination of certain positive cognition and affect. Thus, a possible relationship between forgiveness and psychological well-being in the eudaimonic sense has been overlooked.

Concern 5: Methodology of forgiveness research. A methodological limitation of prior psychological research on forgiveness has been noted. To study such a complex phenomenon as forgiveness, researchers have been encouraged to conduct a multi-method study to investigate various dimensions of forgiveness (Pargament, McCullough, & Thoresen, 2000). However, still few psychological studies have been conducted to explore qualitative inquiries (e.g., what forgiveness means to people, why they forgive, and what is the process of forgiveness that they experience).

Understanding the Concerns in a Broader Context

These concerns in psychological research on forgiveness are in fact relevant to some problematic tendencies in psychological research in general: uncritical use of college student samples, disregard or avoidance of religious and spiritual aspects of people, and monolithic research methodology. Feminist (Grossman et al., 1997),

multicultural (Sue & Sue, 1999), and crosscultural (Segall, Dasen, Berry, & Poortinga, 1990) psychologists questioned the generalizability of mainstream psychological research to socio-culturally diverse populations. Historically, separation of psychology from religion happened when psychology differentiated itself from philosophy to become a discipline grounded in science (Smith, 2001). An irony is that mainstream psychology seems to have lost its original meaning (the study of soul) and its root in more open-minded, pluralistic empirical approach represented by the work of James (1902/1997) when psychologists alienated soul from sense (Wilber, 1998).

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate the process of forgiveness and the relationships among state forgiveness, self-compassion, and psychological well-being experienced by Buddhists. The rationale for this study was derived from a gap in prior psychological research on forgiveness, which was suggested by several concerns raised by researchers and clinicians that I outlined previously. Additionally, psychologists and Buddhist teachers' interest in potential applications of Buddhist practices for developing mental and emotional skills and healthy self-attitudes has grown, thereby promoting psychological well-being (Bastis, 2003; Brach, 2003; Kornfield, 2002; Sanderson & Linehan, 1999; Salzberg, 2008). Self-compassion was recently conceptualized as a healthy self-attitude that entails a set of mental and emotional skills (Neff, 2003b), calling for more empirical studies. Thus, I decided to examine self-compassion in relation to forgiveness and psychological well-being.

This study addresses the following questions. What are the subjective and contextual meanings of forgiveness for Buddhists? What is the process of forgiveness

that Buddhists experience? Do Buddhist teachings and practices play any role in the process of forgiveness? If so, what and how? How do socio-cultural contexts, such as gender, influence Buddhists' experiences of forgiveness? Does forgiveness promote psychological well-being for Buddhists as suggested by prior psychological research with non-religious samples? Does self-compassion play any role in forgiveness as a route to psychological well-being?

To respond to these questions, I conducted this mixed-method study with heightened awareness of epistemological issues involved in crossing the paradigms of quantitative and qualitative psychological research. I developed a theoretical framework, which I called an integral feminist approach, based on my application of Wilber's (2000a, 2000b) integral meta-framework from a feminist perspective. Within this framework, I conducted the qualitative component of this study to explore and describe the meanings and the process of forgiveness experienced by Buddhists. I conducted the quantitative component of this study to investigate the predictive relationship among forgiveness, self-compassion, and psychological well-being, and the possible impact of demographic and Buddhist practice variables on the relationship among the primary variables. Then, toward a more comprehensive understanding of Buddhists' experiences of forgiveness in relation to self-compassion and psychological well-being, I examined how corresponding or discrepant the quantitative and qualitative results turned out to be.

Chapter Two: Review of Selected Literature

In this chapter, selected literature is reviewed in two parts: a topic-focused review and an epistemology-focused review. First, I review psychological theories and research studies and Buddhist literature relevant to primary constructs (forgiveness, self-compassion, and psychological well-being) and the population (English-speaking individuals who practice Buddhism in the United States) of this study. Second, I review psychological, feminist, and philosophical literature to discuss epistemological issues pertaining to an integral feminist framework that I used for this mixed-method study.

Topic-Focused Review

This topic-focused review is divided into four sections: forgiveness, self-compassion, psychological well-being in relation to forgiveness and self-compassion, and Buddhist teachings and practices relevant to forgiveness, compassion, and psychological well-being. In the first section, the similarities and differences in a wide range of definitions, conceptualizations, operationalizations, and measurements of forgiveness used in prior quantitative research are identified; then they are compared to qualitative research findings. Also, prior studies indicating socio-cultural influences, such as religiosity and gender, on forgiveness are discussed. In the second section, self-compassion is introduced as a psychological construct that is conceptualized as a healthy self-attitude alternative to self-esteem; and prior research findings on self-compassion are reviewed. In the third section, I summarize two major branches of conceptualization of psychological well-being (i.e., emotional well-being and positive psychological functioning) recognized in its own field of psychological research. Then, I discuss prior research findings on the links between forgiveness/forgiveness interventions and

psychological well-being as well as between self-compassion and psychological well-being. In the fourth section, I review Buddhist literature to discuss forgiveness, compassion, and psychological well-being from a Buddhist perspective. This topic-focused review is concluded with a discussion of models and measures selected for the quantitative component of this study.

Forgiveness. In the past 20 years, forgiveness has been empirically investigated in an increasing number of psychological studies, and its scientific knowledge base is quickly expanding. Prior quantitative studies showed various individual, relational, and situational factors involved in forgiveness; psychological, neurophysiological, and physical health correlates of forgiveness; and applications of forgiveness in educational and therapeutic settings and the effect of such interventions (McCullough et al., 2000; McCullough, Root, Tabak, & Witvliet, 2009). However, when it comes to what forgiveness is and what constitutes forgiveness, consensus has not been reached among researchers (Kaminer, Stein, Mbanga, & Zungu-Dirwayi, 2000), and discrepancy has been found between experts' and laypeople's understanding of forgiveness (Mullet et al., 2004; Younger et al., 2004).

Quantitative psychological research on forgiveness. Various definitions and conceptualizations of forgiveness resulted in a large number of measures of forgiveness that appear to assess many different aspects of forgiveness (DeShea, 2008; McCullough et al., 2000; Thompson & Snyder, 2003). One way to summarize the similarities and differences in a wide range of definitions, conceptualizations, operationalizations, and measurements of forgiveness is to examine those in terms of the components of forgiveness and forgiveness as state or trait. In the following discussion in this section, I

mainly refer to the following five measures of forgiveness: Enright Forgiveness Inventory [EFI] (Enright & Rique, 2000; Hebl & Enright, 1993), Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivation (TRIM)(McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997; McCullough et al.,1998), Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS)(Thompson et al., 2005), Mullet Forgiveness Questionnaire (MFQ)(Mullet et al., 1998), and Multidimensional Forgiveness Inventory (MFI)(Tangney, Boon, Fee, & Reinsmith, 1999). A summary table of these selected measures of forgiveness is available in Table 1 as a reference to compare definitions, scales and subscales, reliability and validity data, and other notable information regarding conceptualization, scale construction, item descriptions, and test administration.

Components of forgiveness: Transformation and reconciliation. Forgiveness has been commonly conceptualized as one's emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and/or motivational transformation that occurs after he or she experiences a transgression or an offense. For example, forgiveness can be understood in terms of one's "overcoming of negative affect and judgment toward the offender" by "endeavoring to view the offender with compassion" (Enright & The Human Development Study Group, 1991, p. 126); one's "motivational transformation" from "seeking revenge or maintaining estrangement" from the offender to "behaving in conciliatory ways" toward the offender (McCullough, Worthington, et al., 1997, p. 325); one's "cognitive-affective transformation following a transgression" (Tangney et al., 1999, p. 2); one's "framing of a perceived transgression" being "transformed from negative to neutral or positive" (Thompson et al., 2005, p. 319); and one's "disposition to abort one's anger" toward the offender (Mullet et al., 1998, p. 290).

Table 2.1

Summary of Selected Forgiveness Measures

Measure [State/Trait] (Authors)	Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI) [State forgiveness of other] (Enright & Rique, 2000; Hebl & Enright, 1993)
Definition	“Forgiveness is the overcoming of negative affect and judgment toward the offender, not by denying ourselves the right to such affect and judgment, but by endeavoring to view the offender with compassion, benevolence, and love while recognizing that he or she has abandoned the right to them” (Enright & The Human Development Study Group, 1991, p. 126).
Scale & Subscales (# of items)	EFI total (60) Subscales: affect (20), behavior (20), and cognition (20) Pseudo-forgiveness (5) Single-item forgiveness
Reliability and Validity	Sample: male and female late adolescent college students ($M = 22$ years old) and their same-gender parents ($M = 50$ years old); internal consistency $> .85$; test-retest reliability = .85; convergent validity: positive correlation with single-item forgiveness; discriminant validity: no correlation with social desirability; concurrent validity: negative correlation with state-anxiety (Subkoviak et al., 1995) EFI has been used in a number of studies with diverse samples, including a non-western student sample (Park & Enright, 1997)
Other Notable Information	EFI was conceptualized based on philosophical and religious literature on forgiveness and developmental and clinical psychological theories. EFI is labeled as “Attitude Scale” for respondents. Respondents are first asked to describe who hurt them unfairly and deeply most recently and what the offense was (i.e., qualitative). They are then asked to rate their current attitudes toward their offender. The word “forgiveness” is not mentioned in any of the item descriptions, except for the final question asking respondents to rate to what extent they have forgiven their offenders.

Table 2.1 (continued)

Summary of Selected Forgiveness Measures

Measure [State/Trait] (Authors)	Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations (TRIM) [State Forgiveness of Other] (McCullough, Worthington, et al., 1997; McCullough et al., 1998)
Definition	“Forgiveness is a motivational transformation that inhibits an injured relationship partner from seeking revenge or maintaining estrangement from an offending relationship partner and inclines them to behave in conciliatory ways instead” (McCullough, Worthington, et al., 1997, p. 325).
Scale & Subscales (# of items)	TRIM total (12) Subscales: avoidance (6) and revenge (6)
Reliability and Validity	Sample: undergraduate students (age range 18-25); internal consistency: “high”; test-retest reliability: “moderate”; convergent validity: positive correlations with single-item forgiveness and with such constructs as empathy, interpersonal closeness, and apology; discriminant validity: negative correlations with such constructs as vengeance and no correlation with impression management (McCullough et al., 1998; McCullough, Bellah, Kilpatrick, & Johnson, 2001)
Other Notable Information	<p>TRIM was conceptualized based on a psychological theory of accommodation in close relationships with empathy as an important factor.</p> <p>TRIM was constructed by a structural equation modeling of relevant variables.</p> <p>Benevolence subscale (6) and single-item forgiveness rating were added to a revised version of TRIM (McCullough, Fincham, & Tsang, 2003; McCullough & Hoyt, 2002).</p> <p>The word “forgiveness” is not mentioned in any of the item descriptions, except for the single-item forgiveness rating.</p>

Table 2.1 (continued)

Summary of Selected Forgiveness Measures

Measure [State/Trait] (Authors)	Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS) [Trait forgiveness of other, self, and situation] (Thompson et al., 2005)
Definition	“Forgiveness is the framing of a perceived transgression such that one’s responses to the transgressor, transgression, and sequelae of the transgression are transformed from negative to neutral or positive. The source of a transgression, and therefore the object of forgiveness, may be oneself, another person or persons, or a situation that one views as being beyond anyone’s control (Thompson et al., 2005, p. 319).
Scale & Subscales (# of items)	HFS total (18) Subscales: forgiveness of self (6), forgiveness of other (6), and forgiveness of situation (6)
Reliability and Validity	Sample: five groups of college students and non-students; internal consistency: “high”; test-retest reliability between .77 and .83; convergent validity: positive correlations with other trait forgiveness measures and such constructs as cognitive flexibility and positive affect; discriminant validity: negative correlations with such constructs as negative affect and vengeance; predictive validity: positive correlation with some aspects of psychological well-being (Thompson & Snyder, 2003; Thompson et al., 2005)
Other Notable Information	HFS was conceptualized based on a synthesis of prior psychological forgiveness research. HFS was positively correlated with social desirability ($r = .38$); however, authors argued that this social desirability scales could have measured a personality trait rather than a response bias. The word “forgiveness” is not mentioned in any of the item descriptions.

Table 2.1 (continued)

Summary of Selected Forgiveness Measures

Measure [State/Trait] (Authors)	Mullet Forgiveness Questionnaire (MFQ) [Trait forgiveness of other] (Mullet et al., 1998)
Definition	“The disposition to abort one’s anger (or altogether to miss getting angry) at persons one takes to have wronged one culpably, by seeing them in the benevolent terms provided by reasons characteristic of forgiving” (Mullet et al., 1998, p. 290) (e.g., morally intelligent tolerance, compassion, and humility).
Scale & Subscales (# of items)	MFQ total (18) Subscales: enduring resentment (6), sensitivity to circumstances (6), and overall propensity to forgive or revenge (6)
Reliability and Validity	<p>Sample: people recruited on the streets in a city of Italy and France (age range 18-65) and young adults with secondary school education (including nuns) in Portugal (age range 21-40); internal consistency between .74 and .82; external validity: religious involvement across three different samples were positively correlated with the Forgive or Revenge subscale and was negatively correlated with the Blockage to Forgiveness subscale (which became Enduring Resentment subscale later) (Mullet et al., 2003)</p> <p>MFQ has been used in a number of studies with diverse samples, including French, Portuguese, Italian, Congolese, and Lebanese with different demographic backgrounds (Azar & Mullet, 2002; Kadiangandu, Mullet, & Vinsonneau, 2001; Mullet et al., 1998)</p>
Other Notable Information	<p>MFQ was conceptualized based on philosophical literature on forgiveness as a virtue and a synthesis of prior psychological forgiveness research.</p> <p>MFQ was constructed by factor analysis based on the authors’ prior research findings.</p> <p>All item descriptions include the word “forgive.”</p>

Table 2.1 (continued)

Summary of Selected Forgiveness Measures

Measure [State/Trait] (Authors)	Multi-dimensional Forgiveness Inventory (MFI) [Trait forgiveness of other and self] (Tangney et al., 1999)
Definition	“Forgiveness is a cognitive-affective transformation following a transgression in which the victim makes a realistic assessment of the harm done and acknowledges the perpetrator’s responsibility, but freely chooses to ‘cancel the debt,’ giving up the need for revenge or deserved punishment and any quest for restitution. This ‘canceling of the debt’ also involves a ‘cancellation of negative emotions’ directly related to the transgression. In particular, in forgiving, the victim overcomes his or her feelings of resentment and anger for the act. In short, by forgiving, the harmed individual essentially removes him or herself from the victim role” (Tangney et al., 1999, p. 2).
Scale & Subscales (# of items)	MFI total (16 scenarios, 72 questions) Subscales: propensity to forgive others (8), propensity to ask forgiveness from others (8), propensity to forgive self (8), time to forgive others (8), time to forgive self (8), propensity to blame others (8), propensity to blame self (8), sensitivity to hurt feelings (8), anger-proneness (8)
Reliability and Validity	Sample: College students with diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds ($M = 20$ years old); internal consistency between .73 and .85; construct and criterion-related validity: positive and negative correlations or little correlation with social desirability, cognitively- and affectively-oriented empathy, self-conscious affect (e.g., shame and guilt), anger-management strategies, relationship-relevant and self-evaluative personality dimensions (e.g., narcissism, attachment, self-esteem, and perfectionism), religiosity, and psychological adjustment and emotional well-being (Tangney et al., 1999)
Other Notable Information	MFI was conceptualized based on philosophical literature on forgiveness and a synthesis of prior psychological forgiveness research. MFI was developed to measure multiple aspects of forgiveness and as a scenario-based measure that was believed to be less susceptible to social desirability response bias. Most questions include the word “forgive.”

Most forgiveness researchers agree that one's renunciation of anger is an essential component of forgiveness; however, they disagree with the extent of transformation from what is negative to what is neutral (i.e., renunciation of what is negative) or what is positive (i.e., benevolence). Inclusion of benevolence in or its exclusion from the definition of forgiveness is another point of disagreement. In forgiveness research, benevolence has been operationalized as positive or prosocial thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and/or motivation. When these researchers' theoretical references are examined, a tendency exists that definitions of forgiveness that derived from prior psychological research literature do not include benevolence as a component of forgiveness (McCullough, Worthington, et al., 1997; Tangney et al., 1999; Thompson et al., 2005), whereas the definitions of forgiveness that derived from philosophical and religious literature include benevolence as a component of forgiveness (Enright & The Human Development Study Group, 1991; Mullet et al., 1998).

Forgiveness has also been commonly conceptualized as an intrapersonal phenomenon, although the nature of a transgression is usually interpersonal (i.e., inflicted by another person). Therefore, most forgiveness researchers, including those previously mentioned (Enright & The Human Development Study Group, 1991; McCullough, Worthington, et al., 1997; Mullet et al., 1998; Tangney et al., 1999; Thompson et al., 2005), have agreed that reconciliation (i.e., restoring a broken relationship between the offended and the offender) is not required for forgiveness, although reconciliation may occur or can be facilitated by forgiveness. However, some forgiveness researchers (Hargrave & Sells, 1997) have conceptualized forgiveness as including a component of reconciliation.

Forgiveness as state or trait. Concerning operationalization of forgiveness as a psychological construct, most measures of forgiveness have been developed to assess one's current state or generalized trait of what is believed to be cognitive, affective, behavioral, and/or motivational manifestations of forgiveness. Many more trait forgiveness measures than state forgiveness measures have been developed. Most trait- and state-forgiveness measures are for the forgiveness of other people. Very few self-forgiveness measures are currently available. Some trait forgiveness measures include a subscale of self-forgiveness (Mauger et al., 1992; Tangney et al., 1999; Thompson et al., 2005), and one state self-forgiveness has been published (Wohl, DeShea, & Wahkinney, 2008).

Measures of state forgiveness typically require respondents to recall a particular experience of being wronged, hurt, or offended (i.e., transgression-specific), and to respond to items that are expected to assess their current state of forgiveness or to what extent they have forgiven concerning the relevant experience of their choice. Measures of trait forgiveness typically require respondents to think about their typical responses to their past experiences of being wronged, hurt, or offended; or to rate how likely they would forgive, given hypothetical statements or scenarios that are possibly harmful or offensive. In other words, trait measures are expected to assess one's generalized willingness, tendency, or propensity to forgive. In this sense, trait measures are also called dispositional measures.

Discrepancies in understanding of forgiveness. Some studies suggested that laypeople only partially agreed upon the conceptual definitions of forgiveness used in prior quantitative research, and that notable individual differences existed in how they

actually understood and experienced forgiveness. For example, Mullet et al. (2004) asked 1029 people in France, including students ($M = 21.66$ years old), their fathers ($M = 50.42$ years old, and their mothers ($M = 47.96$ years old), about half of whom believed in God (54%), to rate on a 17-cm scale indicating the extent of their agreement or disagreement with 93 sentences referring to conceptions about forgiveness recognized by experts in forgiveness research. The researchers found that only 23% of the participants believed that forgiveness would transform their negative emotions toward the offender into positive emotions; and that 46% of the participants believed that the forgiven could be an unknown offender or an abstract institution (e.g., Church) (Mullet et al., 2004). Younger et al. (2004) asked 196 undergraduate students ($M = 20.92$ years old) and 83 adults ($M = 42.2$ years old) in a local community in Tennessee, who were predominantly European Americans, what forgiveness meant to them. The researchers found that the community adults tended to define forgiveness in emotional terms (e.g., letting go of negative emotions toward the offender), while the students tended to define forgiveness in behavioral terms (e.g., acceptance of what happened, dealing with the event, and getting over it); and that almost 25% of the students and 16% of the community adults defined forgiveness as reconciliation (Younger et al., 2004).

Qualitative psychological research on forgiveness. To discern such discrepancies between researchers and laypeople in their experiences and understandings of forgiveness, more qualitative research is called for. Publication of qualitative psychological studies on forgiveness is growing, but the number is still limited compared to that of quantitative studies. Keyword-search (“forgiveness” and “qualitative”) on the PsycINFO database resulted in 94 sources, including 57 dissertations, 30 journal articles, four book chapters,

one book, and two non-research documents. Forgiveness was a primary focus for 28 published research-based sources. The following is a summary of selected qualitative research on forgiveness (and its related construct, reconciliation) in terms of methods and findings. I briefly discuss how they are consistent with or discrepant from definitions and conceptualizations that have been used in quantitative research on forgiveness.

Qualitative methods used to study forgiveness. Prior qualitative data on forgiveness have been generated through qualitative survey/descriptive questionnaire, in-depth interview (e.g., phenomenological and ethnographic), participant-observation, and a combination of quantitative survey and one or two qualitative data collection methods (e.g., qualitative survey, interview, focus group, journal or reflective writing, and transcripts of public testimony). For data analysis, simple forms of quantitative summary were made; case studies were developed; hermeneutics were applied in interpretation; narratives were presented and interpreted; and themes were extracted from data (e.g., phenomenological analysis and grounded theory).

For example, Brenneis (2002) asked Catholic priests and clergymen of other denominations who were former residential patients in a psychiatric treatment center in the eastern United States ($N = 88$, age range 32-84) to complete a descriptive questionnaire to reflect on their attitudes and experiences of forgiveness, and analyzed the content of the descriptions to identify the participants' definitions of forgiveness and themes across their experiences of forgiveness. Katz (2002) interviewed six pairs of fathers and sons with Christian-based spirituality who have experienced reconciliation and positive change in their relationships, and applied grounded theory to analyze the transcripts from which qualities of a reconciled relationship and factors in the

reconciliation process emerged. Black (2003) conducted ethnographic interviews with 40 elders ($M = 77$ years old) varied by gender, race, and religious practice, and developed a case of an 82-year-old European-American female divorcee's experience of forgiveness in her socio-cultural context. Holeman (2003) conducted phenomenological interviews with 12 Protestant married couples and participant-observation in their homes, and developed multiple case studies and analyzed narratives to illustrate the couples' experiences of reconciliation. Each qualitative study provided unique information that described what forgiveness means to the participants, and why and how they have forgiven others from their own point of views.

Qualitative results: Meanings of forgiveness. The qualitative researchers previously mentioned provided no pre-set definitions of forgiveness but instead invited participants to define forgiveness. Meanings of forgiveness that emerged from some qualitative data (Black, 2003; Brenneis, 2002; Katz, 2002) appeared to be more or less consistent with some aspects of definitions of forgiveness provided by quantitative researchers. Some examples are: a shift in awareness; letting go of anger and resentment, hurt and pain, expectations for others, negative thoughts, and the desire to blame; and not forgetting, but choosing not to blame or not to attribute malice. However, other qualitative data suggested that offering or asking for pardon was included in participants' experiences of forgiveness (Brenneis, 2002), and that forgiveness was understood as a part of the process of reconciliation, particularly among Protestant couples (Holeman, 2003). These definitions of forgiveness supported by qualitative research findings seem to contradict pre-set definitions of forgiveness commonly used in quantitative research.

Qualitative results: Subjective experiences of forgiving and unforgiving. In the Brenneis's (2002) study, 88 clergymen who were former residential patients in a psychiatric treatment center described their experiences of forgiving their religious superiors by whom they were hurt during some disciplinary interventions. Some descriptions of their experiences of forgiving were "healing," "freeing," "relief," "release," "life began to flow," "weight lifted off my shoulders," and "feeling closer to God," whereas those of unforgiving were "imprisoned in anger," "tense," "anxious," "shut down" or "unable to feel," and "carrying a load of heavy luggage" (p. 89). In the Katz's (2002) study, six pairs of fathers and sons with Christianity-based spirituality described their experiences of forgiving each other over relational conflicts as progressing from understanding and tolerance toward compassion and supporting their personal growth. In the Black's (2003) study, a case of an 82-year-old European-American female divorcee suggested that her process of forgiving her sister with an adverse health condition was intertwined and complicated by her primary role as caretaker.

Socio-cultural influences on forgiveness. Some qualitative studies described religious/spiritual nature of forgiveness as well as gender-related implications of forgiveness, both areas of which had not been investigated well in quantitative studies until recently. In this section, I discuss prior quantitative studies on the relationship between religion and forgiveness and the relationship between gender and forgiveness.

Religion and forgiveness. Even though forgiveness is often associated with religion by the general public in the United States, quantitative psychological studies tended to focus on social and psychological aspects of forgiveness and overlook religious

aspects of forgiveness in the past decade (McCullough & Worthington, 1999). Most published studies that investigated the link between religion and forgiveness were conducted with Christian samples or from a monotheistic religious perspective (i.e., Christian, Jewish, and Muslim). Some exceptions are Mullet and her colleagues' studies with a sample of Hindu students in India (Tripathi & Mullet, 2010) and with a sample of Muslim and Christian Lebanese (Azar & Mullet, 2002; Mullet & Azar, 2009), as well as their study comparing among Buddhists, Christians, and Buddhist Christians in China (Paz, Neto, & Mullet, 2007).

Prior studies showed that consistent practice of one's religious faith (e.g., church attendance and reading the Bible) contributed to the development of more sophisticated reasoning for forgiveness (Enright, Santos, & Al-Mabuk, 1989), and that one's religious faith was also positively correlated with his or her tendency to forgive (Edwards et al., 2002). Other studies also indicated that one's religious involvement or social commitment to a religion (e.g., church attendance and taking vows) made a significant difference in his or her willingness to forgive (Mullet et al., 2003); similarly, one's religious practice, positively predicted his or her forgiving attitudes (Hui, Watkins, Wong, & Sun, 2006). However, one's religious affiliation or religious beliefs alone did not make a significant impact on his or her trait forgiveness (Mullet et al., 2003; Hui et al., 2006). Furthermore, religious people were found to be not necessarily more forgiving than non-religious people in actual life situations (i.e., state forgiveness) (Hui et al., 2006; Subkoviak et al., 1995).

McCullough and Worthington (1999) argued that this gap between general religious support of forgiveness and transgression-specific (i.e., state) forgiveness

reported by religious people might be explained by the impact of social desirability on trait forgiveness, the impact of social and psychological conditions on state forgiveness, and methodological issues (e.g., aggregation and specificity in measurement, and recall biases). Tsang, McCullough, and Hoyt (2005) presented a series of studies with undergraduate psychology students indicating that the “religion-forgiveness discrepancy” (p. 785) was resolved when recall biases were controlled and state forgiveness was assessed for multiple transgressions. They also suggested that people can use religion to rationalize both forgiving and unforgiving attitudes, which might obscure the positive relationship between religion and forgiveness (Tsang et al., 2005).

Gender and forgiveness. Psychological research that directly investigated the impact of gender on forgiveness is scarce. Among prior quantitative studies in which gender was included as a variable, the findings are mixed. For example, Macaskill (2003) found that British undergraduate female students reported higher scores on state forgiveness than male students. However, Macaskill, Maltby, and Day (2002) found no gender difference in trait forgiveness among British undergraduate students. Toussaint and Webb (2005) found no gender difference in state forgiveness among adults in a community in the United States (a convenience sample). However, Toussaint, Williams, Musick, and Everson-Rose (2008) found that female adults reported higher scores on trait forgiveness than male adults (a U.S. nationally representative random sample). Miller and Worthington (2010) found that husbands reported higher scores on overall marital forgiveness (i.e., trait forgiveness in marital relationship) than wives in their study with recently married couples.

Based on a meta-analysis of empirical studies on the relationship between gender and forgiveness, Miller, Worthington, and McDaniel (2008) confirmed that females were found to be more forgiving than males on average (small to moderate significant difference, .20-.35 at 95% CI, $d = .28$). However, since the reasons for the difference are still debatable, they recommended further investigation of potential psychological moderators, such as difference in perception of and response to transgressions, dispositional qualities, attachment styles, situational differences, and religiosity (Miller et al., 2008).

Some prior studies indicated the impact of religiosity, gender role, and empathy on gender difference in forgiveness. For example, women were found to be more religious and spiritual than men, which might have contributed to women's trait forgiveness (Toussaint et al., 2008). Endorsement and internalization of masculine gender stereotypes was found to impede trait forgiveness among Christian males (Walker & Doverspike, 2001). Empathy toward the offender was found to be positively associated with state forgiveness for men, but not for women, although women were found to be generally more empathic than men (Exline & Zell, 2009; Toussaint & Webb, 2005).

Summary of psychological literature and research on forgiveness. In this section, I reviewed psychological literature on forgiveness with a focus on how forgiveness has been empirically studied. The similarities and differences in the definitions, conceptualizations, operationalizations, and measurements of forgiveness in quantitative research were identified. Most psychological researchers agreed with the following points: forgiveness is an intrapersonal phenomenon; forgiveness is transformative of one's emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and/or motivational levels; one's renunciation of anger

is an essential component of forgiveness; and forgiveness can be measured as state or trait. On the other hand, researchers disagreed with the extent of transformation (i.e., renunciation of anger and/or benevolence toward the offender) experienced by forgivers and whether or not reconciliation was required for forgiveness. Based on the review, I discussed the discrepancy in the definitions of forgiveness between experts and laypeople in quantitative research and a lack of qualitative research to discern the discrepancy. I reviewed a limited number of prior qualitative studies with a focus on the methods used to study forgiveness and the findings about the meanings of forgiveness and laypeople's subjective experiences of forgiving and unforgiving. Religious/spiritual dimensions and gender-related implications of forgiveness were identified as two socio-cultural aspects of forgiveness that were described in some prior qualitative studies but have not been investigated well in quantitative studies until recently. I discussed a lack of non-Christian perspectives and mixed findings about the impact of gender in prior quantitative studies on forgiveness.

Self-compassion. Interest among psychologists and/or Buddhist teachers in potential applications of Buddhist practices for developing mental and emotional skills and cultivating one's healthy relationship with oneself is growing (Bastis, 2003; Brach, 2003; Kornfield, 2002; Sanderson & Linehan, 1999; Salzberg, 2008). Self-compassion, which is a concept derived from Buddhist philosophy, was recently proposed as an alternative conceptualization of healthy self-attitudes (Neff, 2003a). Self-compassion was conceived as a new construct of healthy self-attitudes that is measured by a set of mental and emotional skills (Neff, 2003b). Buddhist teachers and therapists (Brach, 2003; Kornfield, 2002) suggested that a positive relationship existed between compassion and

forgiveness (relevant Buddhist literature is reviewed later). However, possible links between self-compassion and forgiveness have not been empirically investigated. In this section, I review psychological literature with a focus on the conceptualization and research on self-compassion and other well-researched constructs of healthy self-attitudes (e.g., self-esteem and self-affirmation) as well as socio-cultural influences (e.g., U.S. and Asian cultures and gender) on self-compassion.

Self-compassion: Conceptualization and research. Neff (2003a) defined self-compassion as “being touched by and open to one’s own suffering, not avoiding or disconnecting from it, generating the desire to alleviate one’s own suffering and to heal oneself with kindness” and “offering non-judgmental understanding to one’s pain, inadequacies, and failures, so that one’s experience is seen as part of the larger human experience” (p. 87). Neff conceptualized that self-compassion entails the following three components: giving oneself kindness and understanding rather than judgment and criticism (i.e., self-kindness versus self-judgment); seeing one’s experience of suffering as a part of the larger human experience rather than seeing it as isolating and separating from others (i.e., common humanity versus isolation); and allowing thoughts and feelings to arise in one’s mind, embracing them without over-identifying with them (i.e., mindfulness versus over-identification). Neff discussed that self-compassion resonates with the existing theories of self-development and conceptualizations of self-attitudes, such as: the self-in-relation model of women’s psychological development (Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991), being-oriented perception of self (Maslow, 1968), unconditional positive regard toward oneself (Rogers, 1961), and unconditional self-acceptance (Ellis, 1973).

Self-compassion versus self-esteem in light of one's relationship with oneself.

Neff (2003a) discussed self-compassion in contrast to self-esteem, which is one of the well-researched constructs of healthy self-attitudes. Some psychologists were increasingly concerned about the popular practice of boosting self-esteem for psychological benefits, considering that self-esteem was found to be associated with mixed psychological outcomes (Neff, 2003a). According to the Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, and Vohs' (2003) summary of empirical studies that investigated the effects of self-esteem (defined as one's own perceived favorable global evaluation of the self) on personal and social outcomes, high self-esteem was found to enhance one's initiative in leadership and pleasant feelings about oneself. However, boosting self-esteem was also found to contribute to narcissism that is associated with increased aggression (Baumeister et al., 2003).

On the other hand, self-compassion was found to be associated with positive psychological outcomes, similar to those of self-esteem, with fewer pitfalls (Neff, 2003b). In an online survey study with 2187 people, Neff and Vonk (2009) found that, compared to global self-esteem (measured by the degree of self-evaluations and perceived other-evaluations of one's competence in various life domains), self-compassion contributed to more stable feelings of self-worth that is less contingent on particular outcomes and showed a stronger negative association with social comparison, public self-consciousness, self-rumination, anger, and need for cognitive closure (e.g., "I dislike questions that could be answered in many different ways."). Also, self-compassion was found to have no significant association with narcissism, while global self-esteem was significantly positively associated with narcissism (Neff & Vonk, 2009). In their subsequent study

with 165 undergraduate psychology students, Neff and Vonk also found that both global self-esteem and self-compassion predicted positive mood states (e.g., happiness, optimism, and positive affect). However, self-compassion predicted additional significant variance when self-esteem was statistically controlled (Neff & Vonk, 2009).

Neff (2003a) discussed that both self-compassion and self-esteem were found to contribute to positive psychological outcomes (e.g., positive affect), but the underlying psychological mechanisms are different. Self-esteem stems from self-evaluation, whereas self-compassion stems from self-acceptance. Self-esteem tends to fluctuate due to its evaluative process that is impacted by social comparison: positive self-evaluation and perceived other-evaluation of the self is likely to result in positive affect, and negative self-evaluation and perceived other-evaluation of the self is likely to result in negative affect. Self-compassion tends to be more stable in producing positive psychological outcomes because its focus is on being kind and non-judgmental toward the self, regardless of how one perceives or believes others perceive the self, while recognizing one's common humanity (Neff, 2003a).

The meaning of "self" is in this context equivalent to that of "ego." Kornfield (2008) pointed out the nuances in the definition of ego in Western psychology and Buddhist psychology as follows. In Western psychology, ego refers to "the necessary organizing function of the mind" (Kornfield, 2008, p. 67). In Freudian terms, ego "regulates energies from superego (conditioned beliefs) and id (unconscious drives)" and has the "functional ability to direct life, deal with frustrations, marshal resources, cope with conflict, work, love, create, and care for self and others" (Kornfield, 2008, p. 67). In Buddhist psychology, ego refers to "states of clinging and identification and the qualities

of self-importance and self-centeredness that arise from the small sense of self” (Kornfield, 2008, p. 67). Ego also derives from one’s attachment to the “illusion of separation and the anxiety it creates” (Kornfield, 2008, p. 67). Although the functional aspect of ego in the Western psychological sense is not denied in Buddhist psychology, one’s over-identification with the self and acting upon the false understanding of the self (i.e., the self is fixed and permanent, exists independently from the other, and needs to be defended from attacks from the other) are considered to deepen the root cause of suffering (i.e., greed, anger/hatred, and ignorance).

Then, from a Buddhist perspective, the difference in the underlying psychological mechanisms between self-compassion and self-esteem can be explained in light of one’s relationship with the self or ego. A major difference seems to lie in that making efforts to maintain or boosting self-esteem is likely to reinforce one’s attachment to the self, while cultivating self-compassion is likely to loosen one’s attachment to the self. Another way to describe the difference may be that self-esteem tightens one’s relationship with the self and narrows one’s awareness of the self as being separate and independent from the other, while self-compassion softens one’s relationship with the self and expands one’s awareness of the self as being connected and interdependent with the other.

Possible links between self-compassion and forgiveness. No empirical study to date has been conducted to investigate the direct relationship between self-compassion and forgiveness. However, prior studies on the relationship between other constructs of self-attitudes (e.g., self-esteem and self-affirmation) and forgiveness provide some insights into possible links between self-compassion and forgiveness. Neto and Mullet (2004) found that self-esteem (defined as expressing the value the person attributes to

himself or herself) was not significantly positively correlated with trait forgiveness among college students in Portugal. Moreover, female students with higher self-esteem were found to be less willing to forgive than those with lower self-esteem (Neto & Mullet, 2004). Exline and Zell (2009) found that self-affirmation (defined as thinking and feeling positive about oneself) did not facilitate state forgiveness for neither males nor females among college students in the United States. In fact, psychological entitlement (defined as believing that one is more deserving than others and demanding the best because he or she is worth it) was found to be a strong moderator that predicted unforgiving responses (defined as more vengeful and avoidant attitudes and less benevolent attitudes toward the offender) among the students in their study (Exline & Zell, 2009).

These prior research findings (Exline & Zell, 2009; Neto & Mullet, 2004) supported negative links between self-esteem and trait forgiveness as well as between self-affirmation and state forgiveness. Considering the operational definitions of these two constructs of self-attitudes used in the studies, self-affirmation seems to involve the underlying psychological mechanisms similar to those of self-esteem as I discussed in the previous section (i.e., feeling good about oneself by positive self-evaluation, which is likely to reinforce one's attachment to the self). Understandably, one's strong attachment to the self, which is commonly experienced as one's need to defend the self from perceived attacks, would make the person forgiving someone who hurt him or her difficult. Then, cultivating self-compassion may facilitate one's process of forgiveness by helping one to accept the self that was hurt by an offense, loosen one's attachment to the self, and recognize one's predicament as a part of common humanity. This speculation is further discussed from a Buddhist perspective later.

Socio-cultural influences on self-compassion. Neff (2003a) speculated how self-compassion could be positively and negatively influenced by socio-cultural factors based on relevant research findings concerning individualistic-collectivistic cultural values, independent-interdependent self-construals, and gender. For example, Asians may be more self-compassionate than North Americans because Asians are more likely to be exposed to Buddhist teachings and collectivistic values that are embedded in their cultures, and Asians tend to develop a more interdependent sense of self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). However, Asians may be less self-compassionate than North Americans because Asians tend to be more self-critical (Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997). Similar patterns may be found in the relationship between gender and self-compassion. Women may be more self-compassionate than men because they tend to develop a more interdependent sense of self (Jordan et al., 1991). However, women may be less self-compassionate than men because women tend to be more self-critical (Leadbeater, Kuperminc, Blatt, & Hertzog, 1999).

U. S. and Asian cultures, self-construals, and self-compassion. To examine cultural influences on self-compassion, Neff, Pisitsungkagarn, and Hsieh (2008) compared the levels of self-compassion among undergraduate students in the United States (76% Christian, 2% Buddhist), Thailand (98% Buddhist), and Taiwan (53% no religious affiliation, 26% Buddhist). Overall, Thai students reported highest scores on self-compassion; Taiwanese students reported lowest scores on self-compassion; and U.S. students' (excluding Asian American students) scores on self-compassion fell in the middle. More specifically looking at the differences within the three groups in terms of the three components of self-compassion (i.e., self-kindness versus self-judgment,

common humanity versus isolation, and mindfulness versus over-identification), Thai students' levels of self-kindness were significantly higher than those of U.S. and Taiwanese students; Taiwanese students' levels of self-judgment were highest among the three groups; and U.S. students' levels of self-judgment were higher than those of Thai students. No difference was found in the levels of common humanity among the three groups, but Taiwanese students' levels of isolation were highest among the three groups, and U.S. students' levels of isolation were higher than those of Thai students. Thai students' levels of mindfulness were higher than those of U.S. students, while Taiwanese students' levels of over-identification were highest among the three groups, and U.S. students' levels of over-identification were higher than those of Thai students (Neff et al., 2008).

Furthermore, cultural differences in the relationship between self-construal (defined as "a constellation of thoughts, feelings, and actions concerning one's relationship to others, and the self as distinct from others" by Singelis [1994, p. 581]) and self-compassion were also found in the Neff et al.'s (2008) study. Taiwanese students reported lower levels of independent self-construal than those of U.S. and Thai students, while U.S. students reported lower levels of interdependent self-construal than those of Thai and Taiwanese students. When self-construal was statistically controlled, cultural differences in the levels of self-compassion remained unchanged. However, within each group, interdependent self-construal positively predicted self-compassion among Thai students, while independent self-construal positively predicted self-compassion among U.S. and Taiwanese students (Neff et al., 2008).

Considering the findings of the study conducted by Neff et al. (2008), Buddhist culture seems to make a difference in the levels of self-compassion among individuals. As observed in Thai students who are Buddhists, one's exposure to Buddhism, Buddhist affiliation and/or Buddhist practice appear to contribute to a more balanced self-construal with both independent and interdependent features. Then, a more balanced self-construal fostered by Buddhist practice may facilitate one's self-compassionate attitudes characterized by kindness toward oneself, a lack of isolation from others, and mindfulness. This speculation is relevant to how Buddhist practice possibly increases the levels of self-compassion among Buddhists in the United States. In fact, Neff (2003b) found that Buddhists ($N = 43$, recruited from a Buddhist email list serve) reported higher scores on self-compassion than non-Buddhists ($N = 232$, undergraduate psychology students).

Gender and self-compassion. Prior studies on cultural influences on self-compassion discussed previously also showed some notable patterns in the relationship between gender and self-compassion. In the Neff et al.'s (2008) cross-cultural study, U.S. female students reported significantly lower levels of self-compassion than U.S. male students, while no gender difference was found among Thai and Taiwanese students. In the Neff's (2003b) study with Buddhists in community and non-Buddhist students, female students reported significantly lower levels of self-compassion than male students, but no gender difference was found in Buddhists in community. Perhaps, Buddhist practice may cancel out a possible gender difference in the levels of self-compassion among individuals.

Summary of psychological literature and research on self-compassion. In this section, I reviewed the conceptualization of self-compassion and the existing empirical support for its conceptualization. Self-compassion was discussed in contrast to other constructs of self-attitudes (e.g., self-esteem and self-affirmation). Prior research indicated that self-compassion was found to be positively associated with positive psychological outcomes similar to those of self-esteem (e.g., positive affect) without its pitfalls (e.g., narcissism). The underlying psychological mechanisms that might explain the difference between self-compassion and self-esteem were speculated based on psychological theories (e.g., self-acceptance versus self-evaluation) and from a Buddhist perspective (e.g., facilitating letting go of one's attachment to the perceived self versus reinforcing one's attachment to the perceived self). No empirical study to date indicated direct links between self-compassion and forgiveness. However, I speculated that self-compassion is likely to be positively associated with forgiveness based on relevant prior research findings indicating negative links between certain self-attitudes (e.g., self-esteem and self-affirmation) and forgiveness. Socio-cultural influences (e.g., Buddhist affiliation/practice, individualistic-collectivistic cultural values, independent-interdependent self-construals, and gender) on self-compassion were also discussed. Based on relevant prior research indicating cross-cultural and gender differences, the following speculations about the relationship between Buddhist practice and self-compassion and between gender and self-compassion were offered. Buddhist practice may contribute to a more balanced self-construal with both independent and interdependent features, which may in turn facilitate one's self-compassionate attitudes.

Also, Buddhist practice may cancel out a possible gender difference in the levels of self-compassion among individuals in the United States.

Psychological well-being in relation to forgiveness and self-compassion.

Ample empirical support has been suggested in prior research for positive links between forgiveness and psychological well-being as well as between self-compassion and psychological well-being. Psychological well-being is a much more established field of research compared to that of forgiveness and self-compassion. Therefore, in this section, I first review general trends in the field of psychological well-being research and clarify how psychological well-being has been conceptualized in its own field. Then, I discuss research findings on the links between forgiveness and psychological well-being and between self-compassion and psychological well-being.

Psychological well-being: Conceptualization and research. Two major branches of conceptualization of psychological well-being and their corresponding lines of research have been recognized as emotional well-being and positive psychological functioning (Keyes & Magyar-Moe, 2003). This difference in the conceptualization of psychological well-being is based on its underlying philosophical view: hedonic versus eudaimonic (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Literally, hedonism comes from a Greek word that means “pleasure,” whereas eudaimonism comes from a Greek word that means “well-being of spirit.” Although both views can be said to be concerned with what makes people “happy,” the focus of the hedonistic view is about increasing pleasure and reducing pain, whereas the focus of the eudaimonic view is about developing virtues or “character strengths” (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) and promoting self-actualization. Thus, the conceptualization of psychological well-being centered on increasing positive

affect and reducing negative affect can be considered “hedonistic,” whereas the conceptualization of psychological well-being associated with living a meaningful life and fulfilling human potentials can be considered “eudaimonic” (Ryan & Deci, 2001).

Emotional well-being versus positive psychological functioning. The concept of emotional well-being, which is also referred to as subjective well-being, emerged from quality of life research. Researchers showed that one’s subjective evaluation of life satisfaction was a significant indicator of subjective well-being, and that one’s experience of positive affect was found to be most strongly related to the sense of emotional well-being (Diener, Sue, Lucas, & Smith, 1999). Common components of psychological well-being in this sense are one’s subjective evaluation of global life satisfaction and a balance of positive and negative affect (Diener, 1994).

The concept of positive psychological functioning emerged from theories of humanistic and developmental psychology and existential philosophy (Ryff & Singer, 1998). According to this branch of conceptualization, psychological well-being is more than the presence of positive affect and the absence of negative affect, but rather it is one’s perception and meaning given to the life situation that accounts for the sense of psychological well-being. This line of quantitative research on psychological well-being is relatively new in its field (Keyes, Shmotkin, & Ryff, 2002; Ryff, 2004). The components of psychological well-being as positive psychological functioning proposed by Ryff and Keyes (1995) include self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth.

Which of the two constructs of psychological well-being better represents one’s psychological well-being? Or do they represent different aspects of psychological well-

being? Keyes et al. (2002) investigated the relationship between emotional well-being and positive psychological functioning using the data from the Midlife in the U.S. Survey (a national random sample, $N = 3032$). The results indicated that emotional well-being and positive psychological functioning were related (e.g., both had moderate to high correlations for self-acceptance, environmental mastery, and positive relations) but were distinct (e.g., emotional well-being was more strongly correlated with life satisfaction and affect, while positive psychological functioning was more strongly correlated with personal growth and purpose in life). Also, the participants' educational level and age influenced different combinations of emotional well-being and positive psychological functioning (e.g., educational level was positively associated with positive functioning, and age was positively associated with emotional well-being).

Furthermore, quantitative data collected from both perspectives (i.e., emotional well-being and positive psychological functioning) indicated some cross-cultural, socio-cultural and religious influences on psychological well-being. For example, participatory and devotional aspects of religiosity among Christians (e.g., church attendance and prayer) were positively correlated with emotional well-being (Diener et al., 1999). Self-esteem predicted global life satisfaction (a cognitive component of emotional well-being) more strongly in individualistic cultures than in collectivistic cultures (Diener & Diener, 1995). Males evaluated themselves as slightly happier than females did, and females tended to experience more unpleasant feelings than males did, although such differences often disappeared after other demographic variables were controlled (Diener et al., 1999).

Also, purposeful and meaningful life and quality social relationships, which are the components of positive psychological functioning, were common characteristics of

psychological well-being across cultures, although cultural contexts influenced external manifestations (e.g., what is purposeful and meaningful in life, what kind of social relationships are considered more important than other relationships, and how people tend to rate self-evaluative questions are different between collectivistic and individualistic cultures)(Ryff & Singer, 1996, 1998). Also, across cultures, females tended to rate higher than males on positive relationships and personal growth (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 1996).

Links between forgiveness and psychological well-being. In the field of forgiveness research, psychological well-being has been treated as a unidimensional construct (e.g., being equated with global satisfaction with life) or considered equivalent to minimal psychological distress or absence of psychopathology (e.g., low scores on the scales of anxiety, depression, neuroticism, and narcissism), or presence of positive affect or positive cognition (e.g., hopefulness). These variables are primarily associated with the hedonic view of psychological well-being or aspects of emotional well-being in the field of psychological well-being research. Keeping this limitation in mind, positive links between forgiveness and psychological well-being have been suggested in a number of psychological and medical studies. In fact, many forgiveness measures were found to be correlated with or predictive of some aspects or components of psychological well-being and/or mental health variables (e.g., negatively associated with anxiety, depression, and neuroticism; and positively associated with global life satisfaction and agreeableness).

Trait forgiveness and psychological well-being. Prior research suggested that trait forgiveness is generally more strongly correlated with some aspects or components of psychological well-being and other mental health variables than state forgiveness

(McCullough & Witvliet, 2002). For example, trait forgiveness measured by the Multidimensional Forgiveness Inventory (MFI) was found to be negatively correlated with psychological problems and psychopathological symptoms (e.g., interpersonal sensitivity [feelings of personal inadequacy or inferiority], depression, hostility, and paranoid ideation) among college students (Tangney et al., 1999). Trait forgiveness measured by the Heartland Forgiveness Scales (HFS) was found to be positively correlated with positive affect, cognitive flexibility, and distraction (as a response to feeling down), and was negatively correlated with negative affect, rumination, vengeance, and hostility among college students (Thompson et al., 2005). HFS was also found to positively predict satisfaction with life and negatively predict trait anger, state anxiety, and depression among college students (Thompson et al., 2005).

State forgiveness and psychological well-being. Much less quantitative data on the links between state forgiveness and psychological well-being are available. However, the findings showed similar patterns observed in the links between trait forgiveness and psychological well-being. For example, state forgiveness measured by the Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI) among college students and their parents was negatively correlated with anxiety (Subkoviak et al., 1995). State forgiveness measured by the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations (TRIM) among college students was positively correlated with global life satisfaction in a cross-sectional study, although the significant relationship disappeared in a longitudinal study (McCullough et al., 2001).

Forgiveness interventions and psychological well-being. A number of psycho-educational and therapeutic programs to facilitate forgiveness for mental health benefits have been developed and implemented. Prior research suggested that forgiveness

intervention programs overall effectively facilitated forgiveness, alleviated psychopathological symptoms (e.g., anxiety and depression), and promoted some aspects of psychological well-being (e.g., decreased anger and increased hope). However, Baskin and Enright (2004) conducted a meta analysis of the nine empirical outcomes studies on forgiveness interventions published to date (with elderly women, Hebl & Enright, 1993; with undergraduate psychology students, McCullough & Worthington, 1995; with parental-love-deprived college students, Al-Mabuk & Enright, 1995; with female incest survivors, Freedman & Enright, 1996; with undergraduate psychology students, McCullough, Worthington, et al., 1997; with post-abortion men, Coyle & Enright, 1997), which clarified some differences among the forgiveness intervention programs. The findings revealed that when the forgiveness intervention programs were categorized into three groups (i.e., decision-based, process-based group, and process-based individual interventions) and were compared with control groups, the decision-based interventions had no significant effect on forgiveness and psychological well-being, and the process-based individual interventions had larger effects than process-based group interventions (Baskin & Enright, 2004).

Links between self-compassion and psychological well-being. As a part of conceptualizing self-compassion, Neff (2003a) hypothesized that self-compassion would promote positive psychological functioning by reducing self-condemnation, feelings of isolation, and over-identification with negative thoughts and emotions, which would result in alleviating depression, anxiety, and neurotic perfectionism, and promoting life satisfaction. Also, self-compassion is likely to be positively associated with intrinsic motivation, autonomy, and self-determination, which would contribute to academic

learning with mastery-based goals instead of performance-based goals. Self-compassion may be related to accurate self-appraisals and effective self-regulation, which may facilitate effective coping with stress (Neff, 2003a).

Neff's (2003b) two studies provided initial validation of the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) that she developed based on the conceptualization of self-compassion previously discussed. The findings suggested that self-compassion was negatively correlated with anxiety, depression, neurotic perfectionism, rumination (defined as "repeatedly focusing on one's experience of distress," p. 237), and thought suppression (defined as "efforts to avoid or repress unwanted thoughts and ideas" p. 239) among undergraduate psychology students (Neff, 2003b). The findings also suggested that self-compassion was positively correlated with general life satisfaction and emotional coping among undergraduate psychology students (Neff, 2003b).

Further empirical support for positive links between self-compassion and psychological well-being was indicated by more recent studies. Neff, Rude, and Kirkpatrick (2007) found that self-compassion was positively correlated with happiness, optimism, and wisdom among college students; more self-compassionate students experienced more positive affect and less negative affect; and self-compassion positively predicted such personality traits as agreeableness, extroversion, and conscientiousness, and negatively predicted neuroticism among college students. Also, self-compassion was found to help students to focus on mastering tasks and foster intrinsic motivation in their learning process (Neff, Hsieh, & Dejitterat, 2005) and facilitate adaptive psychological functioning by reducing self-evaluative anxiety (Neff, Kirkpatrick, et al., 2007). Furthermore, Lee and Bang (2010) developed a therapeutic intervention program in

which participants were taught meditative practices to enhance mindfulness and self-compassion. Their outcome study suggested that their program effectively promoted mindfulness and self-compassion and improved both positive psychological functioning and emotional well-being among Korean women in community (Lee & Bang, 2010).

Summary: Psychology well-being in relation to forgiveness and self-compassion.

Prior studies provided ample empirical support for positive links between forgiveness and psychological well-being as well as between self-compassion and psychological well-being. Prior studies also suggested that intervention programs in which participants were taught how to forgive or be more self-compassionate increased their levels of psychological well-being. However, most researchers who investigated forgiveness or self-compassion conceptualized psychological well-being as a unidimensional construct or considered equivalent to minimal psychological distress/ negative affect/cognition, absence of psychopathology, or presence of positive affect/cognition. These constructs of psychological well-being used in the field of forgiveness and self-compassion research are primarily associated with the hedonic view of psychological well-being or aspects of emotional well-being in the field of psychological well-being research. Few researchers have investigated forgiveness or self-compassion in relation to psychological well-being in the eudaimonic sense or psychological well-being as a multidimensional construct of positive psychological functioning.

Buddhist literature on forgiveness, compassion, and psychological well-being.

Although forgiveness has religious roots, few psychological studies on forgiveness have been conducted with religious populations in the United States, still fewer with religious minorities, including Buddhists. On the other hand, interest is growing among

psychologists, as well as Buddhist practitioners, in potential applications of Buddhist teachings and practices for developing mental and emotion regulation skills, thereby promoting mental, physical, and emotional well-being, as well as personal and spiritual growth. Buddhist teachings and practices appear to influence people in a unique way in terms of how they understand and experience forgiveness, compassion, and psychological well-being. In this section, I review Buddhist literature to discuss the three constructs from a Buddhist perspective. (I am hoping that this section will help readers who are not familiar with Buddhism to better understand my rationale for selecting the instruments for the quantitative component of this study as well as the results of the qualitative component of this study.)

Buddhist teachings on forgiveness. At first glance, the connection between Buddhism and forgiveness is not obvious. Comparing what forgiveness means and what constitutes forgiveness across different religious traditions is difficult because such comparisons involve understanding multiple levels of difference, not only theological and moral stance, but also worldview, culture, and language (Rye et al., 2000). Some Christian-Buddhist ecumenical studies (Eckel, 1997; Fittipaldi, 1982) and Buddhist discussions on forgiveness (Higgins, 2001; Rye et al., 2000) suggested that no single Buddhist concept equivalent to forgiveness in a Judeo-Christian sense exists. Looking more deeply into Buddhist literature, however, Buddhist teachings and practices do encompass forgiveness.

The ultimate purpose in all Buddhist practices is for oneself to become a *Buddha* (Awakened or Enlightened One). In *Mahayana* (Greater Vehicle) Buddhist practices, in which the majority of Buddhists in the United States are engaged, one's ultimate

intention is to help all sentient beings to become Buddhas. Buddha also refers to the historical *Shakyamuni* Buddha. Buddhists believe that Shakyamuni Buddha is a teacher of the *Dharma* (Truth or the law of nature experienced by all Buddhas) who can most skillfully expound the teachings of all Buddhas to sentient beings. A number of life stories of Shakyamuni Buddha are narrated in *Tripitaka* (Three Containers of the Teachings of the Buddha), all of which point to certain attitudes to be cultivated on the way to buddhahood. A brief summary of one of such life stories, how *Gautama Siddhartha* became Shakyamuni Buddha, based on two sources (Nhat Hanh, 1991; Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2003) is appended (Appendix A).

Intention and purpose of Buddhist practice: Attitudinal guidance for forgiveness.

This particular life story of Shakyamuni Buddha inspired many people who practice Buddhism as well as those who are interested in Buddhist philosophy (Hesse, 1922/1981). It symbolizes the central intention and purpose of one's spiritual path according to the teachings of the Buddha, that is, to practice transforming suffering into liberation. Such practice involves freeing oneself from one's attachment or clinging to whatever arises in one's mind. As a popular Zen aphorism goes, pain is inevitable, but suffering is optional. Suffering has something to do with one's reactions to his or her experience of pain. The root cause of suffering is believed to be *kleshas* (defilements), what is commonly referred to as "the three poisons": greed, anger, and ignorance (Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2003). The dynamics of such mental states can also be described as craving of whatever is pleasant, avoidance and aversion of whatever is unpleasant, and not knowing the truth of impermanence.

What is considered as a primary practice for many Buddhists is meditation to train one's own mind. Various meditative methods are available, but they all are supposed to help people to cultivate mindfulness, insight into the true nature of reality, and/or loving-kindness/compassion. The word "mindfulness" is often used as equivalent to "awareness" in the United States, but Buddhist teachers (Nhat Hanh, 1990; Trungpa, 2005) emphasize the intention and purpose behind mindfulness as a Buddhist practice. Mindfulness is the foundation of any meditative practices. According to the *Satipatthana Sutta* (Sutra on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness), people can develop five faculties and/or strengths (i.e., confidence, energy, meditative stability, meditative concentration, and true understanding) by mindfully observing their own body, feelings, and mind (Nhat Hanh, 1990). The progression of meditative process can be described as *shamatha* (calm abiding) and *vipashyana* (insight into the true nature of reality)(Trungpa, 2005). These two states of mind are the foundation of compassion (Nhat Hanh, 1990; Trungpa, 2005).

When forgiveness is understood as one's cognitive, affective, and behavioral transformation from the negative to the neutral and/or to the positive as proposed by psychologists, Buddhist teachings and practices seem to encompass forgiveness in a sense of freeing oneself from one's attachment to the spectrum of anger (e.g., resentment, hatred, and rage). Presumably forgiveness would be more difficult when people are overwhelmed by their own thoughts and feelings evoked by an offense, compared to when they understand and accept what happened and their minds are clear and calm. Also, forgiving someone whom one hates would be more difficult, compared to forgiving someone whom he or she loves. Therefore, plausibly, cultivating mindfulness and loving-kindness/compassion is helpful for cultivating forgiving attitudes, and vice versa.

Basic principles of Buddhist teachings: Rationale for forgiveness. What would be the reasons that Buddhists choose to let go of anger instead of dwelling on it and letting it grow into hatred and desire to retaliate? Buddhist teachers (McCormick, 2000; Nhat Hanh, 1998) and scholars of world religions (Smith & Novak, 2003) overall agree to consider the following Buddhist principles as the core teachings of the Buddha: Four Noble Truths, Eightfold Noble Path, and Dependent Origination. English translation of the original texts from Buddhist scriptures referring to these teachings can be found in *Buddha-Dharma* by Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research (2003). The following is a brief summary of these basic Buddhist principles.

Four Noble Truths consist of *dukkha* (the truth of suffering), *samudaya* (the truth of cause or arising of suffering), *nirodha* (the truth of cessation or extinction of suffering), and *marga* (the truth of the way) (Nhat Hanh, 1998). The first truth can be read: suffering exists; no one can avoid pain as long as he or she lives in this world of *samsara* (the cycle of birth and rebirth). The second truth can be read: suffering arises due to a cause. The third truth can be read: one can end suffering when he or she understands the very cause of suffering. The fourth truth can be read: the way to the end of suffering is the Eightfold Noble Path, which is also referred to as the Middle Way. “Middle” means to be neither neutral nor average but to be non-extreme. It can also be rephrased that the Middle Way is “between self-indulgence and self-denial” (McCormick, 2000).

More specifically, the Eightfold Noble Path involves mastering *samyag drishti* (right view), *samyag samkalpa* (right thinking), *samyag vac* (right speech), *samyag karmanta* (right action), *samyag ajiva* (right livelihood), *samyak pradhana* (right diligence), *samyak smriti* (right mindfulness), and *samyag samadhi* (right concentration)

(Nhat Hanh, 1998). Nhat Hanh (1998) explained that what is “right” on one level means neither a moral judgment nor an arbitrary standard imposed by authorities, but what is beneficial to nurture *buddhata* or *buddha-dhatu* (Buddha nature) within all beings. What is “right” on another level, one needs to understand *karma* (the cosmic principle of cause and effect).

Cause and effect are neither separate nor do they have a linear relationship in karma. The teaching on *karma* has been often misunderstood and misused. Karma can be understood more accurately along with a larger principle of *pratitya samutpada* (Dependent Origination, McCormick, 2000; Interdependent Co-Arising or Interbeing, Nhat Hanh, 1998). “Dependent” and “interdependent” in Buddhist teachings means that nothing exists separately. This principle is also the basis for understanding *anatta* (no-self), that is, no one exists independently from everything around him or her.

The principles of the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Noble Path, and the Dependent Origination can be interpreted to explain the rationale for forgiveness from a Buddhist perspective. Based on these principles, Buddhists may understand the universality of suffering from emotional pain in reaction to perceived offense, interrelatedness of self and other or the offended and the offender, and the inevitability of letting go of their own attachment to the spectrum of anger in order to end their own suffering. Also, Buddhists may understand that the cost of retaliation is their own continuous suffering from their attachment to poisonous mental formations and their *karma* affected by their own harmful view, thought, and action.

Exemplary forgivers in Buddhist parables. Some parables in Buddhist scriptures describe how people struggle with freeing themselves from anger, hatred, and desire to

retaliate; and how they learn to overcome such struggles. Synopses of such parables are appended (Appendix B: Parable of King *Dighiti*, Prince *Dighavu*, and King *Brahmadatta*; and Appendix C: Parable of *Angulimala*). The contexts in which Shakyamuni Buddha narrated these parables to his disciples and the experiences of main characters in the parables illustrate how forgiveness may look from a Buddhist perspective.

The Buddha narrated the parable of King *Dighiti*, Prince *Dighavu*, and King *Brahmadatta* to some disciples who were fighting over whether or not one disciple committed an offense and who were splitting their community over which side was right. In this parable, Prince *Dighavu* struggles with letting go of his desire to take revenge against King *Brahmadatta* who executed King *Dighiti* and his queen, Prince *Dighavu*'s parents, for the sake of greed. However, when Prince *Dighavu* is repeatedly reminded of his father's last words, "Hatred is allayed by the absence of hatred" (Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2003, p. 360), he perceives an opportunity to take revenge as an opportunity to "cleanse" (p. 361) himself. King *Brahmadatta* is touched by the wisdom of Prince *Dighavu*, transmitted by King *Dighiti*, acknowledges his offense and begs Prince *Dighavu* to spare his life. In the end, this reconciliation between Prince *Dighavu* and King *Brahmadatta* brings peace and harmony to both kingdoms.

The Buddha narrated the parable of *Angulimala* to some disciples in order to teach them about the difference between people who are ignorant and those who are wise. In this parable, a gentle monk, *Ahimsaka*, became an outraged monster, *Angulimala*, driven by his agony and distress due to harmful thoughts, desires, and actions committed by a king and a queen whom he served. However, when *Ahimsaka* is touched by the Buddha's compassion, he is healed, understands his own ignorance, and begins to act

wisely. Ahimsaka endures the harm inflicted upon him by people who are fearful of him because he understands that the best he can do to end his suffering is not to make any more causes for harmful effects, and to transform harmful effects by making causes for virtuous effects. In the end, the Buddha reveals Ahimsaka's karma from his past life to disciples who do not understand why someone like *Angulimala* was able to be so quickly enlightened.

The forgivers in these Buddhist parables manifested an array of human strengths and virtues: the ability to take perspectives, self-regulation, kindness, bravery, persistence, humility, and gratitude (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). In Buddhist terms, wisdom, compassion, and patience can be said to help people to understand why they forgive, learn how to forgive, and go through the challenging process of forgiveness. Notably, the Buddha's attitudes and behaviors, which Angulimala appears to experience as compassion, express little emotional energy, sound straightforward, and demonstrate no overbearing or self-sacrificing care. Compassion from a Buddhist perspective seems to be somewhat different from how compassion is typically understood by the general public in the United States.

Compassion from a Buddhist perspective. What is compassion from a Buddhist perspective? According to Buddhist teachings on the Four Immeasurable Minds, there are “four elements of true love” (Nhat Hanh, 1997, p. 1): *maitri* or *metta*, (loving-kindness), (b) *karuna* (compassion), (c) *mudita* (sympathetic joy), and (d) *upeksha* or *upekkha*, (equanimity). *Maitri* is a kind of love that people experience when they wish others to be happy and wish to bring happiness to others. It can also mean people's “compassionate engagement” in helping others to relieve themselves from their suffering (Itsuki, 2001, p.

178). Karuna describes a sound of deep sigh coming out of the heart when people feel pain in others as if it were their own. In this sense, karuna is a kind of love that corresponds to the literal meaning of compassion in English, that is, “to suffer with,” although more precisely karuna means people’s “sympathetic identification” with the pain of others while knowing they cannot take on the suffering of others or relieve it for them (Itsuki, 2001, p. 179). Compassion in Japanese is called *jihi* that is a combination of maitri and karuna. Mudita is often translated as sympathetic joy or altruistic joy because it is a kind of love that people experience when they rejoice in the happiness of others, instead of feeling jealous. Upeksha is a kind of love that people experience when they are indiscriminatory toward others and can let go of their attachment to particular objects of their love. Thus, compassion in Buddhist terms is based on wisdom and emphasizes sympathetic understanding of the nature and cause of suffering, actions that help people to relieve themselves from the suffering, and attitudes of unconditional and indiscriminatory benevolence toward all beings.

Buddhist practice to cultivate compassion. To cultivate compassion, many Buddhist teachers (Brach, 2003; Chödrön, 2004; Nhat Hahn, 1997; Salzberg, 2008) recommend that people begin with being compassionate toward themselves, then extend compassion toward others. This recommendation does not come from a self-centered point of view, but it is based on Buddhist teachings on the universality of suffering and the principle of interdependence. Brach (2003) and Chödrön (2004) articulated how compassion can expand from self to other and what happens when one is compassionate as follows:

[W]e are all awakening beings, each of us learning to face suffering, each of us discovering the compassion that expresses our deepest nature. As we come to trust in suffering as a gateway to compassion, we undo our deepest conditioning to run away from pain. Rather than struggling against life, we are able to embrace our experience, and all beings, with a full and tender presence” (Brach, 2003, p. 200).

It [compassionate action] all starts with loving-kindness for oneself, which in turn becomes loving-kindness for others. As the barriers come down around our own hearts, we are less afraid of other people. We are more able to hear what is being said, see what is in front of our eyes, and work in accord with what happens rather than struggle against it...the way to help, the way to act compassionately, is to exchange oneself for other. When you can put yourself in someone else’s shoes, then you know what is needed, and what would speak to the heart (Chödrön, 2004, p. 144).

Both Buddhist teachers (Brach, 2003; Chödrön, 2004) explained that compassion grows out of accepting one’s own life as it unfolds, particularly when it is unpleasant and painful. They also explained that compassion expands when the practice of facing one’s own predicament with openness and loving-kindness helps the person to soften the heart, which in turn helps the person to empathize with others who suffer from their predicaments. Furthermore, they suggested that compassionate actions are made possible by one’s ability to “embrace” the life experiences of both oneself and others and to “exchange” oneself for others or take perspectives.

Some Buddhist teachers (Nhat Hanh, 1997; Trungpa, 2005) recommended specific meditative methods to cultivate compassion toward oneself and others. Metta (loving-kindness) and *tonglen* (sending out/letting go and receiving/accepting) practices are particularly popular in the United States. In metta practice, one is instructed to contemplate on thoughts and feelings of happiness and well-being and extend them unconditionally and indiscriminatorily to all sentient beings, beginning with oneself (Nhat Hanh, 1997). In tonglen practice, one is instructed to breathe out anything that feels “good” within oneself, and give it away to others; then, to breathe in anything that feels “bad” to others, remove it from them, and take it onto oneself (Trungpa, 2005). The point of both meditative practices is to soften the boundary or territoriality of the self and the other (Nhat Hanh, 1997; Trungpa, 2005). Softening the self-other boundary involves letting go of one’s attachment to the perceived self.

Compassion and forgiveness in light of one’s relationship with oneself. According to the Buddhist teachings discussed previously, the relationship between compassion and forgiveness can be better understood in light of one’s relationship with oneself. Kornfield (2008) discussed that what we perceive as “self” is based on our ideas about it. We create a self in our minds by identifying with parts of our experiences. Consequently, we develop a partial, limited, “small” sense of self (Kornfield, 2008). Compassion involves loosening one’s attachment to the small self. When we are not clinging to the small self, our awareness is broadened, and our consciousness is raised. The expansion of our minds and the deepened understanding of ourselves enable us to put our life experiences in a larger context of common humanity, take perspectives other than our own, empathize with the sufferings of all beings, and take appropriate actions to help to alleviate the

sufferings. Forgiveness also involves loosening one's attachment to the small self. More specifically, forgiveness is about disidentifying or freeing oneself from one's attachment to the experience of the spectrum of anger evoked by a perceived offense. When we disidentify from the small self, we also disidentify from its narrow perceptions and understandings of ourselves and our experiences. This self-disidentification and its consequent transformation of our perceptions and understandings enable us to access a larger viewpoint that is more aligned with the principles of impermanence and interdependence.

A Buddhist sense of psychological well-being. Many Buddhist teachers and scholars (Davids, 1914; De Silva, 1979; Kornfield, 2008; Sasaki, 1960) assert that Buddhism can be considered as a system of psychology. Attempts have been made to bridge so-called Buddhist psychology and Western psychology (Katz, 1983), psychiatry (Scotton, 1996), and psychotherapy (Kwee & Holdstock, 1996; Watson, 1998). A notable compatibility between Buddhist psychology and American psychology lies in their emphasis on empiricism and pragmatism. The Dalai Lama (1995, 2002) often begins his teachings with statements that represent this viewpoint: everyone wants happiness and does not want pain and suffering; the problem is that most people do not know what makes them and how to be happy and well; Buddhism provides guidance and methods to overcome suffering and to achieve happier and healthier lives; and anyone is welcome to experiment on them and see if they are true for themselves (The Dalai Lama, 1995).

Buddhist teachings on the relationship between one's sense of self and psychological well-being. Kornfield (2008) pointed out a commonalty and a difference between Western psychology and Buddhist psychology in terms of understanding the

relationship between one's development of self and psychological well-being. Both psychological theories and Buddhist teachings suggest that one needs to develop a sense of self (a boundary of self as being separate from others) to survive and navigate in this world. In Western psychology, one's sense of self is assessed to be healthy when one's ego is functioning at its developmentally optimal level. One's psychological well-being depends on one's well-functioning ego. In contrast, in Buddhist psychology, ego is understood as states of identification with one's small sense of self and its associated mental qualities that are not healthy (e.g., self-importance and self-centeredness). One's psychological well-being depends on one's ability to disidentify from the small sense of self, which helps the person to discover, attend, and nurture mental qualities within oneself that are healthy (e.g., wisdom and compassion) (Kornfield, 2008).

Some Buddhist teachers (Nhat Hanh, 1998; The Dalai Lama & Cutler, 1998) often describe mental formations (anything that is made of something else that arises in one's mind [Nhat Hanh, 1998]) as "wholesome" or "unwholesome" in correspondence to "beneficial" or "detrimental" to our well-being. One's sense of self influences the condition of our mental states, attitudes, and actions. When we strongly identify with our small self, we tend to create unwholesome mental states, develop unwholesome attitudes, and manifest unwholesome behaviors because our perceptions and understandings of ourselves and our experiences are partial, narrow and limited from the perspective of the small self. On the other hand, when we let go of our attachment to the small self, we tend to discover and connect with our buddha nature and wholesome qualities within us, including compassion, thereby benefiting ourselves and others around us.

Buddhist teachings on the relationship between anger and psychological well-being. From a Buddhist perspective, one's attachment to the experience of the spectrum of anger (e.g., resentment, hatred, rage, hostility, and aggression) is considered not only psychologically, but also physically and spiritually, destructive to oneself, as well as to others around him or her (Goleman, 2003). In fact, one of the earliest teachings expounded by Shakyamuni Buddha was that one's attachment to anger is one of the three primary causes of his or her own suffering and ill-being as well as of hindrance from enlightenment. According to some verses from *Dhammapada* (The Words of Truth) (see Appendix D), the relationship between anger and well-being is explained that hatred, which is a consequence of one's attachment to anger, harms oneself more than the object of one's hatred. Also, the verses indicate that prevention is less costly than treatment whether it is for physical, mental, or emotional well-being. The most efficient way to prevent anger turning into hatred is to guard oneself against anger by self-discipline. Some Buddhist teachers (Nhat Hanh, 2001) also teach that the key to resolving one's anger is to understand the true nature of anger with wisdom and compassion.

Buddhist teachings on the relationship between anger and psychological well-being are relevant to the issue of forgiveness. Anger is a normal emotional reaction to a perceived offense. Getting in touch with anger when one is unable to be angry for some reasons (e.g., socio-cultural conditioning and gender socialization) may even be therapeutic. However, experiencing anger is one thing; holding onto anger is another. Anger does not resolve, but gets intensified by being held onto, which is harmful to oneself rather than to the target of anger. Also, acting out anger, or retaliation, does not serve its purpose if it means for the offended to get even with the offender. According to

the principle of *karma*, every action has its consequence, which is a cause of another action. If one harms another, he or she will be eventually harmed. Buddhist teachings suggest that one is neither obligated to forgive nor is condemned if he or she retaliates, and is neither rewarded for forgiving nor punished for retaliating. However, when responding to harm by harming, one is actually harming oneself.

Research on the links between Buddhist practice and psychological well-being.

Prior research provided empirical support for positive links between Buddhist practice, particularly meditation, and well-being (Walsh, 1983). Recently, the mechanism of mindfulness, which is one of the key components of meditation, was investigated in an increasing number of psychological and medical studies (Baer, 2003). The most frequently cited mindfulness-based clinical intervention is the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Program (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2002), and its effectiveness for mental health benefits is promising (Carmody, Baer, Lykins, & Olendzki, 2009). What meditators appear to agree upon is that the early stages of meditation (i.e., mindfulness, one-pointed focusing, and non-attachment to whatever arises in one's mind [e.g., perceptions, thoughts, and feelings]) help them to slow down the activity of their minds, which has a calming and relaxing effect. When their minds are clear and tranquil, they can more easily observe whatever they experience more accurately, accept it as it is, and let it go. Such state of mind is the optimal condition for one's innate capacity to heal.

This process of meditation itself can be applied as a method to facilitate compassion and forgiveness from a Buddhist perspective. Baer (2010) discussed that mindfulness and self-compassion are closely related in terms of its Buddhist origin and

psychological mechanism, and that some studies suggested that self-compassion explained positive links between mindfulness and psychological well-being. For example, Shapiro, Astin, Bishop, and Cordova (2005) conducted a randomized controlled study with health care professionals about the outcomes of intensive mindfulness meditation group practice, and the results suggested that the practice contributed to increased self-compassion and reduced stress among the participants in the treatment group. Also, some psychologists and therapists discussed how some Buddhist concepts (e.g., non-attachment, karma, and compassion) can be used to teach forgiveness as a therapeutic strategy or a set of psychological skills (Hope, 1987; Sanderson & Linehan, 1999). Some Buddhist practitioners also presented how to practice forgiveness for personal and spiritual growth using meditative exercises including mindfulness (Bastis, 2003; Kornfield, 2002; Lingo, 2003; Sumedho, 1996), although the effectiveness of such interventions have not been empirically investigated.

Summary: Buddhist literature on forgiveness, compassion, and psychological well-being. In this review of Buddhist literature, I discussed Buddhist teachings on forgiveness, compassion, and psychological well-being, and identified some unique perspectives that might influence Buddhists' understandings and experiences of the three primary constructs that I investigated in this study. First, the ultimate purpose of Buddhist practice is to help all sentient beings to realize buddhahood, which means to help all sentient beings, including oneself, to liberate from suffering. Buddhist teachings encourage Buddhists to uphold the intention to fulfill this purpose, and Buddhists are likely to be motivated to develop attitudes and behaviors that are congruent with the purpose. Second, basic principles of Buddhist teachings (e.g., Four Noble Truths,

Eightfold Noble Path, and Dependent Origination) appear to provide Buddhists the rationale for forgiveness, and some Buddhist parables illustrate how forgivers manifest an array of human strengths and virtues. In Buddhist terms, wisdom, compassion, and patience help people to understand why they forgive, learn how to forgive, and go through the challenging process of forgiveness. Third, Buddhist teachings emphasize that compassion is unconditional and indiscriminatory benevolence toward all sentient beings. Compassion in the Buddhist sense is inevitably directed to both self and others according to the principles of impermanence and interdependence. Fourth, Buddhist teachings suggest that the relationship between compassion and forgiveness can be better understood in light of one's relationship with oneself. Both forgiveness and compassion involve loosening one's attachment to the small self and its narrow perceptions and understandings of the self and life experiences. Meditative practices can be applied to cultivate compassion within oneself and to let go of one's attachment to the spectrum of anger, which would presumably facilitate forgiveness. Finally, Buddhist teachings further suggest that psychological well-being depends on one's ability to disidentify from the small sense of self and its associated mental qualities that are unwholesome, which helps the person to discover and connect with the buddha nature and wholesome qualities within oneself.

Models and measures selected for this study. The topic-focused review of literature led me to adopting the following models and measures for this study to investigate the process of forgiveness and the relationship among forgiveness, self-compassion, and psychological well-being experienced by Buddhists.

Enright and the human development study group's (1991) models of forgiveness. Earlier I compared various definitions and conceptualizations of forgiveness and reviewed prior research findings on forgiveness measured by different instruments. In this section, I present the Enright and the Human Development Study Group's (1991) conceptualization and two models of forgiveness (i.e., stage and process) more in detail and explain why I consider them as appropriate for this study.

Conceptualization of forgiveness. Enright and the Human Development Study Group (1991) reviewed the texts of major world religions (i.e., Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism) and philosophical discussions on forgiveness. A philosopher, North (1987) argued that forgiveness is a moral response of the wronged that involves “a willed change of heart” as a result of “an active endeavor to replace bad thoughts with good, bitterness and anger with compassion and affection” for the purpose of “restoring and healing the relations which the wrongdoer has, for a time, suspended” (p. 508). Primarily based on this North's definition of forgiveness, Enright and his colleagues defined forgiveness as follows: “Forgiveness is the overcoming of negative affect and judgment toward the offender, not by denying ourselves the right to such affect and judgment, but by endeavoring to view the offender with compassion, benevolence, and love while recognizing that he or she has abandoned the right to them” (Enright & The Human Development Study Group, 1991, p. 126).

Enright and his colleagues (Enright, 2001; Enright, Freedman, & Rique, 1998; Enright & The Human Development Study Group, 1991) translated this philosophical and moral perspective on forgiveness into a developmental, educational, and clinical psychological perspective on forgiveness, and conceptualized forgiveness as follows.

First, forgiveness occurs between people (i.e., people can only forgive people, not situations or events). Second, forgiveness is not obligatory but volitional. Third, forgiveness occurs on cognitive, affective, and behavioral levels. Fourth, forgiveness is a choice that the offended can make regardless of the offender's attitudes or behaviors toward the offended. Furthermore, forgiveness is more than accepting what happened, ceasing to be angry, being neutral toward the other, and making oneself feel good. Also, forgiveness is neither condoning, excusing, forgetting, justifying, calming down, denial of hurt, nor demonstration of moral superiority (i.e., pseudo-forgiveness). Enright and his colleagues distinguished forgiveness from reconciliation in a sense that forgiveness is a choice to be made by the offended, whereas reconciliation is a choice involving both the offended and the offender.

Enright (2001) pointed out that two kinds of rationale for forgiveness were commonly expressed by the general public as well as psychologists in the United States. One kind of rationale is related to the intrinsic quality of forgiveness based on religious teachings (e.g., parables of blessings and tragedies caused by forgiving and not forgiving) and philosophical discussions on morality. In short, forgiveness is a “good” and “right” thing. Another kind of rationale is related to possible consequences of forgiving and not forgiving (e.g., one's psychological and physical health, one's relationship with others, and the offender's well-being). In short, forgiveness is more “beneficial” to the forgiver than the offender. This “paradox of forgiveness” was articulated as follows: “As we reach out to the one who hurt us, we are the ones who heal” (Enright, 2001, p. 75). Such a paradoxical effect of forgiveness has been observed in some clinical research on forgiveness (Freedman & Enright, 1996; Hope, 1987).

Stage model of forgiveness. Enright and his colleagues (Enright et al., 1989; Enright & The Human Development Study Group, 1991) proposed stage and process models of forgiveness based on psychological literature and research. Their stage model of forgiveness was developed from a social cognitive developmental perspective in contrast to Kohlberg's (1976) stage model of moral development. The findings of their studies (Enright et al., 1989) suggested that one's pattern of reasoning for forgiveness changes as he or she develops skills to take increasingly complex social perspectives: revengeful forgiveness (e.g., I forgive someone who hurt me only if I can punish him or her to a similar degree to my pain); restitutive or compensational forgiveness (e.g., I forgive if I get back what was taken away from me or because I feel guilty about withholding forgiveness); expectational forgiveness (e.g., I forgive because others expect me to forgive and feel pressured to forgive); lawful expectational forgiveness (e.g., I forgive because my religion demands me to forgive); forgiveness as social harmony (e.g., I forgive because forgiveness restores harmony or good relations in society); and forgiveness as love (e.g., I forgive unconditionally because forgiveness promotes a true sense of love).

Process model of forgiveness. Enright and his colleagues (Enright, 2001; Enright et al., 1998; Enright & The Human Development Study Group, 1991) developed a process model of forgiveness based on philosophical and psychological literature on forgiveness. They identified four phases of forgiveness: uncovering or pre-forgiving, deciding to forgive, working on forgiveness, and deepening forgiveness by discovery and release. They also identified psychological variables that may be involved in each phase based on theories and research.

According to Enright and his colleagues (Enright, 2001; Enright et al., 1998; Enright & The Human Development Study Group, 1991), the uncovering or pre-forgiving phase is characterized by becoming aware and experiencing negative consequences of an offense and emotional injury. Psychological variables that may be involved in this first phase include: psychological defenses (e.g., denial, suppression, regression, displacement, and identification with the offender) to protect themselves from the emotional pain; acknowledgment of anger and other negative emotions toward the offender; experience of more painful emotions possibly underlying anger (e.g., shame and guilt); cathexis on the emotional injury; cognitive rehearsal of the offense; comparison between their own psychological state with their perceived better state of the offender; permanent or adverse changes in their sense of self; and reevaluation of the just-world view.

Enright and his colleagues (Enright, 2001; Enright et al., 1998; Enright & The Human Development Study Group, 1991) postulated that when people suffer enough from the consequences of the offense, they are likely to be motivated to do something to alleviate the suffering and begin considering options. Thus, they enter the decision phase. Their motives for forgiveness are likely to be influenced by their social cognitive developmental stage (as discussed in the previous section); cultural conditioning; encouragement or discouragement from family, friends, and societal groups; philosophical and/or religious education; the passage of time since the emotional injury; the degree of suffering; and conversion leading to insights for forgiveness and against revenge.

According to Enright and his colleagues (Enright, 2001; Enright et al., 1998; Enright & The Human Development Study Group, 1991), the work phase is characterized by gaining perspectives, increasing understanding, and building positive feelings, thoughts, and behaviors toward the offender. Psychological variables that may be involved in this third phase include: reinterpretation of the offender's qualities and the offense by understanding the offender and the offense in the context; development of empathy toward the offender; development of compassion toward the offender; and acceptance of the emotional pain without repressing or harboring it.

According to Enright and his colleagues (Enright, 2001; Enright et al., 1998; Enright & The Human Development Study Group, 1991), the deepening phase is characterized by experiencing discovery and emotional release. Psychological variables that may be involved in this fourth and final phase include: finding the meaning of suffering for self and others; realization of one's own need to be forgiven by others; insights into common humanity, universality of suffering, and available support; finding a new purpose in life because of the emotional injury; and experience of emotional release and inner freedom.

Appropriateness for this study. Enright and the Human Development Study Group's (1991) models of forgiveness seemed to be appropriate for assessing Buddhists' experience of forgiveness for the following reasons. First, the definition of forgiveness makes an explicit reference to religious and philosophical literature and yet is not colored by any particular religious connotation. Second, benevolence is included in the conceptualization of forgiveness, which is consistent with Buddhist teachings. Third, the model has been tested with diverse populations, including religious populations.

Considering the lack of empirical understanding of Buddhists' experience of forgiveness, the process of forgiveness experienced by Buddhists was investigated qualitatively in this study, and the qualitative findings will be discussed in contrast to Enright's stage and process models of forgiveness.

Neff's (2003a) model of self-compassion and its appropriateness for this study.

As I presented earlier, Neff (2003a) conceptualized self-compassion as a self-attitude that derived from Buddhist psychology and consisted of the following three components: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness. Her model of self-compassion was not developed to assess Buddhist religiosity nor was intended to be used for only Buddhists. In fact, Neff discussed self-compassion as a psychological construct that resonates with some existing models of self-development and self-attitudes, such as the self-in-relation model of women's psychological development (Jordan et al., 1991), being-oriented perception of self (Maslow, 1968), unconditional positive regard toward oneself (Rogers, 1961), and unconditional self-acceptance (Ellis, 1973). Still, her model of self-compassion seemed to be particularly appropriate and applicable for Buddhists for its underlying Buddhist philosophy.

As I also discussed earlier, compassion (i.e., loving-kindness [*maitri*] and a wise and sympathetic response to suffering [*karuna*]) is the core of Buddhist teachings and practices. Some Buddhist teachers (Chödrön, 2004; Nhat Hanh, 1997) suggested that one needs to learn to be compassionate toward oneself before he or she can be truly compassionate toward others. In other words, self-compassion for Buddhists can be considered as a particular self-attitude that is supported by Buddhist teachings and

practices, particularly of *Mahayana* (Greater Vehicle) Buddhist traditions, in which the majority of Buddhist participants in this study were engaged.

Ryff's (1989) model of psychological well-being and its appropriateness for this study. As I pointed out earlier, in prior research that investigated forgiveness in relation to psychological well-being, psychological well-being was treated as a simplified concept, often equated with global satisfaction with life or equivalent to minimal psychological distress, absence of psychopathology, or a combination of certain positive cognition and affect. Considering this limitation, I reviewed two major branches of conceptualization and measurement of psychological well-being in its own field of research: emotional well-being and positive psychological functioning (Keyes & Magyar-Moe, 2003) based on hedonistic and eudaimonic views of psychological well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2001).

As I presented earlier, Ryff and Keyes (1995) conceptualized psychological well-being as positive psychological functioning in a eudaimonic sense in the following six domains: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. Ryff and Singer (1998) discussed that this concept of psychological well-being emerged from humanistic and developmental psychological theories and existential philosophy, emphasizing one's perception and meaning given to his or her life situation rather than the presence of positive affect and absence of negative affect (i.e., emotional well-being).

Psychological well-being as positive psychological functioning or based on the eudaimonic view seems to be more representative of a Buddhist sense of psychological well-being than emotional well-being. Buddhist teachings relevant to psychological well-being are more concerned about one's personal and spiritual growth than his or her

temporary experience of pleasant feelings. Buddhist practice, particularly meditation, is designed to develop one's capacity to be mindful, which involves letting go of one's attachment to pleasant feelings and aversion to unpleasant feelings. Ryff's (1989) model of psychological well-being seemed to be consistent with such Buddhist teachings and practices, therefore, appropriate for assessing Buddhists' experience of psychological well-being.

Selected measures. Considering the appropriateness and applicability of the models of forgiveness, self-compassion, and psychological well-being for Buddhists discussed above, I selected the following instruments developed based on those models: the Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI, Enright & Rique, 2000) to measure state forgiveness; the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS, Neff, 2003b) to measure self-compassion, and the Psychological Well-Being Scales (PWBS, Ryff & Keyes, 1995) to measure psychological well-being as positive psychological functioning in a eudaimonic sense. Operational definitions and reliability and validity data for the selected measures are presented in the Methodology chapter.

Epistemology-Focused Review

I want to introduce this section with personal statements made by psychologists that resonated with my intention behind this study. Kitzinger (1990) said:

While rejecting the label “feminist psychologist” as a contradiction in terms, I am passionate in my commitment both to feminism and psychology. The intellectual excitement and the practical impact of my research and teaching are lodged in the space created by this contradiction (p. 27).

Ponterotto and Grieger (1999) said:

Our position...is that although qualitative and quantitative perspectives do represent distinct “languages” and “cultures,” so to speak, becoming “bilingual” and “bicultural” in research identity is both possible and desirable. Forging a merged qualitative/quantitative research identity as a scholar is a difficult, long-term, and challenging process, but one that we think is well worth the effort (p. 49).

In this epistemology-focused review, I discuss what may be perceived as this contradiction of assumptions and values held by researchers who are interested in both feminism and psychology. Also, I discuss what seem to be two different languages and cultures of quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. In the end of this review, I present a theoretical framework adapted from the Wilber’s (2000a, 2000b) Integral Model for myself as a researcher to embrace seemingly opposing or conflicting identities and worldviews, which are applied for the methodology of this mixed-method study. Also, I review qualitative approaches to research and select qualitative methods for this study.

What makes research feminist? Feminism is evolving theories and practices of personal and social transformation from the perspectives of women and socio-cultural minorities. People who advocate feminism share a vision of non-oppressive and non-violent societies where individuals from diverse backgrounds are encouraged and supported to live as who they are while appreciating one another’s unique qualities. As hooks (1981, 1984) more eloquently stated her definition of feminism, “feminism is not simply a struggle to end male chauvinism or a movement to ensure that women will have

equal rights with men” (hooks, 1981, p. 194); neither is feminism “a lifestyle nor a ready-made identity or role one can step into” (hooks, 1984, p. 26). However, “feminism is a commitment to eradicating the ideology of domination that permeates” a culture and “reorganizing” a society “so that the self-development of people can take precedence over imperialism, economic expansion, and material desires (hooks, 1981, p. 195).

The focus of early feminism was to reveal, analyze, and challenge systems of oppression or power structures within ideologies and institutions that exclude or disadvantage certain groups of people based on socio-cultural backgrounds, such as gender, race, ethnicity, economic status, sexual orientation, age, disability, and religious affiliation (Tong, 1989). A primary tool was consciousness-raising (Mander, 1974). People who became more aware of the systems of oppression acted upon their transformed consciousness in various ways, which was believed to contribute to the transformation of consciousness of others around them and institutions with which they interacted. This process of transformation was described as “the personal is political,” which has been the slogan of feminist activism as well as one of the principles of feminist psychotherapies (Enns, 1997). Nowadays, overt prejudices and discriminations are illegal on the institutional level, and the systems of oppression tend to operate in a more subtle, complicated way. Therefore, skillfulness is required to bring about the personal and social change that feminists envision.

Feminist researchers in social science have applied feminist theories and practices to choosing what to research and how to research for personal and social change (Jayaratne & Stewart, 1991; Reinharz, 1992). Feminist researchers in psychology are no exception. Since the Weisstein’s (1971) radical criticism of traditional psychological

research, feminist psychologists have articulated a number of critiques on traditional approaches to psychological research and ways to transform them. By reviewing such feminist critiques, Worell and Remer (2003) summarized that traditional psychological research is characterized by androcentrism, ethnocentrism, methodological restriction, hierarchal researcher-participant relationships, and context-free observation and analysis. Based on the result of a focus group consisting of psychologists, Grossman et al. (1997) reported that feminist psychological research is characterized by purposefulness and methodological openness, and that feminist psychologists are interested in developing a non-exploitative, non-oppressive research process that can potentially transform the field of psychology, epistemologies, and lives of participants and researchers.

Significant progress in challenging androcentrism and ethnocentrism has been made in psychological research. Whether researchers identify themselves as feminist or not, more women participate in psychological research, and an analysis of socio-cultural variables is now considered as a common research protocol. However, feminist social scientists (Jayaratne & Stewart, 1991), particularly feminist psychologists (Grossman et al., 1997), suggested that two persistent obstacles existed in conducting research in social science: making a research process feminist and dealing with a resistance to methodological openness, specifically making use of qualitative research.

Why is qualitative research less visible in American psychology? As a principle, the choice of research methodologies should be driven by research questions. However, research questions themselves are influenced by researchers' own assumptions and values that are influenced by those predominant in their disciplines. This issue is not only epistemological, but also political. As Patton (1980) called it "methodological

prejudice” (p. 18), quantitative research is somehow considered superior to qualitative research in the discipline of psychology. One of the reasons why qualitative research has been less visible in American psychology is that the assumptions and values embedded in quantitative research (e.g., reductionism and deductive reasoning) predominate over those of qualitative research (e.g., holism and inductive reasoning) in the discipline. The power dynamics influence how psychologists think of what research is and how research should be conducted. Psychology students typically learn to view qualitative research as secondary or supplemental to quantitative research and are discouraged to make qualitative inquiry. Ponterotto’s (2005) observations and perceptions confirmed that this trend still persists.

Feminist researchers have been more open to using qualitative methods because they believe that qualitative methods are more appropriate for in-depth, contextual understanding of the diversity and complexity of the experiences of women and socio-cultural minority groups (Reinharz, 1992). However, quantitatively-trained feminist psychologists may be cautious of researcher biases in qualitative research methods. Also, they may be afraid of political and scholarly costs of conducting feminist and qualitative research (Jayaratne & Stewart, 1991) by asserting double minority viewpoints in psychology.

Among psychologists, counseling psychologists have been more responsive to the calls for methodological pluralism to include qualitative approaches in research (McLeod, 2001; Morrow & Smith, 2000; Polkinghorne, 1984). Hill, Thompson, and Williams (1997) developed a systematic qualitative methodology for counseling psychology research. Their methodology called Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) incorporated:

grounded theory for the process of coding data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967); comprehensive process analysis of significant therapy events (Elliott, 1989); a phenomenological method to delineate psychological meaning units (Giorgi, 1985); and some feminist research ethics (e.g., researcher-participant collaboration, consensus through open dialogue, and participants as experts on their own inner experiences). Also, they recommended using a team of three to five researchers to analyze the data and one or two auditors to review and provide feedback on the analysis. Stile (1997) summarized one of the strengths of this methodology as its emphasis on “the scientific value of intersubjective verifiability” (p. 586); however, its limitations come from their attempt to hold the assumptions and values embedded in quantitative research (e.g., quantitative representativeness of a sample, and consensus among researchers through averaging) over those of qualitative research. These limitations of this qualitative methodology reflected those of most mixed-method psychological research as well. The assumptions and values embedded in qualitative research (e.g., intentional and purposeful selection of research participants, and validation coming from participants) tend to be minimized by quantitative researchers.

How to bridge between quantitative and qualitative research methodologies?

Ponterotto and Grieger (1999) discussed that communicating the difference between quantitative and qualitative research methodologies is similar to communicating crosscultural differences. Different worldviews operate between quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, like between cultures. What is involved in integrating these two research methodologies can parallel what is involved in a marriage of two people coming from different cultures (Ponterotto & Grieger, 1999). Communication is extremely difficult when one party is operating from a set of assumptions and values

without being aware that the other party is operating from another set of assumptions and values, still more difficult when one party is not even aware of his or her own set of assumptions and values. Furthermore, power dynamics in communication can result in one party imposing his or her set of assumptions and values on the other party instead of both parties appreciating different sets of assumptions and values.

Selected review of qualitative research approaches. Qualitative research has a long history in many disciplines of the humanities and social sciences, such as sociology, anthropology, education, history, political science, medicine, nursing, social work, and communication (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), although only recently qualitative research began to be recognized in psychology (Morrow & Smith, 2000). Numerous approaches to qualitative research have been discussed in literature in terms of paradigms, research strategies, what is considered as “data,” and methods of collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and presenting data. Psychologists who advocate the including of qualitative research in psychology (Morrow & Smith, 2000; Ponterotto, 2005) agree that researchers must understand the paradigms for research.

Kuhn (1962/1996) defined “paradigm” in the context of scientific revolutions in two different senses. First, a paradigm means “the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community” (p. 185). Second, a paradigm encompasses “exemplary past achievements” (p. 175) that were “sufficiently unprecedented to attract an enduring group of adherents away from competing modes of scientific activity” and “sufficiently open-ended to leave all sorts of problems for the redefined group of practitioners to resolve” (p. 10). The most frequently cited classification of research paradigms was provided by Guba (1990) and Guba and Lincoln

(1994). A research paradigm functions as a theoretical framework that guides a researcher in responding to the questions of ontology (the nature of reality), epistemology (ways of knowing), methodology (ways of discovering such reality or knowledge), and axiology (the role of values). Research paradigms can be classified as follows: positivistic, postpositivistic, constructivist-interpretivist, and postmodern (including ideological and critical perspectives) (Guba, 1990; Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

According to the Guba's (Guba, 1990; Guba & Lincoln, 1994) classification of research paradigms, in the positivist paradigm, the existence of objective, context-free, unchangeable reality is assumed. Researcher and research are supposed to be value-free. Knowledge is gained through affirmation of theories by strict "scientific" methods (i.e., reduction of a phenomenon into a measurable construct, observation and experimentation in controlled environment, and replication of experiment for confirmation). Reality is understood by accumulation of such "scientific" knowledge of its parts. Quantitative research in psychology is mostly conducted within this positivistic paradigm. In the postpositivist paradigm, reality is still assumed to exist independently. However, the premises of positivism are questioned, and "science" is defined in broader terms (e.g., reliable knowledge-base developed by any systematic studies, including not only experimental research but also naturalistic research). In the constructivist and interpretivist paradigms, reality is assumed to be constructed by people who participate in it. Reality is subjective and relative, thereby being understood only through interpretation. Knowledge is gained through understanding of meanings by methods deriving from such philosophical traditions as phenomenology and hermeneutics. In the postmodern paradigm, reality is assumed to be context-bound. Researcher or research cannot be

value-free. Knowledge is gained through deconstruction of conventional knowledge with awareness of power dynamics and perspectives of socio-cultural minorities. Qualitative approaches that have been applied to psychological research have been conducted mostly in the postpositivist and constructivist-interpretivist paradigms and rarely in the postmodern paradigm.

In this section, I review several qualitative approaches that have been applied to psychological research: phenomenological approaches (Giorgi, 1985; Moustakas, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1989), hermeneutic approaches (Martin, 2002; Packer & Addison, 1989; Steele, 1989), narrative approaches (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998; Rieseman, 1993; Sarbin, 1986), and a combination of qualitative approaches (e.g., heuristic and phenomenological) (Taylor, 1993).

Phenomenological approaches. Giorgi (1985) explained that phenomenological approaches to qualitative psychological research have roots in the tradition of descriptive and philosophical psychology. In-depth interview is the method for collecting research participants' detailed descriptions of lived experiences of a phenomenon in their own terms. Phenomenological researchers assume that multiple phases of analysis should eventually reveal the essence of the phenomenon as experienced by the participants (Giorgi, 1985). Moustakas (1994) pointed out that phenomenological researchers are more focused on describing the participants' experiences than the researcher's interpretations of them. In fact, they apply Husserl's notion of phenomenological epochè (suspension of judgment) and phenomenological reduction or bracketing (the act or a technique of suspending judgment) in their research process. Then, they attempt to set their own perceptions and experiences aside to take a fresh perspective on the

phenomenon under investigation (Moustakas, 1994). Polkinghorne (1989) stated that the final product of successful phenomenological research should give readers a felt-sense that they understood better what it was like for the participants to experience a particular phenomenon that the researcher had investigated.

No model of phenomenological psychological research is universally accepted. However, Giorgi (1985) described the four essential steps of analysis that he employed for psychological research: (a) repeatedly reading the entire transcripts to grasp a sense of the whole, (b) identifying meaning units within a psychological perspective with a focus on the phenomenon under investigation, (c) going through all the meaning units and transforming the participants' everyday expressions into psychological language, and (d) synthesizing all the transformed meaning units into statements regarding the participant's experience.

Hermeneutic approaches. Martin (2002) explained that the origins of hermeneutic psychology can be traced back to descriptive and analytical psychology, particularly that of Dilthey. The word "hermeneutics" came from *Hermes* who interpreted the meanings of messages from the Greek gods for humans in forms of advice, warning, and instruction (Packer & Addison, 1989). Packer and Addison (1989) stated that hermeneutics emphasizes the centrality of interpretation and circularity of understanding, which is more about an ontological stance than an epistemological or methodological stance. In hermeneutic approaches, interpretation is not "conjecture" (Packer & Addison, 1989, p. 276) but is the process of "working out of possibilities that have become apparent in a preliminary, dim understanding of events" (Packer & Addison, 1989, p. 277).

Packer and Addison (1989) described three general phases in hermeneutic approaches to psychological research: (a) discovering an appropriate perspective from which interpretation can be made, (b) conducting inquiry within that perspective, and (c) critically reflecting on and evaluating the interpretive account or the outcome of inquiry. For example, Steele (1989) used a critical hermeneutics to interpret the text of a psychological journal article. Steele identified his approach as being influenced by many forms of inquiry (e.g., feminism, Marxism, phenomenology, psychoanalysis, structuralism, and deconstructionism). From this particular perspective, Steele analyzed the text hermeneutically, which revealed meta-themes or hidden meanings.

Narrative approaches. Sarbin (1986) defined narrative as a story that is “a symbolized account of actions of human beings” with “a temporal dimension” (p. 3). Narrative researchers (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 1993; Sarbin, 1986) assume the contextual and storied nature of human experience and the inevitability of interpretation to understand people’s stories. How people perceive, think, feel, imagine, and make choices have narrative structures. Why people behave in a certain way cannot be understood without their historical and socio-cultural contexts. Moreover, people can tell stories of their life experiences in many different ways depending on with what they identify and how they understand at the moment (Sarbin, 1986). People decide themselves what is included and excluded in their narratives, how the stories unfold, and what the stories are supposed to mean (Riessman, 1993). Thus, narratives can be said to be constructed and reconstructed life stories. “Narrative inquiry is stories lived and told” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20).

Narrative analysis can mean different things to different people. Lieblich et al. (1998) identified the four approaches to narrative studies and their corresponding four modes of narrative analysis: holistic-content, holistic-form, categorical-content, and categorical-form. In the holistic-content mode of analysis, the unit of analysis is a person as a whole in his or her context (i.e., holistic), and the focus of interpretation is on the content of narrative (e.g., case study). In the holistic-form mode of analysis, the unit of analysis is a person as a whole in his or her context, and the focus of interpretation is on the form (i.e., plots and structures) of narrative (e.g., comedy or tragedy). In the categorical-content mode of analysis, categories of the studied topic are defined, the content of narrative is dissected based on categories across different individuals' stories, and the relevant texts were extracted, classified, and gathered into the categories (e.g., content analysis). The categorical-form mode of analysis focuses on discrete stylistic or linguistic characteristics of defined categorical units of narrative (Lieblich et al., 1998).

A combination of qualitative approaches: Heuristic and phenomenological.

Taylor (1993) used a combination of qualitative approaches (i.e., heuristic and phenomenological) to investigate the learning process of intercultural competence among adults in the United States and to evaluate the model of transformative learning developed by Mezirow. He reviewed heuristic and phenomenological approaches influenced by the works of such qualitative researchers as Moustakas (1990) and Spiegelberg (1975). His phenomenological approach refers to the researcher's "effort to understand and interpret how [participants] view their world and make meaning of particular experiences – constructing their point of view" (Taylor, 1993, p. 96). His heuristic approach refers to the researcher's "becoming intimately connected to the

inquiry process, resulting in a personal understanding of the [participants']... experience” (Taylor, 1993, p. 98). In Taylor’s (1993) work, the heuristic approach was applied to the whole process of research, and the phenomenological approach was used as a pragmatic guide, particularly for the stages of data collection and data analysis.

As for the heuristic approach, Taylor (1993) referred to the six phases of research process described by Moustakas (1990): (a) initial engagement, (b) immersion, (c) incubation, (d) illumination, (e) explication, and (f) creative synthesis. In the initial engagement phase, researchers discover their research interests that have personal and social implications. In the immersion phase, researchers formulate their research questions and develop their knowledge and understanding of the questions, and collecting data and being absorbed in making sense of the data. In the incubation phase, researchers temporarily detach themselves from deliberate and concentrated research-related activities, which enable their knowledge and understanding to grow internally beyond their immediate awareness (i.e., letting their intuition work). In the illumination phase, researchers experience a breakthrough in their deepened understanding of the data, they observe themes emerging from the data naturally, correct their previous understanding, and find hidden meanings. In the explication phase, researchers bring together and organize what was discovered and making descriptions of their analysis. In the creative synthesis phase, researchers figure out how to communicate effectively with others the findings in response to their research questions (Moustakas, 1990).

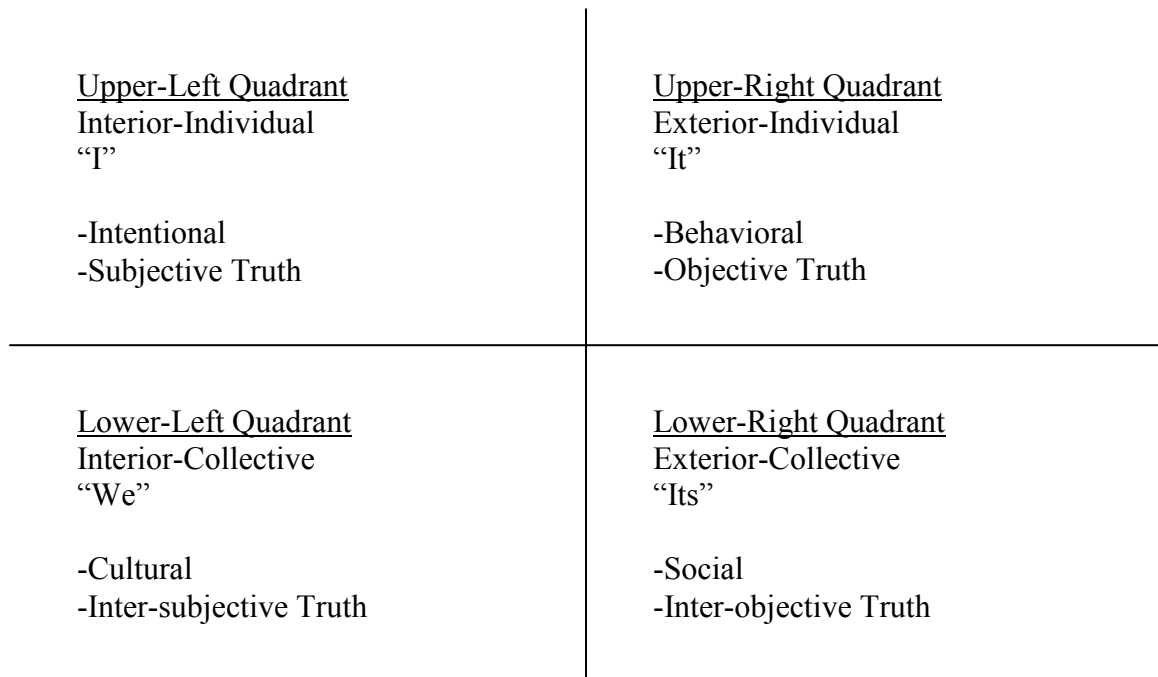
Selected qualitative approaches. I decided to take phenomenological and narrative approaches for the qualitative component of this study because I wanted to understand the essence of Buddhists’ experiences of forgiveness without losing sight of

their individual uniqueness and their contexts. For guidance in my qualitative research process, I primarily referred to Giorgi's (1985, 1986) phenomenological approach to psychological research and Winter and Daniluk's (2004) modified holistic-content narrative approach informed by Lieblich et al. (1998)'s classification of narrative approaches. I discuss the details of the qualitative methods and procedures employed in this study in the Methodology chapter.

Toward an integral feminist approach. In this section, I build on the epistemology-focused review above by discussing Wilber's (2000a, 2000b) integral theory and its applications for psychological, feminist, and mixed-method research. The purpose of this section is to develop a theoretical framework for this mixed-method study and explain how I see the quantitative and qualitative components of this study come together without violating either research paradigm.

Wilber's (2000b) integral theory and meta-framework. Wilber (2000b) conducted an extensive review of various systems of thought developed in academic disciplines and Eastern and Western wisdom traditions. He believed that they all purport to respond to human inquiry, and yet offer different perspectives, and lead us to understanding partial truths. He also believed that a way must exist for uniting the best of all that will lead us to understanding the whole truths. He identified patterns in the systems of thoughts, and realized that the patterns can be organized into the four irreducible categories, which resulted in his integral meta-framework. This integral meta-framework can be displayed on the four quadrants: the interior-individual dimension (upper-left), the interior-collective dimension (lower-left), the exterior-individual dimension (upper-right), and the exterior-collective dimension (lower-right) (*Figure 1*).

Figure 2.1. Integral meta-framework displayed on the four quadrants (based on Wilber, 2000a, 2000b)



According to Wilber (2000a), the upper-left quadrant represents the interior of the individual, what is intentional, and the subjective truth, all of which are communicated by the “I” language or the first-person accounts of inner experiences. The lower-left quadrant represents the interior of the collective, the cultural domain that includes the worldviews, values, and ethics shared by any group of individuals, the inter-subjective truth, all of which are communicated by the “We” language or in I-Thou dialogue. The upper-right quadrant represents the exterior of the individual or the exterior attributes of the interior-individual dimension, what is behavioral, and the objective truth, all of which are communicated by the “It” language or the third-person accounts of what is considered as “scientific” facts about the individual. The lower-right quadrant represents the exterior of the collective or social systems that are external manifestations of the cultural domain, the inter-objective truth, all of which are also communicated by the “It” language in the plural form.

Wilber (2000a, 2000b) argued that each of the four dimensions has its own validity or truth claim that cannot be reduced to another dimension. He calls his meta-framework “integral” because it provides a map to include and transcend different perspectives. He also considers one’s attempt to apply the integral meta-framework in any fields and to include as many dimensions as possible in practice as an integral approach. The integral meta-framework has a wide applicability. For example, when it is applied to psychology, a psychological phenomenon is conceived to manifest on the four distinct and yet corresponding dimensions. When it is applied to research methodology, different research methodologies can be considered appropriate for investigating different dimensions.

A feminist application of the integral meta-framework to psychological research.

How can I apply the integral meta-framework to develop a theoretical framework for a mixed-method psychology study from a feminist perspective? The following is my attempt to respond to this question.

A psychological phenomenon can manifest on the individual behavioral level and the collective social level on the exterior dimensions, which can be objectively observed and measured by a third person. It is objective in a sense that when researchers of a similar level of skills follow the same procedure and measure the phenomenon, they are likely to end up with similar scores. Translating this statement in a more common language for quantitative psychological researchers, they operationalize a psychological phenomenon into a construct so that they can quantify it. They develop an instrument that is valid and reliable for measurement or choose to use an instrument that other researchers developed, validated, and found reliable. Their data are numbers. They analyze the data statistically and interpret the statistical results according to the meanings that they assigned to the numbers. Generalizability of the quantitative results depends on the representativeness of a sample that is ideally achieved by random sampling. In social science research, however, strict experimental conditions are not easily attainable. Therefore, quantitative psychological researchers statistically control as many confounding variables as possible and/or acknowledge the limitation about generalizability, and suggest that their studies should be replicated and/or possible confounding variables should be taken into consideration in future research. The whole quantitative research process is primarily governed by deductive reasoning, and it is operated within the positivistic paradigm.

The interior dimensions of a psychological phenomenon, on the other hand, are subjectively experienced by each individual or inter-subjectively experienced by a group of individuals who share a culture. It is subjective in a sense that an individual's inner experience is unique to him or her and is not directly observable by someone else. Quantitative psychological researchers may attempt to understand the interior dimensions of a psychological phenomenon by using participants' self-report. However, measurement inevitably reduces participants' individual experiences to numbers to which meanings are assigned by researchers. Essentially, if you want to understand someone else's interior dimensions of a psychological phenomenon, you must ask him or her to describe his or her inner experience; imagine, relate to, or empathize with what the experience is like to him or her; and discern what the experience means to him or her.

Translating the statement above into a common language for qualitative psychological researchers is difficult because qualitative research can be conducted from many different perspectives and their languages are influenced by their approaches. Nevertheless, for example, many qualitative psychological researchers conduct in-depth interview to investigate a psychological phenomenon on the individual level. During the interview, qualitative researchers listen to participants' descriptions of their own individual, subjective, inner experiences of the phenomenon from the participants' viewpoints in their own intrapsychic, interpersonal, and socio-cultural contexts. Qualitative researchers immerse themselves into the data (in this case, interview transcripts); analyze and interpret data (how they analyze and interpret looks very different from one researcher to another depending on their methodology); and develop depictions that represent the participants' individual, subjective, inner experiences of the

phenomenon. Qualitative psychological researchers are concerned with delimitation in sampling and transferability of results. To enhance the quality and trustworthiness in qualitative research, researchers may triangulate multiple sources of data, and ask participants to validate the researchers' interpretation of the participants' inner experiences. The whole qualitative research process is primarily governed by inductive reasoning or abductive reasoning (a combination of inductive and deductive reasoning); and it can be operated within different research paradigms (e.g., post-positivistic, constructivist-interpretivist, critical, and ideological).

To add a feminist perspective on an integral perspective on psychological research, the exclusion of the interior dimensions in psychological research is the matter of concern because this exclusion is particularly problematic when researchers try to understand a psychological phenomenon experienced by individuals who come from socio-cultural minority groups. This concern has a root in various liberation movements in the 1960's simultaneously arisen across cultures. For example, what many middle-class women of an ethnic majority in the United States and Japan discovered through their participation in consciousness-raising groups in the 1970's was that, when they shared their personal and private experiences with one another (i.e., the interior "I" dimension), they realized that they were all influenced by a systematic oppression based on gender, which they called sexism, in their cultures (i.e., the interior "We" dimension) and social systems (i.e., the exterior "Its" dimension). Feminists described this discovery of the interconnectedness of the individual and collective aspects of their experiences as "the personal is political." Pioneers of feminist therapy proclaimed that women are not sick but rather that society is, because they recognized that many of their female clients

suffered from psychological symptoms (e.g., depression and anxiety) as reactions to sexism and violence against women that were condoned and perpetuated in their societies.

An alarming parallel exists between the status of feminist research in mainstream psychology and that of qualitative research in mainstream psychology. Choosing what to research and how to research for personal and social change is a feminist issue. Including underrepresented populations is still a challenge in psychological research. A crucial step for understanding minority perspectives is to listen to their voices directly as many feminist researchers have advocated. Qualitative approaches to research are more suitable for that purpose, but they have been underestimated and underutilized in psychological research. The status of qualitative research as well as that of feminist research in mainstream psychology may reflect the majority of psychological researchers' lack of sensitivity to the power dynamics that can be played out in the research process, to their resistance to examining their own perspectives and assumptions, and to their lack of understanding those approaches different from their own. For an approach to psychological research to be integral and feminist, it should include feminist and multicultural perspectives that emphasize the importance of understanding socio-cultural or contextual influences on individuals' experiences as well as an integral perspective that emphasizes the importance of understanding both the interior and exterior dimensions of individuals' experiences.

Application of an integral feminist approach to this mixed-method study. To my knowledge, no theoretical framework for mixed-method psychological research has been presented in psychological literature; in fact, psychological researchers rarely discuss

their theoretical frameworks, unless they conduct qualitative research. Hence, I attempted to develop one for this mixed-method study.

I conceptualized that Buddhists' experiences of forgiveness would manifest on the interior and the exterior dimensions on the four quadrants: (a) their individual inner experiences of forgiveness that are not directly observable (the interior-individual dimension); (b) their collective cultural or inter-subjective experiences of forgiveness that are not directly observable (the interior-collective dimension); (c) exterior attributes of their individual experiences of forgiveness that are directly observable (the exterior-individual dimension); and (d) exterior manifestations of their collective experiences of forgiveness that are directly observable (the exterior-collective dimension). Qualitative research methods are considered more appropriate to investigate the interior dimensions, and quantitative research methods are considered more appropriate to investigate the exterior dimensions (*Figure 2*).

For this study, I focused on the interior-individual and the exterior-individual dimensions to limit the scope of the study. I chose to take narrative and phenomenological approaches to the qualitative component of this study and used in-depth interview as a qualitative method to investigate the interior-individual dimension of Buddhists' experiences of forgiveness. I used self-report survey as a quantitative method to investigate the exterior-individual dimension of Buddhists' experiences of forgiveness. I included self-compassion and psychological well-being as variables that are hypothetical correlates of forgiveness in the quantitative component of this study. In the qualitative component of this study, I examined whether these variables actually emerge as correlates of forgiveness from the qualitative data.

Figure 2.2. Application of integral feminist approach to this mixed-method study

<u>Upper-Left Quadrant</u> Interior-Individual Qualitative In-depth interview Narrative approach Phenomenological approach	<u>Upper-Right Quadrant</u> Exterior-Individual Quantitative Self-report survey Statistical analysis
<u>Lower-Left Quadrant</u> Interior-Collective Qualitative (e.g., participant observation, ethnography)	<u>Lower-Right Quadrant</u> Exterior-Collective Quantitative (e.g., organizational survey, statistical analysis)

Summary of the epistemology-focused review. In this epistemology-focused review, I discussed feminist and multicultural issues concerning the paradigms of psychological research, reviewed characteristics of selected qualitative approaches, and developed an integral feminist approach to this mixed-method study based on my application of Wilber's(2000a, 2000b) integral meta-framework. First, I discussed what makes research feminist, why qualitative research is less visible in American psychology, and how these issues are political and concerning from the perspectives of minorities (i.e., feminist, multicultural, and qualitative). Second, I reviewed selected qualitative approaches (phenomenological, hermeneutic, and narrative approaches and a combination of these approaches) and discussed the diversity in the philosophical underpinnings and research procedures across them and in contrast to those of quantitative research. Finally, in the spirit of bridging quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, I developed a theoretical framework for this mixed-method study based on my application of Wilber's integral meta-framework, provided a translation of research concepts in quantitative and qualitative research languages, and discussed how the quantitative and qualitative components of this study can come together without violating either research paradigm.

Summary of the Selected Review of Literature

In the topic-focused review, selected Buddhist literature and psychological studies relevant to the primary constructs (i.e., state forgiveness, self-compassion, and psychological well-being) and the population (i.e., English-speaking individuals who practice Buddhism in the United States) of this study were reviewed. First, I discussed issues concerning definitions and conceptualizations of each primary construct in

psychological literature, prior empirical studies indicating the impact of socio-cultural influences, such as gender and religiosity, on state forgiveness and self-compassion, as well as the positive links between forgiveness and psychological well-being and between self-compassion and psychological well-being. Second, I discussed forgiveness, self-compassion, and psychological well-being from a Buddhist perspective by referring to the texts from Buddhist scriptures and Buddhist teachings and practices expounded by Buddhist teachers. Based on the topic-focused review, I selected models and measures of forgiveness, self-compassion, and psychological well-being that would be appropriate for understanding Buddhists' experiences. In the epistemology-focused review, I discussed feminist and multicultural issues concerning paradigms of psychological research, reviewed characteristics of selected qualitative approaches, and developed an integral feminist approach to this mixed-method study based on my application of Wilber's (2000a, 2000b) integral meta-framework.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to investigate the process of forgiveness and the relationships among state forgiveness, self-compassion, and psychological well-being experienced by Buddhists in the United States. I intended to bridge a gap in prior research on forgiveness, particularly in response to several concerns raised by researchers and clinicians about methodological and clinical implications of forgiveness research by conducting a mixed-method study with an integral feminist approach. Within this theoretical framework, a mixed-method psychological research was conceptualized as investigating both the interior-dimensions (i.e., subjective inner experiences that are not directly observable) and the exterior-dimensions (i.e., objective quantifiable attributes of the interior-dimensions that are directly observable) of a psychological phenomenon, such as one's experience of forgiveness, by using qualitative and quantitative research methodologies without reducing one to the other. In this chapter, I present research questions and research designs for the quantitative and the qualitative components of this study, and discuss how to interpret the quantitative and qualitative results from this study.

Research Questions

This mixed-method study was conducted to answer the following questions:

1. What is the process of forgiveness that Buddhists experience?
 - (a) What does forgiveness mean to Buddhists?
 - (b) What motivates Buddhists to forgive?
 - (c) How do Buddhists' socio-cultural contexts, particularly gender, influence their experiences of forgiveness?

- (d) What are the challenges in the process of forgiveness experienced by Buddhists, and what helps them to overcome the challenges and facilitate the process of forgiveness?
 - (e) What are the outcomes of forgiveness experienced by Buddhists?
- 2. What are the relationships among demographic characteristics of Buddhists and variables of Buddhist practices, and their levels of state forgiveness, self-compassion, and psychological well-being?
 - (a) Do gender, age, and the years spent in Buddhist practice predict the level of state forgiveness among Buddhists?
 - (b) Do gender, age, and the years spent in Buddhist practice predict the level of self-compassion among Buddhists?
 - (c) Do the levels of self-compassion and state forgiveness predict the level of psychological well-being among Buddhists?
 - (d) Does the level of self-compassion mediate the relationship between the levels of state forgiveness and psychological well-being among Buddhists?

Quantitative Research Design

The goal of the quantitative component of this study was to examine the relationships of the following variables: gender, age, the years spent in Buddhist practice, state forgiveness, self-compassion, and psychological well-being by using self-report survey in order to provide information regarding the individual-exterior dimension of Buddhists' experiences of forgiveness and its hypothetical correlates, self-compassion and psychological well-being.

Participants. One hundred and twelve adults ($N = 112$) were solicited from *sanghas* (Buddhist communities) in the United States listed on the *World Buddhist Directory* (BuddhaNet, 2006), the *Dharma Directory* (Tricycle, 2008), and the *Buddhist organizations and temples* (E-Sangha, 2004) for voluntary participation in the quantitative component of this study. Although a convenience sampling method was used, efforts were made to improve the representativeness of a sample by sending an invitation for participating in this study to sanghas randomly selected from all sanghas located in each state listed on the *World Buddhist Directory*. Prospective volunteers who were not comfortable with reading and writing in English to communicate with this researcher and to respond to this online survey administered in English were unintentionally yet inevitably excluded from this study. Also, those who did not have easy access to the Internet were excluded from this study, except that a few requests for using a paper-and-pencil method and regular mail to participate in this study were accommodated.

To determine an appropriate sample size N for this study in which a series of multiple regression analyses were conducted, a two-step approach developed by Green (1991) was applied. This approach to determining a minimally required N more accurately reflects the Cohen's (1988) power analytic approach than other conventional and simpler approaches (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). The first step was to calculate the formula $L = 6.4 + 1.65m - .05m^2$, where m is the number of predictors. The second step was to calculate the formula $N \geq L/f^2$, where f^2 is an anticipated effect size. In this study, six predictors (at most) were planned to be examined in an analysis. According to the Cohen's standard, the value of f^2 for the anticipated "medium" effect size is known as .15. Therefore, a minimally required N for this study turned out to be close to 97 participants.

Instrumentation. For this study, demographic and Buddhist affiliation and practice variables were measured by Buddhist participants' responses to the items included in the Demographic Questionnaire (DQ) and the Buddhist Practice Questionnaire (BPQ) that this researcher designed for this study; state forgiveness was measured by the Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI) (Enright & Rique, 2000); self-compassion was measured by the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) (Neff, 2003b); and psychological well-being was measured by the Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWB) (Ryff & Singer, 1996).

Demographic questionnaire (DQ). Demographic Questionnaire (DQ) (Appendix E) was designed for this study to collect data about Buddhist participants' demographic characteristics, such as gender, age, race/ethnicity, sexual/affectional orientation, and the level of education. Gender, age, race/ethnicity, sexual/affectional orientation, and the level of education were treated as categorical variables. Age was treated as a continuous variable. Gender and age were used as independent variables for this study.

Buddhist practice questionnaire (BPQ). Buddhist Practice Questionnaire (BPQ)(Appendix F) was designed to collect data about participants' Buddhist practices, including the number of years spent for practicing Buddhism, whether or not they are affiliated with any Buddhist communities, and the branches of Buddhism that they study and practice.

Enright forgiveness inventory (EFI). Enright and Rique (2000, p. 1) defined forgiveness as follows: "Forgiveness is a willingness to abandon one's right to resentment, negative judgment, and indifferent behavior toward one who unjustly injured us, while fostering the undeserved qualities of compassion, generosity and even love

toward him or her.” Based on this definition, they developed the Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI) to measure one’s current state or degree of having forgiven an offender for a particular offense. EFI is a propriety measure, and the manual/sampler set and the license to reproduce and administer were purchased from Mind Garden. The front page of EFI consists of questions asking respondents to rate and describe the most recent, severe offense and the offender of their choice. EFI is a 60-item scale consisting of three primary subscales (affect, behavior, and cognition) to assess six areas of forgiveness (absence of negative affect, presence of positive affect, absence of negative cognition, presence of positive cognition, absence of negative behavior, and presence of positive behavior toward the offender). EFI is rated on a 6-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*.) EFI’s total score ranges from 60 (low degree of forgiveness) to 360 (high degree of forgiveness). An additional five items assess pseudo-forgiveness (e.g., denial and condoning) whose score ranges from 5 to 30. The final question functions as the single-item forgiveness “scale” [sic] for rating respondents’ global degree of forgiveness of the offender for a particular offense of their choice whose score ranges from 1 to 6.

A summary of EFI’s reliability and validity data has been provided by Enright and Rique (2000). Samples of the studies included in the summary consisted of college students and their same sex parents, and approximately 60 to 70% of the participants identified their religious affiliation as Catholic, Jewish, or Protestant. EFI demonstrated a high degree of internal consistency coefficients ($\alpha = .98$ or greater reported by Sarinopoulos [1996, 1999], and Subkoviak et al. [1995]) as well as a high degree of test-retest reliability ($\alpha = .86$ reported by Subkoviak et al. [1995]). The face validity of EFI

was indicated by positive correlations with the single-item rating on forgiveness (Sarinopoulos, 1996; Subkoviak et al., 1995). The discriminant validity of EFI was indicated by almost no correlation with a social desirability scale (Sarinopoulos, 1996; Subkoviak et al.). Psychotherapy literature had suggested a link between not forgiving and a high level of anxiety (Fitzgibbons, 1986), and the convergent validity of EFI was indicated by negative correlations with state-anxiety in empirical studies (Sarinopoulos, 1996; Subkoviak et al., 1995). Additionally, the concurrent validity of EFI was indicated by a positive correlation with the Wade Forgiveness Scale (Sarinopoulos, 1996; Subkoviak et al., 1995; Wade, 1989). Also, EFI has been used with diverse samples, including a non-Western sample (Park & Enright, 1997), which provides empirical support for external validity for diverse populations.

Self-compassion scale (SCS). Neff (2003a) conceptualized that self-compassion “involves being touched by and open to one’s own suffering, not avoiding or disconnecting from it, generating the desire to alleviate one’s own suffering and to heal oneself with kindness” and “offering non-judgmental understanding to one’s pain, inadequacies, and failures, so that one’s experience is seen as part of the larger human experience” (p. 87). Based on this conceptualization, Neff (2003b) developed the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) (Appendix G) that is a 26-item scale consisting of six subscales: self-kindness (5 items), self-judgment (5 items), common humanity (4 items), isolation (4 items), mindfulness (4 items), and over-identification (4 items). These six subscales are considered to represent three components of self-compassion: (a) self-kindness versus self-judgment, (b) common humanity versus isolation, and (c) mindfulness versus over-identification. Respondents are instructed to indicate how often they act in the manner

stated in each of the items and rate on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*almost never*) to 5 (*almost always*). Self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification subscales are reverse-coded. SCS's total score ranges from 26 (low self-compassion) to 130 (high self-compassion).

SCS's reliability and validity data have been provided by Neff (2003b) and Neff et al. (2005). The sample of one study (Neff, 2003b) was 391 undergraduate students (including 225 females; approximately 21 years old on average; 58% White, 21% Asian, 11% Hispanic, 4% Black, and 6% Other) randomly selected from a psychology participant pool at a large southwestern university. The samples of two other studies (Neff, 2003b; Neff et al., 2005) were slightly smaller but had similar demographics and were randomly selected from a psychology participant pool. In these three studies, SCS demonstrated a high degree of internal consistency ($\alpha = .92$ or greater) as well as a high degree of test-retest reliability ($\alpha = .93$).

In Neff's (2003b) studies, participants with higher levels of self-compassion were found to be equally kind to self and others, whereas those with lower levels of self-compassion were found to be kinder to others than self. The results provided support for the content validity of SCS since one's balanced attitudes of kindness toward self and others is one of the primary content domains of the construct of self-compassion. The discriminant validity of SCS was indicated by non-significant correlation with a social desirability scale, and moderate correlations with measures of self-esteem. The convergent validity of SCS was indicated by negative correlations with self-criticism and rumination, and positive correlations with a sense of social connectedness, emotional intelligence, and emotional coping. The predictive validity was indicated by negative

correlations with anxiety, depression, and neurotic perfectionism, and a positive correlation with life satisfaction.

Another study by Neff (2003b) compared the level of self-compassion between the undergraduate student sample used in her other study, and 43 Buddhists (including 27 women; 47 years old on average; 91% White, 5% Asian, 2% Other) who were recruited from a U. S. Buddhist e-mail list-serve and practiced *Vipassana* (insight meditation) (the duration of practice ranging from 1 to 40 years, $M = 7.72$ years). The Buddhists reported significantly higher scores on SCS than the undergraduate students. Also, the Buddhists reported significantly higher scores on self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness subscales than the undergraduate students, and the Buddhists reported significantly lower scores on self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification subscales than the undergraduate students.

Additionally, in three studies presented previously (Neff, 2003b; Neff et al., 2005), women reported lower levels of self-compassion than men. More specifically, compared to men, women tended to have a higher level of self-judgment, a higher level of isolation when confronted with painful situations, and a higher level of over-identification and a lower level of mindfulness when dealing with negative emotions. However, no significant difference was found between men and women in terms of their levels of self-kindness and common humanity (Neff, 2003b). In one of Neff's studies that compared Buddhists and undergraduate students, no significant gender differences were found in their total scores of SCS or their scores on its subscales (although the difference in terms of race and age between these two groups was not examined in this study).

Psychological well-being scales (PWBS). Ryff and Singer (1996) reviewed the common characteristics of psychologically well functioning people and defined psychological well-being as consisting of the following six domains: (a) self-acceptance, (b) positive relations with others, (c) autonomy, (d) environmental mastery, (e) purpose in life, and (f) personal growth. Based on this definition, they developed Psychological Well-Being Scales (PWBS) (Appendix H). PWBS is originally the 120-item scale (including six subscales, each consisting of 20 items) that is supposed to measure the six domains of functional aspects of psychological well-being. Among several shorter versions available, the 54-item scale (including six subscales, each consisting of nine items) is the shortest length of survey that has demonstrated acceptable reliabilities. PWBS is rated on a 6-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). The total score ranges from 54 (low degree of positive psychological functioning) to 324 (high degree of positive psychological functioning).

In longitudinal studies (with a sample of 55 years old or older females, $N = 518$; with a random sample of men and women who graduated from Wisconsin high schools in 1957 and their brothers and sisters, $N = 10,317$; with a subsample of the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study, $n = 202$, 58 years old on average) conducted by Ryff (2004), the 54-item version of PWBS demonstrated moderate to high internal consistency coefficients ranging from .66 to .87. No data for test-retest reliability of the 54-item version is available. However, in another study (Ryff, 1989) with a sample of young adults and middle-aged adults ($N = 321$), the 120-item version of PWB demonstrated high test-retest reliability ranging from .81 to .88 for the subscales with a subsample ($n = 117$) over a 6-week interval.

PWBS was constructed to represent key aspects of positive psychological functioning that have been emphasized in humanistic psychological theories but had not been represented in empirical studies of subjective well-being (Ryff, 1989). The convergent validity of PWBS was indicated by positive correlations between PWBS's self-acceptance and environmental mastery subscales and measures of related constructs (e.g., life satisfaction, affect balance, self-esteem, and morale). In some prior studies (Ryff & Singer, 1996, 1998), the construct of PWBS appeared to reflect cross-cultural implications of psychological well-being, which provided some empirical support for its external validity for more diverse populations.

Conceptual and operational definitions. The following is a list of the operational definitions of variables for this study.

Gender. Gender refers to “self-identified categorization as male or female” (Broadus, 1992, p. 94) that is socio-culturally learned and may or may not be associated with his or her biological origin (i.e., sex). Buddhist participants' responses to Question #1 of DQ were coded as male = 0, female = 1. Gender was treated as a categorical variable and was used as an independent variable for this study.

Age. Age refers to the number of years one has lived since he or she was born. Age was taken from Buddhist participants' responses to Question #2 of DQ (i.e., “What is your age in years?”) and was treated as a continuous variable. Age was used as an independent variable for this study.

Race/ethnicity. Race/ethnicity refers to one's identification with “groups of people who are distinguished by their ancestry and/or culture” (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1998, p. 9). For the purpose of statistical analysis for this study, Buddhist participants'

responses to Question #3 of DQ were coded as White/Caucasian/ European (and not Hispanic) = 0, People of Color (e.g., Asian/Pacific Islander, Black/African [and not Hispanic], Hispanic/Latino[a], Native American/Alaskan Native, and Other or Mixed Race/Ethnicity). Race/ethnicity was treated as a categorical variable to describe participants.

Sexual/affectional orientation. Sexual/affectional orientation refers to “an enduring pattern of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attractions to men, women, or both sexes” and “a person’s sense of identity based on those attractions, related behaviors, and membership in a community of others who share those attractions” (American Psychological Association, 2008, p. 1). For the purpose of statistical analysis for this study, Buddhist participants’ responses to Question #4 of DQ were coded as heterosexual = 0, sexual minorities (e.g., gay, lesbian, and bisexual) = 1. Sexual/affectional orientation was treated as a categorical variable to describe participants.

Years spent in Buddhist practice. Years spent in Buddhist practice refers to the number of years one has been practicing Buddhism. Years spent in Buddhist practice were taken from Buddhist participants’ responses to Question #3 of BPQ. Years spent in Buddhist practice was treated as a continuous variable and was used as an independent variable for this study.

Forgiveness. Forgiveness refers to “a willingness to abandon one’s right to resentment, negative judgment, and indifferent behavior toward one who unjustly injured us, while fostering the undeserved qualities of compassion, generosity and even love toward him or her” (Enright & Rique, 2000, p. 1). Forgiveness can be measured as trait forgiveness (i.e., one’s generalized willingness, tendency, or propensity to forgive) or

state forgiveness (i.e., one's current degree of having forgiven a particular offender for a particular offense) as I discussed in the review of literature. For this study, state forgiveness was measured. State forgiveness was operationally defined as a total score on all 60 items of EFI. Higher scores on EFI (possible scores range from 60 to 360) indicated higher levels of state forgiveness. First, state forgiveness was examined as the dependent variable in relation to gender, age, and the years spent in Buddhist practice as the independent variables. Second, state forgiveness was examined as the independent variable in relation to psychological well-being as the dependent variable. Third, state was examined as the exogenous variable in relation to psychological well-being as the endogenous variable and self-compassion as the mediating variable.

Self-compassion. Self-compassion refers to one's "attitude toward oneself" that is supported by Buddhist teachings and practices, which consists of "being touched by and open to one's own suffering" and "generating the desire to alleviate one's own suffering and to heal oneself with kindness" (i.e., self-kindness), "offering non-judgmental understanding to one's pain, inadequacies, and failures" (i.e., mindfulness) "so that one's experience is seen as part of the larger human experience" (i.e., common humanity) (Neff, 2003a, p. 85). Self-compassion was operationally defined as a total score on all 26 items of SCS. Higher scores on SCS (possible scores range from 26 to 130) indicated higher levels of self-compassion. First, self-compassion was examined as the dependent variable in relation to gender, age, and the years spent in Buddhist practice as the independent variables. Second, self-compassion was examined as the independent variable in relation to psychological well-being as the dependent variable. Third, self-compassion was

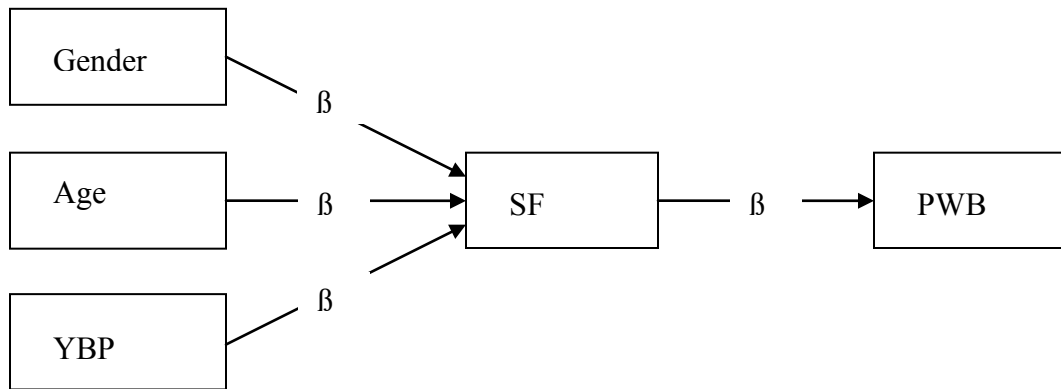
examined as the mediating variable in relation to state forgiveness as the exogenous variable and psychological well-being as the endogenous variable.

Psychological well-being. Psychological well-being refers to one's positive intrapersonal, interpersonal, and social functioning that is influenced by his or her perception and meaning given to his or her life situations (Ryff & Singer, 1996).

Psychological well-being can be measured as emotional well-being in a hedonistic sense (i.e., experiencing more positive affect than negative affect) and positive psychological functioning in a eudaimonic sense (i.e., living a meaningful life and fulfilling one's potentials). For this study, psychological well-being as positive psychological functioning was measured. Psychological well-being was operationally defined as a total score of all 54 items of the PWBS. Higher scores on PWBS (possible scores range from 54 to 324) indicated higher levels of psychological well-being. Psychological well-being was examined as the dependent variable in relation to state forgiveness and self-compassion.

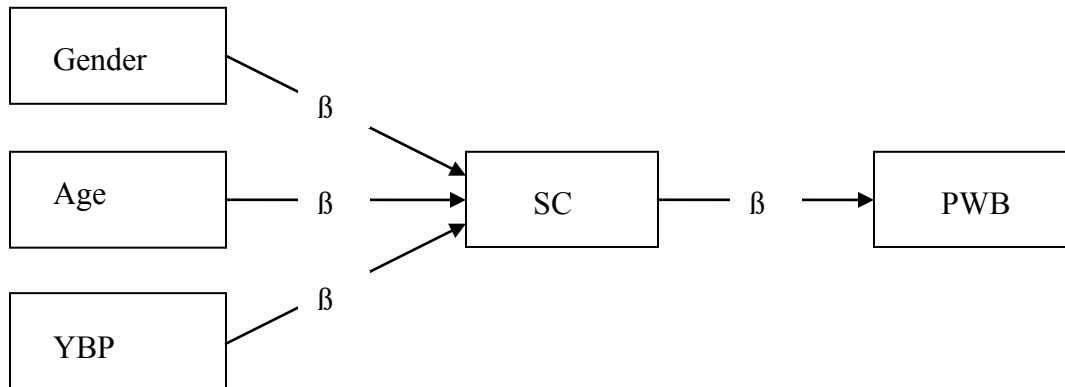
Research and statistical hypotheses. The following models were tested in the quantitative component of this study: Hypothetical Regression Model 1 (*Figure 3*), Hypothetical Regression Model 2 (*Figure 4*), and Hypothetical Mediation Model (*Figure 5*).

Figure 3.1. Hypothetical regression model 1: Gender, age, and years spent in Buddhist practice predicting state forgiveness, and state forgiveness predicting psychological well-being



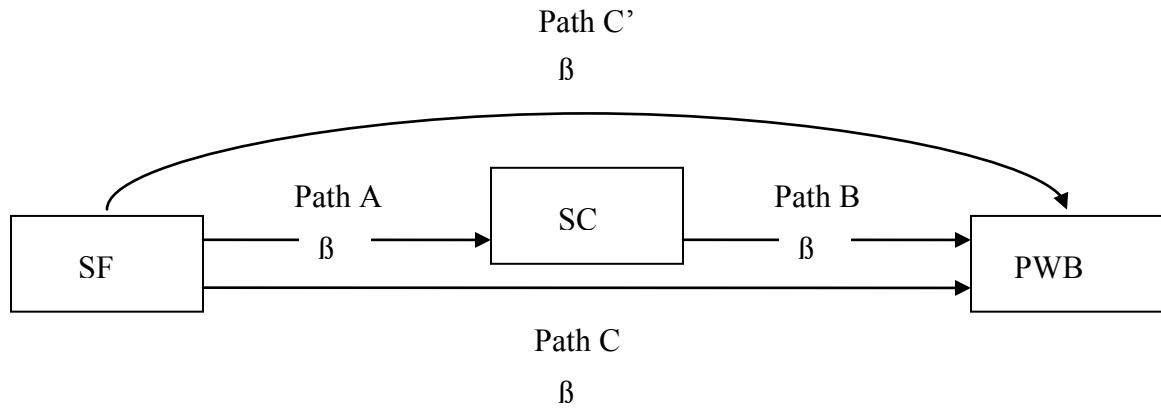
Note. Gender was coded as female (f) = 1, male (m) = 0. Age was treated as a continuous variable. YBP = the years spent in Buddhist practice, SF = state forgiveness, PWB = psychological well-being.

Figure 3.2. Hypothetical regression model 2: Gender, age, and years spent in Buddhist practice predicting self-compassion, and self-compassion predicting psychological well-being



Note. Gender was coded as female (f) = 1, male (m) = 0. Age was treated as a continuous variable. YBP = the years spent in Buddhist practice, SC = self-compassion, PWB = psychological well-being.

Figure 3.3. Hypothetical mediation model: Self-compassion mediating state forgiveness and psychological well-being



Note. SF = state forgiveness, SC = self-compassion, PWB = psychological well-being.

The following hypotheses about the relationships among gender, age, the years spent in Buddhist practice, state forgiveness, and psychological well-being were tested.

Hypothesis 1. Gender, age, and the years spent in Buddhist practice will significantly predict Buddhists' levels of state forgiveness. More specifically: (a) being female Buddhists, as compared to being male Buddhists, will significantly positively predict their levels of state forgiveness; (b) being older Buddhists, as compared to being younger Buddhists, will significantly positively predict their levels of state forgiveness; and (c) the number of years spent in Buddhist practice will significantly positively predict their levels of state forgiveness.

$$H_1: \beta_{mf} > 0, \beta_{age} > 0, \beta_{ybp} > 0$$

Macaskill (2003) found that female students reported higher levels of state forgiveness than male students. Subkoviak et al. (1995) found that older people reported higher levels of state forgiveness than younger people. Some Buddhist teachers (Chödrön, 2003; The Dalai Lama & Chan, 2004) suggested that Buddhist teachings promoted forgiveness and Buddhist practice could facilitate forgiveness.

Hypothesis 2. With gender, age, and the years spent for Buddhist practice being statistically controlled for, Buddhists' levels of state forgiveness will significantly positively predict their levels of psychological well-being.

$$H_1: \beta_{sf \cdot mf, age, ybp} > 0$$

Prior studies on state forgiveness (McCullough et al., 2001; Subkoviak et al., 1995) found that state forgiveness was positively correlated with some aspects of psychological well-being (e.g., global life satisfaction), while state forgiveness was negatively correlated with some psychopathology variables (e.g., anxiety).

The following hypotheses about the relationships among gender, age, the years spent in Buddhist practice, self-compassion, and psychological well-being will be tested.

Hypothesis 3. Gender, age, and the years spent for Buddhist practice will significantly predict Buddhists' levels of self-compassion. More specifically: (a) being female Buddhists, as compared to being male Buddhists, will significantly negatively predict their levels of self-compassion; (b) being older Buddhists, as compared to being younger Buddhists will significantly positively predict their levels of self-compassion; and (c) the number of years spent in Buddhist practice will significantly positively predict their levels of self-compassion.

$$H_1: \beta_{mf} < 0, \beta_{age} > 0, \beta_{ybp} > 0$$

Neff and her colleagues (Neff, 2003b; Neff et al., 2005) found that female undergraduate students reported lower levels of self-compassion than male students. Neff (2003a) speculated that younger people would be less self-compassionate than older people based on some developmental psychology literature. Neff (2003b) also speculated that Buddhists would be more self-compassionate than non-Buddhists because Buddhist teachings support self-compassion and Buddhist practices could cultivate self-compassion.

Hypothesis 4. With gender, age, and the years spent in Buddhist practice being statistically controlled for, Buddhists' levels of self-compassion will significantly positively predict their levels of psychological well-being.

$$H_1: \beta_{sc \cdot mf, age, ybp} > 0$$

Neff and her colleagues (Neff, 2003b; Neff et al., 2005) found that self-compassion was negatively correlated with various mental health variables (e.g., anxiety,

depression, neurotic perfectionism, performance goals, and avoidance-oriented coping strategies) that indicated lower levels of psychological well-being; and self-compassion was positively correlated with some aspects of psychological well-being (e.g., life satisfaction, social connectedness, emotional intelligence, and emotion-focused coping strategies).

The following hypothesis about the relationship among state forgiveness, self-compassion, and psychological well-being was tested.

Hypothesis 5. Buddhists' levels of self-compassion will mediate the relationship between their levels of state forgiveness and psychological well-being. More specifically: (a) Buddhists' levels of state forgiveness will significantly positively predict their levels of self-compassion (Path A); (b) Buddhists' levels of self-compassion will significantly positively predict their levels of psychological well-being (Path B); (c) Buddhists' levels of state forgiveness will significantly positively predict their levels of psychological well-being (Path C); (d) and the degree of the relationship between Buddhists' levels of state forgiveness and their levels of psychological well-being (Path C) will be reduced when their levels of self-compassion are included in the equation (Path C').

$$H_1: \beta_{sc} > 0 \text{ (Path A)}, \beta_{sf} > 0 \text{ (Path B)}, \beta_{sc} > 0 \text{ (Path C)},$$

$$\beta \text{ of Path C}' = 0$$

Self-compassion is a relatively new construct in psychological research, and the relationship between state forgiveness and self-compassion has not been empirically investigated. However, some Buddhist teachers and therapists (Brach, 2003; Chödrön, 2004; Kornfield, 2002) suggested that a positive relationship exists between forgiveness and compassion, and practically, people need to forgive and be compassionate toward

themselves before they can genuinely forgive and compassionate toward others. Thus, it can be speculated that more self-compassionate people are more likely to be forgiving of others.

As I mentioned previously, prior studies on state forgiveness (McCullough et al., 2001; Subkoviak et al., 1995) indicated that state forgiveness was positively correlated with some aspects of psychological well-being, while state forgiveness was negatively correlated with some psychopathology variables. Also, prior studies on self-compassion (Neff, 2003b; Neff et al., 2005) indicated that self-compassion was positively correlated with some aspects of psychological well-being and negatively correlated with various mental health variables that indicated lower levels of psychological well-being.

Furthermore, psychological researchers of forgiveness (Enright, 2001; Laskin, 2002) suggested that forgiveness interventions or a therapeutic use of forgiveness (i.e., teaching people who want to forgive to practice forgiving for the sake of their own healing) contributed to participants' subjective sense of psychological well-being, and that they often needed and wanted to forgive themselves before they could forgive others. Self-forgiveness has been considered being related to self-compassion in some self-help literature (Rutledge, 1997). Thus, the speculation is that self-compassion explains the relationship between state forgiveness and psychological well-being.

Quantitative data analyses. Histograms of frequency distributions (along with means, standard deviations, mode, skewness, and kurtosis), bivariate scatter plots, and a correlation matrix of all variables included in this study were examined to assess the normality of distributions, the linearity of the relationships between independent variables and dependent variables, and the multicollinearity among independent variables

for the appropriateness of conducting multiple regression analysis. All variables satisfied the assumptions of the main analysis.

Multiple regression. To test the first hypothesis, a standard multiple regression analysis was performed with gender, age, and the years spent in Buddhist practice as the independent variables, and state forgiveness as the dependent variable. To test the second hypothesis, a sequential multiple regression analysis was performed with gender, age, the years spent in Buddhist practice, and state forgiveness as the independent variables, and psychological well-being as the dependent variable. Gender, age, and the years spent in Buddhist practice was entered at the first step, and state forgiveness was entered at the second step. To test the third hypothesis, a standard multiple regression analysis was performed with gender, age, and the years spent in Buddhist practice as the independent variables, and self-compassion as the dependent variable. To test the fourth hypothesis, a sequential multiple regression analysis was performed with gender, age, the years spent for Buddhist practice, and self-compassion as the independent variables, and psychological well-being as the dependent variable. Gender, age, and the years spent in Buddhist practice was entered at the first step, and self-compassion was entered at the second step.

Mediation. To test the fifth hypothesis, the mediation model was assessed with state forgiveness as the exogenous variable, psychological well-being as the endogenous variable, and self-compassion as the mediating variable. To test mediation, the following four steps were taken (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Frazier, Barron, & Tix, 2004). First, I examined if state forgiveness significantly positively predicts self-compassion (Path A). Second, I examined if self-compassion significantly positively predicts psychological

well-being (Path B). Third, I examined if state forgiveness significantly positively predicts psychological well-being (Path C). Finally, I examined if the degree of relationship between state forgiveness and psychological well-being (Path C) is reduced to zero (i.e., full mediation) or is reduced but not to zero (i.e., partial mediation) when self-compassion is included in the equation (Path C'). This mediation model illustrated a hypothetical predictive order among the selected variables, not a causal relationship of these variables.

The following table (Table 2) summarizes the quantitative research hypotheses, statistical hypotheses, and planned statistical analyses.

Table 3.1

Quantitative Research Plan Summary

Research Hypotheses	Statistical Hypotheses	Instrumentation	Analyses
1. Gender (MF), age, and the years spent in Buddhist practice (YBP) will significantly predict Buddhists' levels of state forgiveness (SF). (a) Being female Buddhists, as compared to being male Buddhists, will significantly positively predict their levels of SF. (b) Being older Buddhists, as compared to being younger Buddhists, will significantly positively predict their levels of SF. (c) YBP will significantly positively predict Buddhists' levels of SF.	$H_1: \beta_{mf} > 0$ $\beta_{age} > 0$ $\beta_{ybp} > 0$ $(H_0: \beta_{mf} = 0$ $\beta_{age} = 0$ $\beta_{ybp} = 0)$	Demographic Questionnaire (DQ): Q1 (Male = 0, Female = 1) DQ: Q2 (continuous variable) Buddhist Practice Questionnaire (BPQ): Q3 (continuous variable) Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI) total scores	Standard multiple regression
2. With gender, age, and YBP being statistically controlled, state forgiveness (SF) will significantly positively predict Buddhists' levels of psychological well-being (PWB).	$H_1: \beta_{sf \cdot mf, age, ybp} > 0$ $(H_0: \beta_{sf \cdot mf, age, ybp} = 0)$	DQ: Q1 (Male = 0, Female = 1) DQ: Q2 (continuous variable) BPQ: Q3 (continuous variable) EFI total scores Psychological Well-Being Scales (PWBS) total scores	Sequential multiple regression

Table 3.1 (continued)

Quantitative Research Plan Summary

Research Hypotheses	Statistical Hypotheses	Instrumentation	Analyses
<p>3. Gender, age, and YBP will significantly predict Buddhists' levels of self-compassion (SC).</p> <p>(a) Being female Buddhists, as compared to being male Buddhists, will significantly negatively predict their levels of SC.</p> <p>(b) Being older Buddhists, as compared to being younger Buddhists, will significantly positively predict their levels of SC.</p> <p>(c) YBP will positively predict Buddhists' levels of SC.</p>	<p>$H_1: \beta_{mf} < 0$ $\beta_{age} > 0$ $\beta_{ybp} > 0$ $(H_0: \beta_{mf} = 0$ $\beta_{age} = 0$ $\beta_{ybp} = 0)$</p>	<p>DQ: Q1 (Male = 0, Female = 1)</p> <p>DQ: Q2 (continuous variable)</p> <p>BPQ: Q3 (continuous variable)</p> <p>Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) total scores</p>	Standard multiple regression
<p>4. With gender, age, and YBP being statistically controlled, SC will significantly positively predict Buddhists' levels of psychological well-being PWB.</p>	<p>$H_1: \beta_{sc \cdot mf, age, ybp} > 0$ $(H_0: \beta_{sc \cdot mf, age, ybp} = 0)$</p>	<p>DQ: Q1 (Male = 0, Female = 1)</p> <p>DQ: Q2 (continuous variable)</p> <p>BPQ: Q3 (continuous variable)</p> <p>SCS total scores</p> <p>Psychological Well-Being Scales (PWBS) total scores</p>	Sequential multiple regression

Table 3.1 (continued)

Quantitative Research Plan Summary

Research Hypotheses	Statistical Hypotheses	Instrumentation	Analyses
<p>5. SC will mediate the relationship between SF and PWB among Buddhists.</p> <p>(a) Buddhists' levels of SF will significantly positively predict their levels of SC (Path A).</p> <p>(b) Buddhists' levels of SC will significantly positively predict their levels of PWB (Path B).</p> <p>(c) Buddhists' levels of SF will significantly positively predict their levels of PWB (Path C).</p> <p>(d) The degree of relationship between Buddhists' levels of SF and their levels of PWB (Path C) will be reduced when their levels of SC are included in the equation (Path C').</p>	<p>$H_1: \beta_{sf} > 0$ $\beta_{sc} > 0$ $\beta_{sf} > 0$ β of Path C' = 0</p> <p>($H_0: \beta_{sf} = 0$ $\beta_{sc} = 0$ $\beta_{sf} = 0$ β of Path C' > 0)</p>	<p>SCS total scores</p> <p>EFI total scores</p> <p>PWBS total scores</p>	<p>Mediation assessment</p>

Quantitative data collection procedures. A survey packet containing the following materials was prepared: cover letter (Appendix I), demographic questionnaire (DQ), three instruments (Self-Compassion Scale [SCS], Psychological Well-Being Scales [PWBS], and Enright Forgiveness Inventory [EFI]), and a feedback sheet on which prospective participants could provide me feedback if they had any. The following statement was printed on the top of the feedback sheet: “I would appreciate any feedback on your experience of completing this survey and any comment on the topic of this study. Thank you so much for your time and contribution to this study.” Concerning the order of the surveys given to participants, DQ was presented first for warming up participants in responding to the surveys by asking questions to which they could easily respond. EFI was presented after SCS and PWBS because participants were asked to recapitulate incidents that deeply and unfairly hurt them while responding to the questions of EFI, which might negatively influence their responses to the questions of SCS and PWBS in which they were asked to think of how they think and feel about themselves and their lives. A free online survey tool, *Surveygizmo*, was used to upload and distribute the survey packet to prospective participants by providing them a direct link.

The cover letter (Appendix I) explained the purpose of the quantitative component of this mix-method study, the qualifications of volunteers who were invited to participate in the quantitative component of the study and why, and the conditions to which prospective participants were asked to consent. They were assured of their anonymity to both this researcher and the readers of this study. Instead of including a separate consent form, the following statement was printed on top of the front page of the

survey packet: “Your consent to participate in this survey study is assumed by your completing and submitting all questionnaires.”

Upon the approval of the University of Kentucky Institutional Review Board, prospective volunteer participants were solicited from sanghas in the United States listed on the *World Buddhist Directory* (BuddhaNet, 2006), the *Dharma Directory* (Tricycle, 2008), and the *Buddhist Organizations and Temples* (E-Sangha, 2004). Three to six sanghas were randomly selected from all sanghas located in each state listed on the *World Buddhist Directory*; a contact person for each sangha was identified; and an invitation for participating in this study and a request for assistance in announcing this study to the members of his or her sangha were emailed to the contact person. Additionally, sanghas that were not listed on the *World Buddhist Directory* were identified on the *Dharma Directory* and the *Buddhist Organizations and Temples*. The invitation and the request were emailed to the contact persons for those sanghas. Several contact persons responded to this researcher’s request for assistance and agreed to forward the invitation to the mailing lists of their sanghas. These recruitment efforts were continued until the number of survey responses reached 112, which was slightly larger than the planned sample size.

Concerning online survey research, advantages and disadvantages have been summarized by Wright (2005). Advantages include: access to unique population, potentially time-saving, and cost effectiveness. Disadvantages include: sampling issues and accessibility to the Internet. Some studies (e.g., Chang, 2005) indicated that reliability and validity of survey ratings obtained by online survey and by paper-pencil survey were essentially equivalent. For this study, online survey was used because advantages outweighed disadvantages.

Qualitative Research Design

The goal of the qualitative component of this study was to explore the interior dimensions of Buddhists' experiences of forgiveness by conducting in-depth interviews. I took narrative and phenomenological approaches to my qualitative research process and examined the process of forgiveness experienced by four Buddhists from their own perspectives and how their experiences of forgiveness are intertwined with their personal, religious/spiritual, and socio-cultural contexts.

Procedures and methods of qualitative data collection and analyses. In this section, specific procedures and methods of data collection and analysis are presented. Also, how I employed a holistic-content approach to narrative analysis (Lieblich et al., 1998; Winter & Daniluk, 2004) and a phenomenological approach to psychological research (Giorgi, 1985, 1986) for this study is discussed.

Selection of participants. Two male and two female English-speaking Buddhist adults were recruited from a local sangha in central Kentucky, using a convenience and criterion sampling method. This geographical parameter was set so that I could drive to interview participants face-to-face. The first criterion was that prospective interviewees are committed to practicing Buddhism and have been regularly practicing Buddhism for at least five years. This number of years spent in Buddhist practice reflected how long it might take for individuals to experience a sense of commitment and the regularity of practice based on my subjective experience shared by some other Buddhists. The second criterion was that prospective interviewees have experienced forgiving a person(s) for hurting them deeply and unfairly, and that prospective interviewees would be willing to share the experience in detail with this researcher for this study. The third criterion was

about prospective interviewees' demographics. One of the research questions was how one's gender might interact with his or her experience of forgiveness; therefore, males and females were needed to be recruited. This sample size ($N = 4$) was arbitrarily and minimally set so that commonalty and difference not only between males and females but also between two males as well as between two females could be analyzed. These three criteria were used to assess the eligibility of prospective interviewees.

Solicitation of participants. I recruited four interviewees with the help of a former leader of a Tibetan Buddhist sangha in Central Kentucky who provided me with a list of six members in her sangha who would be interested in participating in this study. The leader knew these members' interest in the topic via personal communication. Since I planned to interview two males and two females, I called the first two males and two females on the list, explaining the purpose of the qualitative component of this study, the qualification of prospective interviewees who were invited to participate in this study, and the conditions to which they would be asked to consent if they decided to participate in the qualitative component of this study (Appendix J). Upon their verbal assent, I assessed their eligibility for participating in this study by asking the screening questions (Appendix K). The four people met the three criteria discussed above, and they all agreed to be interviewed face to face. We set up appointments for the first interviews at the end of the initial phone contact. When we met for the first interviews, I asked the interviewees to read the cover letter and sign the consent form before I began interviewing them. The other two prospective interviewees were kept on the waiting list in case any of the four interviewees dropped out. I notified the two individuals that they might be contacted later.

In-depth interview. I conducted two in-depth interviews with each interviewee. To formulate the questions for guiding the first interviews (Appendix L), I reviewed interview questions that had been used in qualitative studies conducted with narrative approaches (Lieblich et al., 1998; Riessman, 1993) and with phenomenological approaches (Giorgi, 1985; Taylor, 1993). With a narrative approach in mind, the questions were asked in a way to encourage the interviewees to describe their personal experiences in a story format with a beginning, a middle, and an end. With a phenomenological approach in mind, the questions were asked in a way to help the interviewees to focus and reflect on their subjective inner experiences and the processes of their personal experiences. The interview format was semi-structured with open-ended questions and supplemental probing questions.

All interviews were audio-recorded. I transcribed the first interviews verbatim in their entirety with notes on the interviewees' nuances (e.g., pauses, changes in speech speed and voice tone, and nonverbal expressions) as well as my observations and reactions. In qualitative research, transcription cannot be separated from analysis. While transcribing an interview, the researcher is already clarifying and deepening his or her understanding of what is described in the text, which is a part of analysis (Riessman, 1993). For an inductive analysis of data to emerge, qualitative researchers attempt to suspend their beliefs in hypotheses and pre-existing models (Taylor, 1993). Inductive analysis tends to occur in the researcher's mind while he or she is scrutinizing drafts of transcriptions before moving to next level of analysis, that is, data reduction (Riessman, 1993).

Holistic-content narrative analysis and phenomenological meaning

condensation. As for strategies for data reduction and analysis, I employed two methods based on a holistic-content narrative analysis (Lieblich et al., 1998; Winter & Daniluk, 2004) and a phenomenological meaning-consideration method derived from a phenomenological approach to psychological research (Giorgi, 1985, 1986). Lieblich et al. (1998) discussed that holistic-content approaches to narrative research is appropriate when the researcher is interested in understanding an individual's experience within his or her context as a whole. In this study, a holistic-content narrative analysis was conducted to describe the unique features of each interviewee's story of forgiveness in his or her religious/spiritual, socio-cultural, and relational contexts. Giorgi (1985) discussed that phenomenological approaches to psychological research are appropriate when the researcher is interested in qualitatively describing the essence of individuals' experiences of a psychological phenomenon. In this study, a phenomenological meaning condensation method was conducted to delineate the common themes and elements that emerged from the descriptions of the interviewees' forgiveness experiences and processes.

Winter and Daniluk (2004) applied a holistic-content narrative analysis, informed by Lieblich et al. (1998), for counseling research. While referring to the steps taken in their analytic process, I took the following steps in analyzing data from a holistic-content narrative perspective. First, I read the transcripts repeatedly and empathically with an open mind until patterns emerged. Second, I took notes on global impressions of the interviewees as well as unusual and unique features of their stories (e.g., contradictions, unfinished or repeated descriptions, episodes or issues that seem to be important for the interviewees, and omissions of some aspects). Third, I decided on the foci of contents or

themes to follow in the stories. Fourth, I developed third-person narratives and sought feedback on the accuracy from the interviewees. Fifth, I interpreted the narratives and identified the themes that are unique to each interviewee's narrative. Both the narratives and themes are presented in the Results chapter.

Giorgi (1985, 1986) developed a phenomenological meaning condensation method to code qualitative data on individuals' experiences of a phenomenon, identify and analyze themes across individuals, and describe the essence of the phenomenon. By referring to the steps taken in his analytic process, I took the following steps to analyze data from a phenomenological perspective. First, I read the entire transcripts to grasp a general sense of the whole, while keeping an open mind without taking any specific aims of this study into account at that point. Second, I read the transcripts to delineate natural meaning units as expressed by the interviewees and identified and stated the central themes that dominate the meaning units. Third, I examined the central themes and the raw data from which the themes were extracted and came up with descriptive statements, using the interviewees' descriptions as much as possible by responding to the following two questions: (a) "What does this description tell me about this interviewee's experience of forgiveness and his or her process of forgiveness?" and (b) "How does this statement reveal significance about this interviewee's experience of forgiveness and his or her process of forgiveness?" Fourth, I tied together the descriptive statements made at the previous stage with descriptive statements of non-redundant, essential themes at the situated level, including the concreteness and specifics of the phenomenon experienced in a particular situation. Fifth, I repeated the previous procedure at the general level (leaving out the particulars of the situation and focusing on aspects of themes). Thus, I came up

with a series of statements describing the essence of the interviewees' experiences and organized them by categories and themes, which are presented in the Results chapter.

Follow-up interview. About two years after the first interviews, I conducted the second interviews to receive feedback from the interviewees on the accuracy of my understanding of their experiences shared during the first interviews and to explore certain areas of their experiences more in depth. This time interval was not a part of my research plan. Much more time than I had anticipated was needed to finalize my qualitative analysis of the first interviews; then, I was unable to make much progress in writing the results in the following year while I was engaged in a full-time internship. However, according to the research plan, I did complete transcription and two kinds of preliminary analyses of the first interviews before conducting the second interviews so that I could refer to the results to prepare personalized questions for each interviewee for guiding the second interviews. I listened to the audio-recordings of the second interviews, identified the parts of the interviews that provided me with information that clarified or deepened my understanding of the interviewees' experiences, and incorporated the information along with the interviewees' feedback into the preliminary analyses to finalize them.

Researcher's subjectivity and trustworthiness in research. Researchers must recognize their own subjectivity, be aware of how it may interact with their research process, and minimize potential problems related to researcher's subjectivity that affect trustworthiness in research. Morrow (2005) summarized the criteria for trustworthiness in qualitative research that are paradigm-specific and paradigm-transcendent. The criteria for trustworthiness in research conducted within the postpositivistic paradigm (e.g.,

phenomenological approach) include credibility (rigor in research process and believability of findings), transferability (the extent to which readers can generalize findings to their own contexts), dependability (consistency in research procedures), and confirmability (the extent to which readers can confirm the adequacy of findings). Authenticity (the worthiness of research in terms of the impact on the members of culture or community being investigated) is most relevant to trustworthiness in research conducted within the constructivist-interpretivist paradigm (e.g., narrative approach). Paradigm-transcendent criteria for trustworthiness include social validity (adoptability of findings by people who implement them), subjectivity and reflexivity (researchers' efforts to make their own implicit assumptions and biases explicit to themselves and readers), adequacy of data, and adequacy of interpretation (Morrow, 2005).

In the process of conceiving the idea of this study and actually conducting it, I was aware that my stance toward this study was intertwined with my socio-cultural and psycho-spiritual contexts, and that my interest in particular topics and my concerns about particular issues were not only academic and professional, but also deeply personal in nature. I am a Japanese female. I have always been interested in learning languages and translating between languages to communicate with people coming from different cultures, which led me to living most of my adult years in English-speaking countries. I came to Kentucky to pursue a doctorate in counseling psychology, wanting to be trained to be a feminist psychologist. Healing has been a keyword to describe my interest in connecting feminism and psychology, my motivation to cross the boundaries. However, my experiences as an Asian international feminist graduate student in psychology were at times more wounding than healing, more disconnecting than connecting. It was one of

those painful times when I began to reflect on spirituality and religion in relation to psychology as well as what spirituality and religion mean in my life. My spiritual orientation shifted from being agnostic, in a typical Japanese Shinto-Buddhist syncretistic way, to consciously studying and practicing Buddhism. About the same time, I began to understand and experience forgiveness in light of healing, which brought me to see a missing piece in the puzzle of synthesizing what I had previously learned that was seemingly opposing or conflicting. I have always been motivated to make use of my outsider-within/bifocal awareness and bicultural/bilingual skills to bring unity through diversity, which was my personal intention behind this study.

I used some strategies discussed by qualitative researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Morrow, 2005; Riessman, 1993; Taylor, 1993) to self-monitor how my subjectivity interacted with the process of conducting this study as a part of my efforts to ensure the trustworthiness of this study. First, I kept a reflexive journal in which I recorded: (a) the scheduling and logistics of this study; (b) reflections on my values, interests, and personal and professional situations and struggles that made an impact on the process of conducting this study; (c) reactions to this research process and research participants; (d) speculations about insights that grew in this research process; and (e) methodological decisions made in this research process and rationales for such decisions. (I will discuss my subjective research process based on what I wrote in my reflexive journal later.) Second, during the second interviews, I asked all interviewees to read my write-up of preliminary analyses of the first interviews in forms of narratives and categories/themes, and to provide me feedback on the appropriateness of my use of their quotes and the accuracy of my interpretation of their descriptions and narratives; and we discussed and

made decision together about any changes in my preliminary analyses that we considered to make.

How to Interpret Quantitative and Qualitative Results From This Study

A caution against merging quantitative and qualitative research paradigms has been discussed (Ponterotto & Grieger, 1999). For this mixed-method study, I discussed an integral feminist framework that includes and transcends rather than merges the two paradigms. Quantitative and qualitative results of this study are interpreted within their own paradigms and treated as information regarding the exterior and interior dimensions of Buddhist experiences of forgiveness and its correlates, self-compassion and psychological well-being. The quantitative and qualitative results are presented separately first, then correspondences and discrepancies between the two are examined and discussed.

Chapter Four: Results

In this chapter, the results of this mixed-method study are presented. In the qualitative component of this study, I explored the process of forgiveness experienced by Buddhists, analyzed the subjective, interior meanings of their experiences of being hurt deeply and unfairly by other people and forgiving those people for a particular offense in a context-sensitive manner, and delineated the unique and common themes that emerged from the descriptions of their forgiveness processes. In the quantitative component of this study, I investigated the relationships among the three main variables: state forgiveness, self-compassion, and psychological well-being. In particular, I examined the role of one's tendency for self-compassion in his or her development of state forgiveness as a route to psychological well-being and the impact of three demographic and religiosity variables (i.e., gender, age, and the years spent for Buddhist practice) on the predictor variables, state forgiveness and self-compassion.

Qualitative Results

To collect qualitative data, I conducted in-depth, face-to-face interviews lasting 1.5 to 2.5 hours each with four self-identified Buddhists: Jake, Steve, Tracy, and Alice (all pseudonyms). They were selected according to the criteria discussed in the Methodology chapter out of six prospective interviewees solicited by a contact person of a Tibetan Buddhist sangha located in Central Kentucky.

Background information. All interviewees identified their race/ethnicity as Caucasian American and their sexual/affectional orientation as heterosexual. Jake and Tracy were in their 50s, and Steve and Alice were in their 80s. They were highly educated individuals: Tracy and Alice held a master's degree in education and art; Jake

and Steve held a doctorate in psychology and English, respectively. Jake, Steve, and Tracy grew up as Catholic, while Alice grew up in “Jewish culture without religious training.” They all chose to practice Buddhism in adulthood. Jake reported that he has been practicing Buddhism for approximately 10 years; Steve, Tracy, and Alice for 30 years or longer. All interviewees considered meditation as their primary Buddhist practice, except that Jake reported that he was spending much time and energy in performing a leadership role in a sangha in addition to his regular practice of meditation.

Screening results. As a part of the screening process, the interviewees were asked to choose their experiences of forgiveness that they would be willing to describe in detail during the interview, identify who hurt them deeply and unfairly (i.e., offender), and when the offense took place. Jake reported that he was hurt by his former wife, and the offense took place 10 years ago. Steve reported that he was hurt by his former wives, and the offenses took place 30 years ago. Tracy reported that she was hurt by a male sangha leader whom she considered an acquaintance and other sangha members whom she considered friends, and the offenses took place five years ago. Alice reported that she was hurt by a female sangha leader whom she considered a friend, and the offense took place a year ago. The interviewees were also asked to rate their current degree of having forgiven the offender of their choice. Jake and Tracy rated “4” on the scale of “5,” which indicated that they perceived themselves still making progress in their processes toward “complete forgiveness.” Steve and Alice rated “5,” which indicated that they perceived their forgiveness processes were complete.

Notes for the follow-up interview. I conducted second interviews lasting 45 minutes to 3 hours each with the four Buddhists. The questions used for guiding the

follow-up interviews are appended (Appendix M). All interviewees were asked to read the preliminary qualitative results, provide feedback on the accuracy of this researcher's understanding of their experiences shared during the first interviews, and discuss any changes in their forgiveness processes since the time of the first interviews conducted two years ago. As for the change in the single-item self-rating on forgiveness, Steve and Alice reported that their rating remained "5" (*complete forgiveness*). Tracy's rating changed from "4" to "5." Jake reported that he might have "overrated" his forgiveness at the time of the first interview, and his initial rating should have been "3" (*in progress*) since he would rate his current level as "4."

Additionally, the interviewees were asked to respond to a few questions for clarification and/or elaboration of certain aspects of their life experiences depending on what they had shared during the first interviews. To formulate the personalized questions, I referred to not only the qualitative findings from the first interviews but also the quantitative results in order to identify the areas of the interviewees' experiences where I needed more qualitative data to deepen my understanding. One such area was the role of self-compassion in the process of forgiveness as a route to psychological well-being. Thus, one of the personalized questions asked the interviewees to elaborate on their experiences that they had shared during the first interviews and might be related to their experiences of self-compassion (e.g., self-forgiveness or empathy toward oneself in one's forgiveness process, and healing one's own wounds or stopping harming oneself as motives for forgiveness).

All interviewees verified the accuracy of this researcher's understanding of their experiences and the appropriateness of how their quotes were represented in the

qualitative results. Their feedback was incorporated into the final results, and any substantial elaboration on their descriptions of certain experiences shared during the follow-up interviews was noted so that the reader could tell what was added to the preliminary results. As an overview reference for the qualitative results, a summary of the interviewees' demographic and religious backgrounds, offenders, and single self-ratings on forgiveness is available in Table 3.

Table 4.1

Summary of Interviewees' Demographic and Religious Backgrounds, Offenders, and Single Self-Ratings on Forgiveness

	Jake	Steve	Tracy	Alice
Gender	Male	Male	Female	Female
Race/ethnicity	Caucasian	Caucasian	Caucasian	Caucasian
Sexual/affectional orientation	Heterosexual	Heterosexual	Heterosexual	Heterosexual
Age	50s	80s	50s	80s
Educational level	Ph.D.	Ph.D.	M.A.	M.A.
Prior religious background	Catholic	Catholic	Catholic	Jewish
Introduction to Buddhism	College	New Age Bookstore	College	New Age Bookstore
Years spent for Buddhist practice	10 years	30 years+	30 years	30 years+
Primary Buddhist practice	Meditation and taking a leadership role in his sangha	Meditation	Meditation	Meditation
Offenders	Former wife	Former wives	Male sangha leader and other sangha members/friends	Female sangha leader/friend
Rating 1	4	5	4	5
Rating 2 (2 years later)	3 → 4	5	5	5

Results of holistic-content narrative analysis. In this section, I present the four Buddhist interviewees' narratives that I reconstructed by re-telling their stories of religious/spiritual paths and forgiveness processes according to the principles of holistic-content narrative analysis (Lieblich et al., 1998) and its modifications (Winter & Daniluk, 2004). The purpose of this presentation is to give the reader a sense of each interviewee as an individual and his or her forgiveness process as a whole, which was interwoven with his or her religious/spiritual, socio-cultural, family and relational contexts. Unique features of each interviewee's narrative are discussed at the end.

Jake's narrative. Jake was born and raised as Roman Catholic. His parents were conservative Catholic, which influenced the early development of his religious/spiritual path. He continued to "accept without questioning" the religion while feeling pressured by his parents. However, he developed his vague dislike of Catholicism (e.g., the ideas of personified God and God's salvation, and some hypocrisy he observed in the teachings of Christianity) in his puberty. When he was in a Catholic high school, an incident that he considered as the first "marker" on his religious/spiritual path occurred. He and his friend wrote a paper on a critical look at the Jesuits and the Catholic churches and presented it for their theology class. Then, their teacher judged their paper as "blasphemous" and dismissed their collaborative efforts to write an informative paper and penalized their critical thinking by giving them an "F." Jake was appalled by a lack of "openness" in Catholicism represented by this teacher's attitude and action. However, in reflection, he recognized that his discontentment with Catholicism actually led him to "opening" his mind, which provided him opportunities to learn and grow.

Jake went to a “liberal” Catholic college and studied various philosophies. Buddhism, existentialism, and humanism were most appealing to him, particularly the idea of self-responsibility and an agnostic stance toward God expressed in Buddhist philosophy. He also studied psychology and found that some theories of psychology (e.g., perception, learning, and cognition) were consistent with some teachings of Buddhism (e.g., impermanence). Buddhism and psychology in combination presented a worldview (e.g., “The world isn’t solid.”) that made most sense to him, and that was congruent with his beliefs and values. He continued to study Buddhism and psychology and earned a doctorate in psychology.

When Jake was busy with his career in his 40s, he found “things” (e.g., his marriage, his job, and his children) in his life were “falling apart,” which shifted the focus of his interest in Buddhism from study to practice. He was introduced to a sangha through his daughter’s teacher who happened to be affiliated with the sangha. In reflection, Jake was looking for “something stable” while going through difficulties in his life, including splitting with his wife of over 20 years. His involvement in the sangha and regular Buddhist practice provided him a kind of support that he needed at that time. He attended the training programs offered in his sangha that essentially consisted of meditative practices (e.g., sitting meditation and mindful awareness of one’s own life) and a study of basic concepts of Buddhism and of a particular lineage of Tibetan Buddhism (e.g., non-duality and Buddha nature or “basic goodness”). In the training programs, he experienced self-growth and self-development characterized by increased awareness, transformation of his perception of himself and the world around him, reframing of his understanding of difficulties in his life, improved ability to “hold space” in his mind for working with his

emotions, deepened understanding of the causes of his conditions, increased mindfulness and skillful responses to himself, others, and situations.

Jake's current relationship with his sangha was "complicated" by his heavy investment of his time and energy in the sangha and his impulse to "run away" from it. He explained that practicing with others in the sangha required him to deal with not only his own "ego" but also other people's egos, which was stressful and yet was considered as an important practice of developing "equanimity" in Buddhist teachings. Jake concluded that "sangha is indispensable as a practice," and that his Buddhist practice encouraged him not to escape from whatever happens in his life.

About 10 years ago, Jake's wife of 24 years, Susan, announced that she was leaving him a day after their Christmas holiday together. Susan had already informed their children of her decision and gave Jake no chance to discuss the issue with her. Jake thought that Susan carefully chose the timing of her announcement because she wanted a new year to be a "beginning," and that she wanted to "make it [the impact of the announcement] as easy as possible." Then, Jake found out that Susan had been seeing another man prior to their separation. His "male ego" was insulted by Susan's betrayal, and that his "deep connection" with her was "lost forever." Jake explained that Susan's offense had a context of their personal and relational issues over a number of years. The issues included: their long-distance marriage initiated by Susan's academic and career development, Susan's long-term anxiety disorder and Jake's efforts to accommodate her needs by giving up his career-related opportunities, and their lack of communication resulting in their "gradual alienation" and "loss of connection." Jake also explained that they had different "views of world," particularly of love and marriage (e.g., "Everything

changes” versus “Marriage is forever”), and that he made efforts to understand and accept hers.

Jake’s initial reactions to the offense included being “stunned” and “awe-struck.” Then he had thoughts of disbelief and suspicion while attempting to understand the reasons why Susan committed the offense. After his “shock” passed, he felt “tremendous sadness” and “tremendous loss.” He experienced his “fear,” which turned into “anxiety” of “being alone.” Anger was not included in Jake’s description of initial reactions, but it was one of the emotional reactions that he recognized during his meditation practice.

What motivated Jake to forgive Susan was his aspiration to apply Buddhist teachings and practices in order to work with his reactions to the offense. Jake observed some people at work going through their divorces in pain and agony with aggression, and he did not want to deal with his divorce in that way. One evening, he pulled up in his driveway and debated in his car whether he should “face the dark, lonely house” or to succumb to his “despair.” He suddenly realized what he had to do was to “just sit” and “work with” his feelings. He recognized his tendency to “close off” emotionally (e.g., by making himself busy with work). Jake happened to be reading a book, *When Things Fall Apart*, written by Pema Chödrön (2000), which provided him helpful instructions for a meditative practice to work with his emotions.

Jake struggled with forgiving Susan. Her affair with another man prior to their separation meant to Jake a “total flip” of his image of her and of her view of love and marriage that he had tried hard to understand and accept. His trust in her and his respect for their relationship were “betrayed,” and Jake experienced a loss. Jake also recognized his Catholic upbringing and some Catholic beliefs (e.g., “marriage is forever”) had a

negative impact on his forgiveness process. Even though he did not identify himself as Catholic any longer, he still felt as if he was “guided” by what he had learned in childhood from his Catholic parents, and he felt as if he was a “failure” who was “not living up.” Such self-judgment became an obstacle in his forgiveness process, not so much as to forgive Susan, but to forgive himself. Gender socialization was another socio-cultural factor that interfered with Jake’s forgiveness process. Some “cultural expectations for men” (e.g., Men should be angry when being offended) and “stereotypical male tendencies” (e.g., Men cannot be emotional) encouraged Jake to get angry and remain angry. These messages discouraged him to be open to experience and express his other feelings, particularly those that made him feel vulnerable. Jake had to work against those expectations and tendencies in his forgiveness process.

What helped Jake to overcome his challenges and obstacles in his forgiveness process was his meditative practice and the “24/7” stance toward his Buddhist practice that he had learned through the training programs in his sangha. He described his meditative practice in three steps. First, he would allow himself to feel his emotional reactions to the offense. Second, he would cut thoughts that were feeding emotions without judgment by labeling the thoughts and coming back to his breaths. Third, he would let the emotions resolve without exaggeration or distortion. Buddhist practice helped Jake not to overgeneralize his negative reactions to Susan for this particular offense to their entire marriage. At the same time, connecting with her “basic goodness” also helped him to understand the offense from her perspective and to empathize with her also being “distracted.” Jake learned that what was important in his forgiveness process was to accept that he would not be able to change what had been done, but he could

change how he would respond to it. He also realized that he “had to forgive” himself for what he had done that might have contributed to ending their marriage without self-blame or self-judgment (e.g., “I am worthless”).

Whether or not age influenced his process of forgiveness was unclear to Jake. He wondered if his “innate energetic tendency toward aggression” might have lessened as he grew older (which could have made his forgiveness process less difficult), but the causes of his anger were different during different periods of his life (which made it difficult for him to compare his experiences of forgiveness in relation to his age). Jake concluded that not his age but rather his meditative practice helped him to forgive.

For Jake, forgiving Susan was a significant learning experience in his life that he could apply to any interpersonal conflicts. In his process of forgiving Susan for this particular offense, Jake experienced the following outcomes. First, he became more open and less reactive to people and their behaviors because he improved his mindfulness, self-regulation (particularly his emotion), and interpersonal skills. Second, he became more likely to see people as acting without malice and less likely to judge people’s reactions (i.e., increased benevolence toward others). Third, he improved his ability to resolve negative emotions in a constructive way and transform them into positive emotions. Fourth, he unlearned some cultural expectations and stereotypical tendencies for how men should feel and act when they are offended.

Jake also experienced positive changes in his relationship with Susan. They “came back together as close friends” by “reconstructing” their relationship, “self-identities,” and “mutual identity.” He believed that forgiveness was essential for reconciliation, which he defined as “coming back to some kind of common mind, healing,

or connection.” He understood that many levels of reconciliation and forgiveness were possible (e.g., “logical” or “functional” level, “emotional” or “physical” level, and “spiritual” level). He also understood that forgiveness and reconciliation were both processes, which could be correlated. In other words, the deeper the forgiveness, the deeper the reconciliation; the more progress he made in the processes, the more subtle and the less pervasive the processes become in his awareness.

Jake defined forgiveness as “letting go of all the feelings of personal hurt and pain that somebody caused.” To do so, he had to understand how his own “ego” was generating his own suffering, be willing to “give up” the “ego aspect” attached to certain feelings and thoughts (e.g., The offender is “evil” who “intentionally” hurt me), and open his mind to connect with the offender’s “basic goodness” with which he shared. These understandings helped him to let anger go or resolve naturally.

Steve’s narrative. Steve was brought up to be an “ordinary” Catholic in the 1920s through the 1930s. Being an ordinary Catholic meant to him to “follow certain rules and strict morality,” including regularly attending church and going to confession. He grew up in “a big city,” Chicago, and went to Catholic schools there. After school, however, he would hang out with a friend in his neighborhood who was “a little more free” than his friends at school (e.g., going to a downtown vaudeville theater to watch “sexy” movies). He went to a university on the East Coast, but his family had moved to “exotic” New Orleans, and he made friends there. He would hang out in the French Quarter and look at “all sorts of shows and stuff” with his friends and “didn’t have a saintly life.” Steve concluded his adolescence through his young adulthood as

experiencing such “two sides” of life (i.e., living as an “ordinary” Catholic while hanging out with non-Catholic friends who were “freer”).

When Steve went to the army in the early 1940s, he experienced “more opportunity” and “openness” during war time, and he again “indulged” himself in “pleasures.” After the war, he studied economics in France and enjoyed living and traveling in Europe. However, when he came back to the United States, he was no longer interested in studying economics and felt depressed. Around that time, he read Thomas Merton’s *The Seven Storey Mountain*, which inspired him to join a Catholic monastery in Kentucky. He lived in the monastery as a novice for four years in his late 20s. However, he began suffering from a severe, progressive type of arthritis, which forced him to leave the monastery and move back to his family in New Orleans. Steve then returned to school to pursue his interest in art and painting that he had developed in France. Steve has experienced three marriages: his first marriage in the 1960s, his second marriage in early 1970s, and his current marriage since early 1980s. His second wife was interested in the New Age movement, which encouraged Steve to expand his interest in a wide range of spiritual traditions, including Buddhism, in his 50’s. He reminisced, “We did all kinds of stuff together.” Steve summarized his religious/spiritual path, like his childhood and early life, as characterized by “two sides of things”: his Catholic monastic training and his interest and involvement in the New Age movement.

Steve “broke up” with his second wife after one year of marriage. He had been teaching modern British and American literature at a university in Kentucky between late 1960s and late 1980s. (He had earned his doctorate in English at a university in New Orleans, and his dissertation was about the work of Henry Miller, whom he described as

“a bad boy.”) While on leave from his teaching job, he began searching and visiting spiritual communities listed on *the Spiritual Communities in the United States*. One day in 1973 Steve picked up a “strange” man from a street who wanted to go to Florida. Steve agreed to drive to Florida with him. When this man left Steve, he was standing in front of a New Age bookstore, *Avatar of Aquarius*. In this bookstore, Steve was introduced to his Buddhist “master,” Chögyam Trungpa, via his book, *Meditation in Action*. Steve asked the bookshop owners if they knew the author of the book, and they told him that they knew a female customer who had met the author. Steve learned more about this Tibetan Buddhist teacher from the female customer and began his journey to meet his teacher. Steve visited meditation centers founded by the teacher in Vermont in the summer of 1974, then Colorado in the summer of 1975. Steve was unable to meet the teacher for a year, but he received instructions for meditation from residents at the practice centers and began practicing meditation. Steve finally met the teacher at the Naropa Institute in Colorado and attended his lectures in 1975.

No Buddhist sangha existed in Kentucky in the 1970s, so Steve was encouraged by his teacher to create one. He and a few other committed members first brought teachers from Colorado to Kentucky, which attracted a number of people, but the majority of those people came and left. Steve eventually took classes to be an authorized meditation instructor and began teaching meditation in his sangha in the 1980s. He and a few other committed members developed their study and practice programs, and their sangha began to grow. Steve described himself as a “senior person,” like “the grandfather” of the sangha. Having the sangha to attend regularly has been a “strong support” for his Buddhist practice. However, Steve stated that “support” that he received

from the sangha was not so much support from others, but it gave him a purpose beyond his own practice, that is, to help others.

When Steve reflected on his experiences of forgiveness, he first thought about his first wife. About 40 years ago, his first wife left him and took their daughter away from him without letting him know where they were going. He then learned from her lawyer that she wanted a divorce and wanted to keep their daughter with her. Steve was upset by his first wife taking “his” daughter away from him without any prior discussion or arrangement, although he was not surprised about her leaving him because they were “different types of people” and had been “fighting a lot.” Steve then thought about his second wife whom he had harder time to “forgive.” Steve and his second wife had a long history together as friends. She then wanted to marry him, and he agreed to marry her. However, a year later, she left Steve for another man who was a “poet.” Steve explained that his second wife left him because she felt that he “never really understood her” and “didn’t appreciate her.” It was very painful for Steve when his second wife left him because he felt deeply “involved” and “connected” with her.

Steve described his initial reactions to the first offense as “confused” and “concerned.” He was mostly worried about his daughter’s whereabouts. Steve was “hurt” by being left by his first wife, but he also experienced a “sigh of relief” that she ended their marriage. Steve described his initial reactions to the second offense as “hurt and angry.”

For Steve, “forgiveness is a hard word to think.” When being asked to share his experiences of “forgiveness,” the only person of whom he could think was his first wife, and he was certain that he had “forgiven” her “completely.” However, he realized that the

word “forgiveness” actually never came to his mind when he was going through the process of “forgiving” her. Instead, he recognized that he was able to “let go” of negative reactions to her when he understood why she left him, found out where their daughter was, and resolved his concerns for their daughter. Concerning his experience of “forgiving” his second wife, Steve decided to “let go” of his hurt and anger toward her when he accepted that she was happy with another man and appreciated her efforts to reconnect with him and remain friends with him. Steve discussed his current motivation for “letting go” of anger in relation to “being a good Buddhist” and “creating a good *karma*” to prepare himself for entering *Bardo* (the intermediate state of existence after death and before next birth) upon his passing according to Tibetan Buddhist teachings.

Steve’s obstacle in forgiving his first wife was that he could not get in touch with his daughter whom his first wife took away from him. His emotional attachment to his daughter made it difficult for him to let go of his negative reactions to his first wife. His obstacle in forgiving his second wife was that he felt “deeply involved” and “connected” with her. Again, his emotional attachment to his second wife made it difficult for him to let go of his negative reactions to her. However, he had three reasons for struggling less in the process of forgiving his second wife. First, he had a chance to discuss with his second wife and reach their mutual understanding of each other’s feelings and situations. Second, he accepted the fact that their marriage was over and she was happy with another man. Third, he appreciated her positive intentions and regards toward him.

Although Steve did not consciously decide to “forgive” his first and second wives, he believed that his Buddhist practice helped him to “let go” of his negative reactions toward them. He referred to Chögyam Trungpa’s teachings and described his process of

“letting go” as “touch and go” as follows. He would touch (i.e., briefly experience) whatever arose in his mind and go back (or more experientially speaking, come back) to whatever he was doing in the present moment (e.g., coming back to his breath if he is meditating) without exaggerating or “indulging” in his experience of whatever he touched. Steve used to be a “very angry person,” but Buddhist practice helped him not to hold onto anger. He denied either gender or age having any impact on his process of “letting go” of his negative reactions toward his first and second wives.

Steve defined forgiveness as “letting go.” The first step of his process of letting go of his negative reactions to people who offended him was to “get anger in perspective.” Then “letting go” of his negative reactions, particularly anger, “paved the way for more creative solutions,” which was an outcome of his forgiveness process. According to Steve’s experience of having practiced both Catholicism and Buddhism, he observed the words “forgiveness” and “reconciliation” were “tossed around” in Catholic teachings, but he was “not taught how to forgive” in Catholic practice. From Buddhist teachings he learned “the way to handle things” (i.e., how to work with one’s mind in meditation) and Buddhist practice in which he learned to “work on how to forgive.”

Tracy’s narrative. Tracy was brought up to be Catholic, but she “never really appreciated” Catholicism. She experienced a lot of negativity with the Catholic church and teachings with which she did “not want to be part.” Nuns were “strict” and “cruel.” “No warmth or gentleness” existed in the church. Catholic teachings presented “no notion that you are a good person.” Tracy reflected on her childhood experience of her first confession at age of seven. As a child, she was “shocked” and “horrificed” when she heard a nun telling children that their “souls were black” unless they confessed their sins. As an

adult, she was “still bothered” by its impact on herself. As a “very shy” child, Tracy felt “punished” when she needed “support.”

Tracy felt “a lot of pressure” from her parents to go to church, and she often attempted to leave church in adolescence. In middle school, her mother would take her and her siblings to Catechism classes at church and drop them off at the front door. Then, they would sneak out from the back door to Baskin-Robbins. She experienced a “bit more freedom” when the language of the mass changed from Latin to English, but still she did not like her experience in church. She opted for working in daycare in church instead of attending services because she “really hated it.” When she was in college, she still tried to go to church once or twice, but she had such aversive reactions to the guilt-ridden teachings and people in charge who appeared to be “just wanting money” that she said to herself, “Forget it,” and she finally left the Catholic church.

Tracy was introduced to Buddhism by her friend in college. Her parents thought that she was going through “a phase.” (Tracy believed that her parents still did not like that she was practicing Buddhism, but she was not sure because religion and politics were not discussed in her family.) However, Tracy was “fascinated” with Buddhism and experienced a “visceral feeling” that Buddhism was “right” for her, and that it was “absolutely” what she wanted to practice. When Tracy read a book, *The Myth of Freedom*, written by Chögyam Trungpa, she was “flabbergasted” with “how true everything that was being said was” in the book. Tracy then began taking Buddhist classes. She observed many people attended a couple of classes and dropped out, but she was “so definite” about Buddhist practice “without having weighed the pros and cons” and stayed in the classes. She found something auspicious about her unexplainably strong sense of

determination to study and practice Buddhism. Tracy's Buddhist practice has been a combination of sitting meditation and other practices using visualization, chanting mantras, and performing rituals according to the teachings of a lineage of Tibetan Buddhism.

The sangha used to be a source of support and encouragement for Tracy's Buddhist practice. However, her relationship with the sangha changed when it "lost" what she "loved" about it and why she was "so involved" in it. She explained that the sangha used to be more focused on practice than socializing with people. When she was taking a leadership role in the sangha, she "felt really good" about her involvement and "wanted to encourage everyone to practice." She also felt like a "mom" of the sangha and spent a lot of time and energy "looking out for everyone" and "taking care of what needed to be done." However, she no longer wanted to "be part of" the sangha, and the sangha was not at the "forefront" in her mind. Tracy referred to the three treasures of Buddhism, *Buddha*, *Dharma*, and Sangha, to describe her current status of Buddhist practice: "They all three work together, and if one is kind of defunct, all the others fall apart."

An offense that Tracy experienced in the sangha five years ago was a part of the reason that she no longer wanted to be part of the sangha. When Tracy was taking a leadership role in her sangha, a new male leader was sent from outside. He was extremely aggressive toward her to the point that she felt emotionally attacked, even physically threatened. She explained that he did "grandstand" on issues to be discussed in the sangha, did not cooperate with anything that she was trying to do, and spread rumors about her to turn other members against her, all of which undermined her leadership in

the sangha. Tracy resisted doing what he was doing (e.g., speaking ill of him behind his back and “making camps”), which put her in a situation where she had no one to whom to talk, except her husband. Tracy did not feel supported by other members in her sangha, and she felt betrayed by them when they would listen to the male leader, but they would never come to ask her what really had happened. This emotionally “painful” situation for Tracy lasted for a few years, and she finally walked away from the sangha because she “could not take it anymore.” This offense negatively affected not only Tracy as a person (i.e., “I lost a bit part of whom I thought I was”), but also her relationship with other members in the sangha and the sangha as a community where she had invested a large amount of her care, time, and energy. The whole situation in which this offense took place reminded Tracy of how she felt about her early relationship with her parents and people in the Catholic Church (e.g., “very strict,” “no warmth or gentleness,” and “not supportive”), which might have complicated her forgiveness process.

Tracy’s initial reactions to the offense were characterized as fear, hurt, and flight. She was “frightened” by the male leader’s aggression toward her and his manipulation of other members in the *sangha*. She felt emotionally attacked and physically threatened by the man who was so angry at her and turned other people against her. She was also “raw and hurt” and felt “betrayed” by the other members in the sangha who did not offer her support while the offense was occurring. Her experience of this offense was so “painful” that she totally avoided the place and people who reminded her of the offense for a while.

Tracy did not consciously decide to forgive the male leader or the other members in her sangha. In fact, she did not label her experience as “forgiveness” until she was invited to participate in this study. While reflecting on her experience of this offense,

however, she realized that she did experience “forgiveness.” Tracy recalled when she felt “comforted” and began letting go of her resentment under the following conditions. First, the members in the sangha “eventually came around” and listened to her. Second, they understood that the male leader’s verbal portrayal of her was not accurate. Third, they communicated their willingness to reconnect with her. She also recalled when she felt ready to leave the offense inflicted by the male leader behind, which occurred when she was able to tell herself that the offense was a past incident, which happened after she removed herself for a while from the place and people that reminded her of the offense.

What was most challenging for Tracy in her forgiveness process was that the male leader “never admitted” that he “caused” her “any harm.” She understood that she was supposed to learn something from her experience of the offense described above “karmically” and wished that she could have dealt with the offense according to Buddhist teachings. However, she had hard time doing so because the male leader was a “narcissistic” (according to Tracy’s husband and another member of the sangha) “nut case” (according to Tracy) and abused a Tibetan Buddhist concept, *Vajra* anger (a dynamic energy of anger that cuts through doubt and confusion), to “rationalize” and “justify” his aggression and emotional attack against her. Tracy also suffered from a sense of loss in terms of her relationship with the sangha. Tracy wondered about the truth that “women hang onto things more strongly than men do,” while “men can get into a huge altercation and then just drop it.” Tracy was uncertain how her age would have made an impact on her process of forgiveness. She wondered if she was “more resilient” to an offense when she was younger, but she might be “more skilled” to deal with an offense because she was older. Tracy denied any significant association between

“forgiveness” or “reconciliation” and Catholic teachings and practices. She recalled that she was taught as a child to “say sorry” when she offended someone and “forgive” someone when she was offended, although they were “just words without any real emotional experience” for Tracy.

What helped Tracy to overcome her challenge in her process of forgiveness was to take “time to put the whole situation into perspective” by temporarily removing herself from the place where the offense took place so that she would not be reminded of the offense or the offenders for a while. Tracy pointed out that her prior relationship with an offender would make a difference in her forgiveness process. In this case, she felt no real connection with the male leader prior to the offense and had no desire to reconcile with him after the offense. For her to heal herself was more important than to forgive him. However, if he had been her good friend prior to the offense, she would have been more motivated and willing to forgive him because forgiveness has something to do with “healing” a relationship (i.e., reconciliation) to her.

Concerning the outcomes of Tracy’s forgiveness process, she experienced a sense of “relief” and diminished “burden” when she was able to accept the offense as a past incident. She also became less “naïve” about people’s intentions (e.g., “Some people can be twisted,” like the male leader). Tracy still occasionally performed rituals and taught meditation in the sangha when she was asked, and she and the members in the sangha were friendly enough to exchange greetings. However, she did not feel “drawn” to the sangha as much as she used to feel. Her relationship with the male leader has been unchanged. She had never recognized and would never recognize him as her friend.

Tracy commented that self-reflection encouraged by her participation in this study made her become more aware that she still “had been hanging onto” the offense.

Tracy defined forgiveness as “not holding resentment” and “lightening up.” As she reflected further on her experience of forgiveness, she stated, “Forgiveness doesn’t mean that the pain goes away.” She understood that she had forgiven the offenders when she was able to put the offense behind her, but she was still grieving for her loss caused by the offense on multiple levels: her relationship with her sangha as a source of support and encouragement for her Buddhist practice, her sense of belonging, and her identity that she had developed when she had been actively involved in the sangha.

Alice’s first narrative. Alice grew up in a “Jewish culture without religious training.” Her parents came from Eastern Europe. They were Jewish but were “not very religious.” Also, in those days, religious training was not offered to girls. Thus, in childhood through young adulthood, Alice developed no desire to be religious. Alice went to a graduate school in New York to study art and experienced art training as a “discipline,” a characteristic she associated with a religious practice. Around that time, Alice had “no idea of paths” or “no aspiration for paths.” She was “not particularly materialistic,” but a “spiritual world had not presented itself” to her before she experienced an “auspicious coincidence” that introduced her to Buddhist teachings and practices in her 40s.

In the late 1970s, Alice moved from New York to Kentucky to live closer to her two grown daughters and began working in a local New Age bookstore. One day a cashier at the bookstore put up a flyer advertising a Buddhist class entitled the *Battle of Ego*. Alice went to the class and met a small group of people with whom she began to

study Buddhism and practice sitting meditation. They read books, including *The Myth of Freedom*, written by Chögyam Trungpa, and listened to his audio-recorded *dharma* talks together. This small group was later developed into a local sangha. In a couple of years, Alice attended a training program in Boston where she actually met the teacher in person. The teacher had “joke teeth” in his hand and began his talk by saying, “You are going to die,” while having the teeth “chattering.” Alice was “completely taken” by him, “the teeth and the humor combined.”

Alice continued to study Buddhism and practice meditation under Chögyam Trungpa’s guidance, and she and other members in the original group attended another training retreat in early 1980s. They systematically studied “three *yanas* (vehicles) of Buddhist teachings: *Hinayana* [sic], *Mahayana*, and *Vajrayana*.” Then, they received a “transmission” from their teacher so that they could begin to practice *Vajrayana* (esoteric Buddhist tantric practices). Alice’s experience of the transmission was a “moment of powerful awakening” with a realization that “we needed to train our minds to open” to “have the teachings available to us.” The most basic teaching that Alice learned from her teacher was about “Buddha nature,” which was also called “basic goodness” in his lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. She also learned about the “social component” of the teachings (e.g., how to develop an effective Buddhist practice community) and about *dharma* art (e.g., *ikebana* [Japanese-style flower arrangement] and calligraphy) to train one’s mind to “develop a relaxed focus” and “work with habits that obstruct.”

Alice expressed her disagreement and discontentment with how the local sangha was currently run and her disappointment with members’ lack of involvement in meditative practices. She understood that the change in the focus of the teachings and

practices in the sangha was due to the new primary teacher's emphasis on social change, and she did not oppose enjoying being social in the sangha. However, she believed that they should develop a community oriented more toward meditative practice than social gathering. She reminisced that the sangha used to be "more available to the public" for people who were at different developmental stages on their paths. In fact, only she and one other member were in the sangha who were currently engaged in a particular *Vajrayana* practice taught by the founding teacher. Nevertheless, Alice was still proud of being a part of the "long" tradition of the Tibetan Buddhist lineage and was hopeful for positive change in the sangha in the future.

About a year ago, a female leader in the sangha, who was younger and less experienced than Alice, asked Alice as a senior member to help improve their sangha as a community. Alice had been interested in applying the original teachings of the founding teacher of their sangha, Chögyam Trungpa, for community development, so she was excited about the idea and was willing to help the leader. However, when Alice offered the leader suggestions based on the teachings, the leader argued against or ignored them.

Alice was initially "put off" by the female leader's attitude and behavior because Alice perceived the leader's argumentativeness toward Alice's suggestions as "so unaccepting" of Alice's help for which the leader had asked. Alice also sensed that the leader "did not understand" something about Alice's suggestions and she perceived the leader's "unavailability" for further discussion as "unfriendly." Alice was hurt by the leader's attitude and behavior that she perceived as rejecting Buddhist teachings that Alice had directly received from the founding teacher of their sangha. This incident meant to Alice more than a "personal offense," an offense to her "very important

teacher.” Thus, Alice decided not to seek the female leader’s friendship and stopped speaking to her.

In reflection, Alice felt “competitive” toward the female leader in terms of “influencing something good for the community” when the leader “refused” what Alice had offered. Alice explained that she was influenced by a “cultural competition among women that has been manipulated mostly for men’s attention,” and that her competitiveness toward the leader was a “false way to behave.” Alice recognized that her past experiences of being a female member in the sangha affected her perception and meaning of the offense. For example, when she took a leadership role in the sangha, she felt less influential in the sangha than male leaders appeared to be. Alice has also been judged by male leaders that she was not ready to become a meditation instructor, even though she had received as extensive training in meditative practices as they had. Alice recalled hearing a male leader making “sexist remarks” in terms of what women were capable or not capable of doing. These past experiences of hers were a context from which Alice’s competitiveness developed.

Alice later experienced the female leader’s random kindness that made her wonder if the offense was unintended by the leader. Alice reflected on her own attitude and behavior and found them “rather harsh” in response to the perceived offense. Consequently, Alice’s perception of the leader’s attitude and behavior changed from “unfriendly” to “kind.” Then, Alice’s understanding of the offense changed from the leader being “unaccepting” and “unavailable” to the offense being possibly unintended by the leader. As Alice began forgiving the leader, Alice was motivated to ask the leader to forgive her for not speaking to the leader, thereby being unfriendly, in return for the

perceived offense. By forgiving the leader and asking the leader for forgiveness, Alice experienced recovering her own “tender heart.” Alice also observed the leader appearing to be “extraordinarily happy” and experiencing recovering her tender heart. This experience of forgiveness validated Alice’s understanding that tender heart was a natural state of heart when one followed the principles of Buddhist teachings, such as the Noble Eightfold Path.

What made forgiving the female leader and asking the leader for forgiveness for Alice was to run into the leader in the sangha and feel the “loss” of their friendship and be reminded of feeling rejected by the leader. In reflection, she thought that she might have been avoiding re-experiencing the hurt caused by the offense by not speaking to the leader.

When Alice “started getting over [the offense]” and experienced the leader’s random kindness rendered to her, Alice realized that her reactions to the perceived offense were “exaggerated,” and that her own “coldness” toward the leader was not “helpful” to her and “hurtful” to both the leader and herself. Alice also wondered if the older she grew, the less “agenda” she held for her own accomplishments, and the more tender-hearted she became, the less difficult forgiving became for her. She observed similar changes in another senior member who is male.

According to Alice, forgiving the female leader, asking the leader for forgiveness, and being forgiven by the leader all helped Alice to become more aware of her own attitudes and behaviors and to recover her “tender heart.” Alice’s cognitive, emotional, and attitudinal/behavioral reactions to the offender changed from the negative (e.g., She was “put off” by the offender’s “unfriendliness” and “stopped speaking” to her) to the

positive (e.g., She experienced “tremendous appreciation” for the offender’s “kindness” and asked the offender to forgive her for her retaliatory “unfriendliness”). Alice reached out to reconcile with the offender, which brought their relationship closer than it had been prior to the offense.

Alice explained that “tender heart” corresponded to “open heart,” and that “open heart” corresponded to “open mind,” concluding that the issue of forgiveness had something to do with “tenderness” of heart and “openness” of mind. Alice also defined forgiveness in relation to the Buddhist teaching of interdependence in a sense that forgiveness “expresses the Buddhist teaching that none of us exists individually” and “we are totally dependent on all the others, even just to be alive.” To Alice, forgiveness meant “recognition that we want to erase our thought of separateness” and “makes the ways of separating from others look completely unnecessary.”

Alice’s second narrative. During the follow-up interview, I asked Alice about her family circumstances prior to her moving from New York to Kentucky. Her response to this question led her to describing another experience of being hurt deeply and unfairly, that is, her “Mexican divorce” from her spouse in late 1960s after 15 years of their marriage.

According to Alice, her husband “brought attitudes that he had learned in military into marriage.” He expected her to perform the “traditional gender roles” for women in the 1950s and be nothing but his wife and the mother of his children. Alice was hurt and unhappy for two reasons. First, her husband provided “no support” in raising their three children while being preoccupied with his business. Second, her husband opposed her pursuit of “heart’s desire” to be an artist. After separating from her husband, Alice was

able to pursue and earn her master's degree in art. However, her children were hurt by growing up with unhappy parents. Alice believed that they formed negative views of their parents due to the history, which still strained their current relationships. Alice stated that "there is no ground for forgiveness" for her and her husband because "forgiveness is not in his vocabulary," although they have been "friendlier" since their separation and she developed "softness" toward him overtime. However, she "had to forgive" herself for taking 15 years to separate from her husband because she did not have "skills to protect" herself or "fight against" him and the consequences on herself, her children, and their relationship.

Summary: Unique features of each Buddhist's story of forgiveness. A theme that runs through Jake's narrative was openness. Jake felt constricted with a lack of openness in his childhood through adolescence, pursued openness in his young adulthood, and struggled with openness in his middle adulthood. His discontentment with a lack of openness was associated with his Catholic upbringing and conditioning. From his discontentment with a lack of openness, his motivation to seek more openness came. In his pursuit of openness, he was introduced to Buddhist philosophy, which made a significant impact on the formation of his identity and his worldview. However, his experience of separation and divorce from his wife of over 20 years posed him a challenge in his pursuit of openness. He realized the more open he became, the more vulnerable he felt, especially when he was hurt deeply and unfairly. His story of forgiveness reflected how he struggled with openness. Buddhist practice helped him to learn how to be open in face of adversity in his life. Thus, his forgiveness process was

intertwined with his religious/spiritual path as a practicing Buddhist, particularly in terms of how to liberate himself from suffering.

A keyword for Steve's narrative was "letting go." In his childhood through young adulthood, Steve was driven by two opposing desires: his desire to "indulge" in sense pleasures and his desire to live a religious life. The latter desire required him to let go of the former desire. Adversity in his life, such as his health problems, challenged him to let go of his attachments based on his two opposing desires, such as to his life of self-indulgence to his Catholic monastic life, and to find a middle ground. Two divorces that he experienced in his middle adulthood challenged him to let go of his emotional attachment to his loved ones, including his second wife who played an important role at a turning point on his religious/spiritual path leading to his Buddhist practice. His story of forgiveness reflected how he struggled with letting go and how his Buddhist meditative practice helped him to let go, particularly of his negative emotional reactions to his second wife leaving him for another man, because of his emotional attachment to her. His letting go process was so essential in his forgiveness process that he defined "forgiveness" as "letting go."

A theme that represented Tracy's narrative was belongingness. Tracy was traumatized in her relationships with her parents and people in the Catholic Church from whom she received little "warmth," "gentleness," or "support." She felt "punished" for not being "good" enough according to their standards. In her adolescence through young adulthood, she resisted being part of the Catholic Church, while yearning for a community where she could feel that she belonged and was accepted. She found Buddhist teachings validating her identity and worldview. Thus, she devoted herself to contributing

to the development of a local sangha. She provided others what she received from others in the sangha: caring, encouragement, and support. However, an interpersonal offense that she experienced in the sangha re-opened her old emotional wounds related to her sense of self-worth. Her forgiveness process was overlapped by her preceding healing process, highlighting her grieving for loss. What was most painful for her in these processes was either never feeling that she belonged or losing the sense of belongingness.

A feature of Alice's narrative was the impact of gender as a socio-cultural context both on her religious/spiritual path and her forgiveness process. Unlike other participants, she was brought up by "not very religious" Jewish parents and grew up developing no desire to be religious, partly because religious training was not accessible to girls in those days. She also talked about her hurt and unhappiness in her marriage and her separation from her husband associated with being expected to perform traditional female gender roles in the 1950s. She was introduced to Buddhism in her 40s and was inspired to pursue her religious/spiritual path for the first time in her life. She devoted herself to studying and getting trained in meditative practices of a particular lineage of Tibetan Buddhism under the guidance of her root teacher and contributed to the development of a local sangha by taking a leadership role. However, she felt less influential in the sangha than male leaders of expertise and seniority equivalent to hers because of sexism, particularly in the area of competence in meditative practices. Her story of forgiveness illustrated how her experience of sexism in the sangha and the gender of an offender influenced her perception and interpretation of an offense that took place in the sangha, thereby influencing her reactions to the offender.

Results of phenomenological analysis. In this section, the results of a modified phenomenological analysis (Giorgi, 1985, 1986) of the four Buddhist interviewees' experiences of forgiveness are presented. The meaning condensation method developed by Giorgi was employed to delineate themes, including common elements across two or more interviewees and variants in the themes, which emerged from the interviewees' descriptions of their forgiveness processes. Selected quotes are cited as raw data to help illustrate the themes. In the quotes, three dots indicate a short pause, and four dots indicate that repetitious or superfluous words and sentences were omitted. This researcher's explanation of words and pronouns was put in parenthesis. Personal identifiers and proper nouns were disguised in bracket. Most sentence fillers (e.g., "you know") were omitted.

Descriptions of the offense. When the interviewees were asked to "recapitulate" an experience of forgiving someone who "unfairly and deeply" hurt them, to identify who hurt them and when the offense occurred, and to tell a "story" of what happened when the person hurt them, they all described their experiences of the offenses in multiple layers. Their stories unfolded from what others did to them unfairly to what hurt them deeply. They all willingly described their intrapsychic, interpersonal, and socio-cultural contexts of the offense, which explained how they interpreted certain incidents as offensive, that is, hurtful and unfair to them. Understanding the offense in context was a crucial step in understanding their experiences of forgiveness as one interviewee articulated, "I'm giving you all the stuff that's part of me now and part of the process of forgiveness for me."

Nature of the offense. This theme represented the essential qualities or characteristics of the offense that emerged from the interviewees' descriptions of what others did to them unfairly. Three characteristics were recognized: aggression, breach of commitment, and betrayal. Some offenses described by the interviewees contained more than one characteristic.

Descriptions of the offense characterized by aggression included two interviewees' experiences of being the target of someone's aggressive acts:

[Someone who hurt me deeply and unfairly] was an individual who was involved in the sangha for a period of time. [The offense] went on for years. Probably four or five years ago, maybe was that the end of it...I was the [leader] of [the sangha], and this individual had some sort of a position in the [sangha] that was appointed by someone else outside. And he distorted [the position] to the degree that he thought that he could do whatever he wanted to, and that he kind of undermined my authority, and [he] would not work with the council, which is a group of people running the [sangha]. And he was just basically working against everything I was trying to do, instead of working as a group. And he told a lot of lies about me, and he would call people up and was grandstanding on things, there would be something to discuss at the council, and he would try to convince everybody about whatever his view was before they came there, so there's really no discussion or working. It was all distorted kind of a thing....He was verbally aggressive through email and one-to-one. Extremely aggressive. And he got other people to turn against me so they wouldn't cooperate. (Tracy)

I'm thinking of a situation where there was a leader in [the sangha] who asked for my help, and then contrary to what I believe she wanted, when I offered suggestions, she argued or ignored that....first thing she said was "I want to do more with [the founder's teachings on] community. Will you help me?" And I was very moved by her request, and I said, "Yes." Then when it came to any kind of discussion of how community would organize [according to the teachings] or how to encourage people to think about community that way, she would not respond. (Alice)

Aggressive acts can be classified on the three dimensions: physical/verbal, active/passive, and direct/indirect (Buss, 1961). The first quote described a male sangha member's verbal-active-direct aggression toward the interviewee (e.g., "He was verbally aggressive through email and one-to-one") and his verbal-active-indirect aggression (e.g., "he told a lot of lies about me" and "he got other people to turn against me") that resulted in "undermining" the interviewee's "authority." The second quote indicated a possibility of a female sangha leader's verbal-passive-direct aggression toward the interviewee (e.g., the female leader "asked for" the interviewee's "help" then "ignored" it when offered).

Descriptions of the offense characterized by breach of commitment included two interviewees' experiences of divorce initiated by their spouses:

[The person who hurt me deeply and unfairly was] My former wife....December of 98....a day after Christmas....She comes up to me and says, "[the name of the participant], we need to talk"...Basically she wanted to tell me that she was going to be leaving, the beginning of the year, before the new year, because she wanted the new year to be a beginning, sort of, and that took me by a total surprise...No

[discussion]. Not between her and I. She talked to our kids and let them know that she was going to be leaving, which is all kind of weird because they went through this whole Christmas knowing she was going to tell me after Christmas. (Jake)

When you asked me [who hurt me deeply and unfairly], the only one I could think of was my first wife... That was, let's see, probably 40 years [ago] or something like that... What she did was she took my daughter... And she left. She just left.

And then I got a letter from a lawyer. I never had heard from her, and then I got a letter from a lawyer saying she wanted a divorce. (Steve)

Neither interviewee described divorce itself as an offense. However, both made a point about how their spouses left them, which they perceived as unfair. Their spouses had been preparing for divorce for their advantage without informing the interviewees of their intention. Thus, the interviewees experienced that their commitment to their marital relationships was breached by their spouses, not dissolved by their mutual consent.

Three interviewees described the offenses in terms of their experiences of betrayal. They did not necessarily believe that the offenders intentionally betrayed them, but they felt betrayed by the offenders, nonetheless. Transcript examples included:

Actually during this process [of divorce], what I didn't know at that time, what I found out later is... she found somebody else so that she can make this break with me and yet still has some security. And I didn't know about that until the point which she told me she was leaving. So it hurt me actually. (Jake)

What happened is that [my second wife and I] went together for quite a long time. And then we separated. And then she came back and decided she wanted to get married. So we got married... and then a year later she said she decided she didn't

want to be married anymore, but she left with a poet...she went out to West Coast with her poet. And the idea I got is that I didn't know her well enough...She felt that I never really understood her and didn't appreciate her. And she left, and that was very painful. (Steve)

I felt like if I were saying, "Oh, listen to what he did," then I'm doing what he's doing, so I didn't engage in any of that, kind of trying to make camps...so I was kind of betrayed by a lot of friends because they would listen to him but never came to question me about what really happened, and so the whole thing was just very, very painful. (Tracy)

The interviewees explicitly or inexplicitly described their experiences of feeling betrayed by their spouses or friends because their trust in their marital relationships or friendship was abused and/or their loving care for their spouses or friends was unrequited. Notably, the interviewees first described aggression and/or breach of commitment as characteristics of the offense, then betrayal as another characteristic of the offense while expressing the intensity of their hurt. Betrayal as a characteristic of the offense, compared to aggression or breach of commitment, might be a deeper layer or closer to the core of the interviewees' experiences of the offense.

Contexts of the offense. This theme represented the intrapsychic, interpersonal, and/or socio-cultural contexts of the offenses that all interviewees willingly described. The contexts of the offense explained what influenced their perceptions and interpretations of an incident and how and why a certain incident was offensive, that is, unfair, and harmful to them. A typical context that emerged from the interviewees' descriptions of the offenses was their psychological investment in their relationships with

the offenders prior to the offenses and/or the community where the offense took place. Two variant contexts of the offense were characterized by the two female interviewees' experiences of past psychological trauma and sexism.

All interviewees talked about how much they invested their time, energy, care in their relationships with the offender prior to the offense and/or the community where the offense took place. One interviewee (Steve) described the offender prior to the offense as someone who fostered his interest in the New Age movement, which introduced him to Buddhism, and with whom he was "deeply involved" and "deeply connected." Another interviewee (Alice) described her dedication to Buddhist teachings and meditative trainings provided by her Tibetan Buddhist teacher who was the founder of her sangha where the offense took place. The other two interviewees more explicitly described their psychological investment in their relationships with the offender or the community where the offense took place:

[My former wife and I] had problems over a number of years. We separated for a while and were back together. She's been working in [a different city from where we lived]. So she'd stay there 5 days a week 'cause she's teaching in university [there]. There's a large period of growth she had. (Pause) She's been through many years of anxiety disorder and other problems, and getting out working on her master's, and then working on a doctorate...She seemed to see our marriage and relationship deteriorating...gradually we were more and more alienated...it wasn't like we talked a lot about our lives. It was really sort of this gradual loss of connection...I mean, the problem was her anxiety. She wouldn't travel in a car for a very long distance. Her panic would be quite horrible. She wouldn't fly. She

wouldn't take an elevator. She wouldn't go to any sort of height situations, you know, very difficult. At one point, she would get locked into the house, but any kind of treatment that involved some medication was out, because she's totally more anxious over medication than the result. So all of her world was becoming really sort of isolated. I had opportunities to do business trips and that sort of things, but she wouldn't go, everything was (Pause) kind of arranged around her anxiety. So let's see, good 15 years, it was very serious. Then when she came out, all of sudden, she was a different person, you know. (Jake)

I was [taking a leadership role in the sangha] for a few years. I was always involved [in the sangha]...I was involved in administrative thing almost from the time I started, and then in the early 90s maybe, I was kind of running things, and then international organization changed the way [local sanghas] were run...I became [an official leader]... probably mid to late 90s...I loved [my involvement in the sangha]. I felt really good about it. I wanted to encourage everybody to practice, and kind of felt like a mom of the [sangha], you know (Laughter), looking out for everybody and taking care of what needed to be done. I really loved it. I spend a tremendous amount of time and energy doing it. (Tracy)

In the first quote, the interviewee explained how much effort he had expended to accommodate his spouse's needs due to her mental health problems and her career development prior to the offense. In the second quote, the interviewee explained how much time, energy, and love she had invested in managing the sangha and taking care of the members of the sangha prior to the offense. Both suggested that their psychological investment in their relationships with the offender or the community where the offense

took place strengthened their identification with the role that they had been taking in the relationships, and that their identification with the role was disturbed by the offense.

They also suggested that their psychological investment in their relationships with the offender and with the community where the offense took place turned fruitless because of the offense.

By an offense whose nature was aggression and betrayal, a female interviewee was reminded of emotions that she had experienced in her early relationship with her parents that were psychologically traumatic to her:

I don't know if my parents ever talked about [forgiveness]. They were...very strict, and you had to do everything right, but they didn't talk about emotions, and the only emotions they would show would be probably anger...no warmth...they were very action-oriented, you know, you had to be doing something constructive, but they didn't talk about emotions or supportive in that way at all. (Deeper in thought. Tearing up.) [Anger] was about the only thing [they expressed]...it's just verbal. I mean...they were pissed off at the government or mad about something somebody did...it's just upset with situations...not like...“Oh, it's such a gorgeous day, I love it when it's like this,” or “She's such a sweet friend,” you know. They just never talked about things like that, so (Tearful. Pause). I just wanted to escape as soon as I could...I left when I was 17 and haven't lived at home since, so (Pause) Just trying to get out it. (Tracy)

This interviewee also talked about experiencing neither “warmth” nor “support” from people in the Catholic Church in her childhood through adolescence, attempting to escape from the church, and eventually leaving it. A similar pattern was found in her description

of the offense, particularly in terms of relational dynamics between her and the offender, her emotional reactions to the offense, and her consequent actions. The offense took place in a sangha (Buddhist community). The offender was a member of the sangha. He was verbally aggressive toward her. She felt other members, whom she considered her friends, were not supportive of her during the occurrence of the offense. She felt betrayed by them, and she left the sangha temporarily. She appeared to be still in her process of healing from her past traumatic interpersonal experiences, and her trauma recovery process was intertwined with her forgiveness process, particularly affecting her perception and interpretation of the offense and her reactions to the offense.

Another female interviewee associated her experience of an offense whose nature was aggression with her experience of sexism in the place where the offense took place:

I had feelings of competitiveness when [the female leader] (i.e., the offender) would refuse what I was offering (i.e., suggestions based on the teachings provided by the founding teacher of the sangha as being asked by the female leader), and for a very long time I had refused to fall into competitiveness.

Competition among women, I think is very bad behavior...My intention was to influence something good for the community...but when [competition] is displayed, it shows serious neurosis, some kind of wish to dominate, which is certainly not what the community is for to train us in that way... if I have competitive feelings with a woman, I question that very seriously because there is a cultural competition among women that has been manipulated mostly for men's attention...I had felt that my influence could have been more respected because the other elder person in the community is male and has lasting influence...The

kind of thing that I experienced was when I had the desire to be meditation instructor, there were three male people...told me I was not ready, and I didn't think that any of them were ready any more than I was. (Laughter) But to hear this from three different people within a space of a couple of days, somebody saying you are not ready, and I was never offered an explanation how I would be ready. Oh, I think [that had something to do with gender]. But they just happened to be male persons, and from my earlier experience, even before I began thinking of women's equality, that kind of situation reverberates, you know, it's like, not fair...I never said I was unhappy because I was unfairly treated because I was a woman, but...I had heard [one of the male leaders] make sexist remarks about what women are capable of and not capable of...I was familiar with those kinds of expressions. So if that attitude was directed towards me, I thought they were just taking advantage of some kind of male superiority...I was always sensitive to those kinds of comments and statements. (Alice)

This interviewee reflected on her competitiveness as one of her reactions to the offender and traced its origin back to her past experience of sexism in the sangha, particularly in the area of her sense of authority and competence. She, as a senior female member in the sangha, has felt less influential and less respected than male members of equivalent expertise in meditative practices and seniority in the sangha.

During the follow-up interview, this interviewee (Alice) elaborated on her experience of sexism in her earlier life. She separated from her husband after 15 years of marriage because she was hurt and unhappy when he expected her to perform the roles of wife and mother according to the traditional female gender roles in the 1950s, provided

her “no support” in raising their three children, and opposed her pursuit of “heart’s desire” to create art. The most recent offense that took place in her sangha evoked her memories of having been treated unfairly, which may have colored her perception and interpretation of the offense and amplified her emotional reactions.

Meanings of the offense. This theme represented the subjective meanings of the offenses that emerged from the interviewees’ descriptions of the offenses. The nature of the offense captured the essence of the offense from the perspective of “this is what they did to me.” The contexts of the offense captured the essence of the offense from the perspective of “this is why and how I believe the offense occurred and was unfair and harmful to me.” The meaning of the offense captured the essence of the offense from the perspective of “this is what happened to me inside, what really hurt me.” Two elements were extracted from the interviewees’ descriptions of the meaning of the offense: broken ego and a sense of loss. Transcript examples included:

...it hurt my male ego. Not that I thought I was such a great husband...but (Pause) also betrayal from her...I don’t know. (Pause) 24 years of marriage was lost forever, this sort of deep kind of connection. One of our difficulties was my particular view of world...I admit difficulty telling [my wife] that I loved her and expressing that...“I’m going to love you forever,” and “It’s never going to change.” “I can’t tell you that.” “I love you deeply now,” and “That’s all I can give you”...for 24 years we were together, I always had this sort of emotion, if there’s any way I strayed from our relationship, I would be really betraying her...You know, “Marriage was forever” [for her]. And then suddenly, there she is, announcing me that marriage is not forever. (Laughter) I don’t know. I thought

it was forever. (Laughter) I was just getting used to the idea that we would be married forever. (Laughter) It's been 24 years, and it looks like we are gonna be here for a while. So that was part of [the difficulty]. And then soon after I found out she actually did have somebody else that she was seeing, it had been several months before she told me. So, then, there was this feeling of betrayal, dishonesty, which also were not part of her character because she was very strongly against those sorts of things. So on one hand, suddenly, this total upheaval of the way. I viewed the world through [her] eyes, which I thought was the world that I was connected with. Then suddenly here's this person turning all of these things around. So there's this sense of loss as well. (Jake)

Because of that incident, which really lasted for a few years (Pause), I lost (Pause. Choking in tears) a bit part of who I thought I was (Pause). It totally goes against all Buddhist teachings...(Inaudible)...It was like [my] whole life, and (Pause) I don't know how to put it into words. (Tracy)

...what I was offering did not come from any whim of my own, but came directly out of the Buddhist teachings I had received... A personal offense, I can allow to slide off, but it was an offense to what I had received from a very important teacher...I was most challenged by running into her, being in her presence, and feeling some kind of loss because we had been friendly at one time. (Alice)

...being left was a painful experience...when I had hard time to forgive was when my second wife left. Because (Pause) I was (Pause) deeply involved with her. I felt deeply connected with her. (Steve)

These quotes indicated that the interviewees' identities (e.g., man, husband, and Buddhist) were greatly disturbed by the offenses due to their experiences of rejection and/or violation. For some interviewees, the brokenness was so great that they experienced a loss of an important part of themselves, and that their worldviews were shaken up. All interviewees described a loss of connection with the people and the community that they loved, which was what really hurt them.

Initial reactions to the offense. The interviewees described their initial reactions to the offense on visceral, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral levels. Their descriptions of visceral reactions included: "shock," "stunned," "awe-struck," "total confusion," "frightened," "irritation," and/or "painful." Such visceral reactions were followed by a mixture of cognitive and emotional reactions:

After I began to think again...emotions begin again, then yes, you know, some of those things happened...I was like, "How could this be happening?" "Why is this happening?" (Pause) You know, I wondered if there was somebody else...fear...tremendous loss...fear and anxiety...of being alone. (Jake)

I didn't know where [my wife] was. I didn't know where my daughter was...She just left. (Pause) Well, that doesn't help any...my feelings at that time were to be hurt. I was very concerned because I didn't know where my daughter was, and we had been fighting a lot, then I think we were too different to be married, just two different types, you know. (Steve)

I didn't feel like I should be attacked so incredibly aggressively, which he did repeatedly, so...It was hard. And I felt I didn't have any support or anyone to talk to about it, except for my husband, because I felt like if I were saying "Oh,

listen to what he did,” then I’m doing what he’s doing, so I didn’t engage in any of that, uh kind of trying to make camps. (Tracy)

...because she was so unaccepting...I was put off. (Alice)

The interviewees’ cognitive reactions included their speculation on the reason for the offense and/or rumination on the unfairness of the offense, and their emotional reactions included feeling anxious, sad, hurt, unsupported/alone, and put-off. Three interviewees engaged in behavioral reactions based on fight-or-flight responses:

There’s lots of rumors going around, lots of different things, and I finally walked away. I couldn’t take it anymore. (Tracy)

I did not wanna take action. I didn’t wanna be the one that (Pause) separated.
(Steve)

I felt she had been unfriendly, and therefore I was not seeking her friendship, and in fact I would not even speak to her... I really can’t explain why I wouldn’t talk to her at all. It was kind of extreme. (Pause) Maybe there was some hurt that I was avoiding by not speaking to her. (Alice)

The first and second quotes described the interviewees’ strategies to avoid re-experiencing the emotional pain caused by the offense and/or possibly being further hurt by the offender (i.e., a flight response). The third quote described a combination of her fight and flight responses (e.g., not speaking to the offender and avoiding hurt). The other interviewee described how he resisted acting out his initial reactions:

At that time, I was working....and noticed that a couple of people in the office that I worked close to were going through divorces. I noticed people were in tremendous pain and agony, you know. The process that was so aggressive. So

much fighting between each other. So much hatred. Yeah. That's what I've seen...the divorce processes. So I certainly didn't like that. That didn't seem to be the way if I was going to be Buddhist. But also more importantly than anything...we had been married for 24 years, and then taken care of each other, you know, for that long, and it seemed like it would be a total betrayal of those 24 years to let it dissolve into some sort of animosity. (Jake)

This quote indicated that the amount of value the interviewee placed on his relationship with the offender and his religious aspiration helped him to control his aggressive impulse in reaction to the offense (i.e., a fight response).

Motivation to forgive. When the interviewees were asked what made them decide and how they decided to forgive the person who hurt them deeply and unfairly, they talked about how conscious or unconscious they were about their decision to forgive the offender, then described what motivated them to begin their forgiveness processes. Two themes emerged from their descriptions: their aspiration to apply Buddhist teachings and practices to deal with difficulties in their lives and their recognition of the offender's benevolence that they experienced at some point in their relationship with the offender.

Aspiration to forgive as Buddhist practice. This theme represented the interviewees' descriptions of how their aspiration to apply Buddhist teachings and practices for themselves motivated them to begin their forgiveness processes. Two interviewees made a conscious decision to forgive the offenders, while the other two interviewees initially did not name their experiences of dealing with the offenses as "forgiveness" but later recognized them as such. Regardless of when they named their experiences as forgiveness, however, they all described how they aspired to forgive

because they understood at some point in their forgiveness processes that forgiveness was congruent with Buddhist teachings and practices:

I remember coming home one evening after work and driving up to the house, we had a garage attached to the house. I drove up to the garage, and the garage opened. It was dark, there were no lights on. I remember pulling up in the driveway and sitting there, and debating on whether to push the garage door opener and open the door and face the dark lonely house, you know. Was there some other alternative, you know, take my despair (Pause) commit suicide (Pause). It's one of those emotions that does pass, one of those concepts. I was just sitting there and suddenly realized what I had to do from my [Buddhist] practice standpoint was to practice what I've learned from [my Buddhist] study and working with meditation, was that I had to just sit and work with this. My tendency would be to close it off, and to even spend more time at work, which I already spent a tremendous amount, you get involved in all kinds of stuff and forget about to get into all the emotional garbage. It was really a decision point, I guess, in terms of forgiveness or not forgiveness at that point. Both myself and her, you know. I happened to be reading Pema Chödrön's book, "When Things Fall Apart." And Pema was saying, just sit on the cushion, and work with the emotions, feel the emotions, and let all the other stuff go. That's what I decided to do at that point [when I decided to forgive]. (Jake)

I have no question about [having forgiven my wife completely], you know, I just...Forgiveness is a hard word to think about....There is a practice, a Buddhist practice called "letting go." I'm not sure if I've ever thought of a word "forgive,"

you know...The word “forgive” probably never came to my mind...Good *karma* is what we talk about, you see?...there’s not only consequence of physical action, like if you get angry, someone would get angry back, but there’s also when you die, you enter the *bardo*. There’s the first place you go after you die, and that’s where your *karma* comes back on you. So if you have a lot of negative *karma*, anger and things like that, then you have to deal with it then. That’s not so good (Laughter). (Interviewer asked, “So you see yourself preparing for that?”) Well, I study it, and I read about it, and at my age, I need to, you know, I’m getting close, I don’t know, nobody knows when it’s going to happen, but it’s part of my study. I don’t worry about it. (Steve)

I can’t say I was trying to hurt [the offender], but I became aware that my behavior [in reaction to the offense] was hurtful, and I wanted not to do it anymore. So I began speaking to her, and then we became quite friendly. That whole issue of what she asked help with was completely gone. It was just old news. It never came up again. And (Pause) and I really felt much more like a person [of this lineage of Buddhism that I practice] who is trained to have a “tender heart.” That was what I asked for, forgiveness. (Alice)

To question one’s own habitual patterns brings qualities of fearlessness and truthfulness instead of acting out of dramatic distortions. The power of offering apology to an imagined opponent has the result of clearing the atmosphere of contaminations, also bringing back the ground of “basic goodness” or Buddha nature in one’s awareness. (Alice)

I tried to deal with [the offense] as best as I could according to the [Buddhist] teachings, you know, understanding where [the offenders are] coming from, turning the other cheek kind of thing, not engaging in gossip or he said she said, not perpetuating [the harm] and not fighting back...I never, until you called [me about this study], I never thought about [my experience of dealing with the offense in terms of] forgiveness or forgiving...if I reflect upon the whole situation, I just try to understand what was happening, and you know, how it all comes out of ego...and how it got distorted, how it can get so neurotic, and yeah [I could think of my experience of dealing with the offense in terms of forgiveness]...karmically, what happened is because I need to go through and experience that (Pause)...And (Pause) I mean, it still really hurts. (Tracy)

In the first quote, the interviewee reflected on the moment of his realization that forgiveness had something to do with “facing” the “dark” emotions within himself and being able to “open” himself up to the emotions instead of being “closed off.” In the second quote, the interviewee described forgiveness as a Buddhist practice of “letting go.” They both recognized forgiveness as serving the primary purpose of meditative practice from a Buddhist perspective, training one’s own mind. The second interviewee continued to explain that forgiveness or letting go of anger promotes one’s own “good *karma*,” whereas unforgiveness or holding onto such emotions as anger creates one’s own “negative *karma*.” According to Tibetan Buddhist teachings on *Bardo*, one’s own *karma* accumulated by the time of his or her passing of the current life determines his or her condition of rebirth. For that reason, this interviewee suggested that he was motivated to forgive. In the third quote, the interviewee described her experience of forgiving the

offender as well as asking for forgiveness as “tender heart,” which was a common expression of one’s visceral experience of compassion according to Tibetan Buddhist teachings. The fourth quote was the same participant’s elaboration on her motivation to forgive in her written feedback provided to this researcher after the follow-up interview. She referred to some virtues highly regarded in Buddhist teachings, such as “fearlessness,” “truthfulness,” and “bringing back the ground of basic goodness or Buddha nature in one’s own awareness,” as a basis of her motivation to forgive and ask for forgiveness. In the last quote, the interviewee described her struggle of dealing with the offense according to her understanding of Buddhist teachings.

Recognition of benevolence in the offender. This theme represented the interviewees’ descriptions of how their recognition of benevolence in the offenders encouraged them to forgive the offenders. Transcript examples included:

[My second wife] tried to get back in touch with me and expressed the fact that she wanted to remain friends, and I said, “OK”...I just think that when she expressed that, I was ready to go ahead with her. I had already let go, you know. I think I hadn’t I had no reservations I just I think we talked about it, and she understood, but she felt we were not really helping each other, and that she really liked the relationship she had now with her poet, so...(Steve)

Eventually [my friends in the sangha] came around and realized [the male leader] was manipulating them, and they understood that he was not accurate what he was saying, and what he was portraying, so that was a comfort, you know. (Tracy)

[After the offense took place] I think it was because I was ill, [the female leader] wanted to help me. She had some meals that she would bring, and she was extremely kind. What was the source of my being unfriendly to her was never discussed since then, but I realized that my behavior had been rather harsh, and uh I asked her to forgive me for that, which she did. (Alice)

...my kids, I think, we really dismissed honoring what we had and recognizing [my wife's] basically good nature in this process. You know, 'cause (Inaudible) she told kids before she told me, when people look at it, they question, "Why would you do that?" you know. It wasn't probably the best. It was a difficult decision for her. She was trying to help me, and she thought she was doing good by letting kids know and help by talking them through it. My daughter was real upset when that happened. But all of it being generated by her trying to do the best she could. (Jake)

In the first and second quotes, the interviewees pointed out that the offenders reached out to the interviewees after the offenses took place, communicated their empathic understanding of the interviewees' perspectives on the offenses, and attempted to restore their relationships with the interviewees. The interviewees appreciated or felt "comforted" by the offenders' positive intentions and regards toward them. In the third quote, the interviewee described how the offender's kindness encouraged the interviewee to reflect on her own reactions to the offense as possibly equally offensive to the offender. In the last quote, the interviewee recognized the "basically good nature" of the offender that he had learned in his long-term relationship with the offender prior to the offense,

which facilitated the interviewee's empathic understanding of the offender's perspective on the offense.

Notably, two interviewees did not recognize any benevolence in two particular offenders with whom they had either negative (e.g., "a lot of fighting") or neutral (e.g., acquaintance-level) relationships prior to the offenses. One interviewee explained how her neutral relationship with the offender prior to the offense impacted her motivation to forgive the offender after the offense:

...if I had had a positive connection with this person prior to having all the difficulty, that I probably would be more willing to forgive, but we never had a real connection. He just came in very aggressive...if I had a good friend who had turned on me, and then you know I worked it all out, then I had something as a basis underneath that in order to work through to get back to forgiveness, but there never was a connection, really. I mean, other than I knew who he was 'cause he's been to the [sangha] for a while...why would I want to heal something if there was never a relationship there to begin with anyway? (Tracy)

This interviewee suggested, if she had experienced a positive relationship with the offender prior to the offense, she would have been more motivated to forgive the offender because she would have been more motivated to restore her positive relationship with him damaged by the offense.

Challenges in the process of forgiveness. When the interviewees were asked about any obstacles or challenges in their forgiveness processes, they all addressed difficulties dealing with their sense of loss caused by the offenses. Two interviewees discussed how their socio-cultural conditioning, particularly gender and religious

socialization, impeded their forgiveness processes. One interviewee talked about certain characteristics and behaviors of the offender, such as a lack of acknowledgement of the offense, which interfered with her forgiveness process.

Difficulties dealing with a sense of loss. This theme represented the interviewees' descriptions of difficulties dealing with a sense of loss caused by the offenses that they experienced in their forgiveness processes. Transcript examples included:

(Interviewer asked, "What was most challenging for you?") (Pause) The fact that she was having an affair, and wasn't honest about that. (Pause) And it had been going on for about 3 months or so. (Interviewer asked, "Can you tell me a little more about it that made it difficult for you?") It was a total flip of my image of her because having an affair, if I showed any sort of signs of being attracted to anyone else, it would be devastating to her from that standpoint. I mean, it would be a sign of betrayal if I ever had an affair with someone. I never did, but you know, a lot of it because of my respect for her and our relationship. It's not that there wasn't people I was attracted to, but I knew that if I had any kind of relationship with somebody, while we were married, that it would be devastating to her. So I lived my whole relationship with her, keeping those things away, and then to find that the relationship ends, and she's having an affair with somebody. It's like, you know, again, this isn't like [her]...I don't know how, if I would have been much more understanding if she had been honest about it when she told me why she was leaving, she was having relationship. I don't think that really mattered much. It was the fact that she had a relationship with somebody, but the

betrayal in the sense of our trust, especially betrayal of a trust that I felt which (Pause) placed a parameter on our marriage. (Jake)

I was most challenged by running into [the female leader], being in her presence, and feeling some kind of loss because we had been friendly at one time. (Alice)

I don't think that my relationship with [my friends in the sangha] would ever be the same (Tearful) as it was. (Tracy)

...the main obstacle is that I couldn't, in the beginning, could not get in touch with my daughter [when my first wife took her away from me]. (Steve)

In the first quote, the interviewee elaborated on the nature, context, and meaning of the offense that he previously described (i.e., betrayal, psychological investment, and loss) and suggested that what was most challenging in his forgiveness process was to deal with his loss of what he believed had existed prior to the offense, such as his understanding of who his spouse is and his deep emotional connection with her. In the second and third quotes, the interviewees indicated their challenge in their forgiveness processes was to deal with their loss of positive and meaningful relationships with the offenders that they had prior to the offenses. In the last quote, the interviewee identified the "main obstacle" in his forgiveness process was to deal with his loss of his daughter with whom he felt emotionally attached; and he found it difficult to forgive his first wife, who took his daughter away, until he reconnected with his daughter.

The impact of socio-cultural conditioning. The interviewees were asked if any of their socio-cultural backgrounds (e.g., gender, age, race/ethnicity, and sexual/affectional orientation) made any impact on their forgiveness processes. Two interviewees discussed how their socio-cultural conditioning, such as religious and gender socialization, might

have interfered with their forgiveness processes. They also discussed a possible relationship between their ages and their forgiveness processes.

One interviewee talked about how his belief about marriage formed by his Catholic upbringing interfered with his forgiveness process:

Coming back with the notion that marriage is forever, you know, once a Catholic, always a Catholic....little tentacles that always hold on. My parents were married for almost 50 years. So divorce and that sort of stuff was not (Incomplete thought). There were both dead by then, but still that was kind of my childhood attitude. So there were those sorts of things, then you're failure, you know, those aspects....I wasn't a Catholic, but because of those attitudes, they contribute to a feeling of being a failure because you are not living up to it, even though you no longer, say, guided by that. (Jake)

This interviewee identified a challenge in his forgiveness process was to deal with his sense of failure caused by the offense (i.e., His wife left him after over 20 years of marriage and had been having an extra marital affair prior to their separation). His sense of failure came from his Catholic belief about marriage, which was reinforced by his Catholic parents who modeled the belief. He described his struggle with unlearning his religious socialization to deal with his own reactions to the offense in his forgiveness process, including self-judgment and self-blame.

Additionally, although two other interviewees did not directly associate their Catholic upbringing with their challenges in their forgiveness processes, they implied that what they had learned from Catholicism prior to their conversion to Buddhism has never helped them to be forgiving in general. One participant stated that words of forgiveness

are “tossed around” among Catholics, but they did not teach him how to forgive. The other participant felt expected to “say sorry” and to “forgive” readily even if she did not actually “feel sorry” or she was not ready to “let go of things” while growing up as Catholic.

Two interviewees talked about how their identification with certain gender stereotypes might have interacted with their forgiveness processes:

I guess [gender] probably did [make an impact on my forgiveness process], I think, some of the cultural expectations, you know, putting those aside...men should be angry, upset. We are in charge, you know. All those stereotypical male...the male tendency, culturally anyway, to be less open to one’s feelings and expressing those feelings. I think that was important part of the process anyway...To be able to just open up, and if the feeling is to cry, just sit there and cry. I mean, from the woman’s standpoint, at least within Western culture, that’s an easy enough thing to do for the most part, but for a male, that’s difficult. So yeah...I had to work against some of those tendencies. (Jake)

Well, maybe [gender made an impact on my forgiveness process]. Maybe in a wrong way. It seems like women hang onto things more strongly than men do.

That’s what I’ve heard, you know, they just can get into a huge altercation, and then they just drop it. I don’t know. (Tracy)

In the first quote, the interviewee pointed out a “cultural expectation” for men to be emotionally stoic, except for an expression of aggression, encouraged him to get angry and remain angry about the offense, and discouraged him to express any other feelings evoked by the offense, particularly those that made him feel vulnerable. He recognized

such emotionally restrictive tendency associated with a masculine gender stereotype became an obstacle in his forgiveness process. In the second quote, the interviewee reflected on what she heard about women's tendency to "hang onto things" and wondered if such tendency for emotional attachment made it difficult for her to forgive. She also wondered if she could have "just dropped" her reactions to an offense if she could have gotten into an "altercation" as men appear to be able to do. She suggested that discouragement for expressing anger, which appeared to be a cultural expectation associated with a feminine gender stereotype that she had learned, might have interfered with her forgiveness process.

Two interviewees also discussed a possible relationship between their ages and their abilities to forgive:

...if I looked at myself at age 48 when this was happening, versus myself at, say, age 28, yeah, I'm sure it would've been very different reactions...I definitely had [aggressive] tendency because even as a young kid, I would get angry very easily, and upset, and that kind of thing. But what was happening, you know, different periods of life, the causes behind that were different most of the time, they were due to depression, some low self-confidence, self-esteem, those sorts of things.

(Jake)

...if I was younger, I would be more resilient? I've learned a lot more now, so maybe I'm better able to deal with the whole thing being older? I don't know.

(Tracy)

They wondered if the older they become, the less aggressive or the more skilled they become to deal with an offense; therefore, the less difficult forgiving may be for them.

However, they suggested that the impact of age on their abilities to forgive could have been easily confounded by other factors, such as mental health problems (e.g., depression), psychological issues (e.g., self-confidence and self-esteem), and emotional intelligence (e.g., resilience and interpersonal skills). Thus, their speculation was inconclusive.

The offender's characteristics and behaviors. One interviewee talked about how certain personality traits, attitudes, and behaviors of the offender interfered with her forgiveness process:

...I don't think [the male leader realizes he hurt me]. He doesn't have any idea. I think he's, well, [another member of the sangha] and my husband said he's narcissistic, and he could only see it in his view, and he thought he was completely right. There's this thing in Buddhism about *Vajra* anger, and that was his rationalization that he could attack me with all this incredible aggression, and he was justified. (Interviewer asked, "So what is *Vajra* anger?") *Vajra* anger is supposed to be that you can be very clear and cutting in the situation that needs change and could wake people up, but it's very direct, and it's done with a tremendous amount of compassion. That would be the last choice of moving the situation if things were really stuck and couldn't go forward, you know. It might feel like aggression, but it's compassion [that] is behind it. But he would just verbally attack me, you know. To give you an example, one time (Pause) I quit work for one year and worked at the [sangha], and he had come to see me in the office, and I don't know what he was upset about, and I would always try to be nice, but he could be really angry. Well, then he went back to his office and

emailed somebody [who is a member of the sangha] such an aggressive email that she called me up and asked me if I was physically OK. (In a shaky voice) I mean, that's how much anger he was coming at me with, you know, but she wanted to make sure he didn't beat me up or something. (Interviewer asked, "He emailed somebody else?") Talking about our conversations with so much anger so she called to see if I was OK, physically OK. (Interviewer responded, "Wow.") Yeah, just he's a nut case. (Interviewer asked, "Tell me about obstacles that you experienced with forgiving this offender. What was most challenging for you?) I think the most challenging thing was that he never admitted that he caused me any harm. (Tracy)

This interviewee identified what was most challenging in her forgiveness process as dealing with the offender's lack of acknowledgement of the offense. She attributed it to the offender's personality traits (i.e., "narcissistic" and unable to see other people's viewpoints). She also explained that such personality traits led the offender to misusing a Buddhist concept, *Vajra* anger, to rationalize his aggression toward her. During the follow-up interview, this interviewee reported that she heard from another member in the sangha that this male leader "felt bad" about the incident, which made her feel "relieved." This report indicated that her recognition of the offender's benevolence, even though she experienced it indirectly, still helped her to forgive him.

Facilitating factors for the process of forgiveness. When the interviewees were asked what helped them to overcome the obstacles or challenges in their forgiveness processes, two interviewees talked about how meditation facilitated their forgiveness processes, and the other two interviewees talked about how psychological distance was

helpful for them to make progress in their forgiveness processes. Furthermore, three interviewees suggested that generating compassion toward self and the offender promoted their forgiveness processes.

Meditation as Buddhist practice. This theme represented the interviewees' descriptions of how certain Buddhist meditative practices helped them to overcome the challenges in their forgiveness processes. Transcript examples included:

[What helped me to overcome the challenge was] Meditation practice. Well, basically using the practice I mentioned in terms of Pema Chödrön. Sitting with the emotion and cutting off the thoughts, and from the standpoint [of a lineage of Tibetan Buddhist practice], you know, the training is a 24/7 sort of practice...emotions are basically fed by our thought processes, and the more we think about it, the more we feed it, the more the mind goes in all sorts of directions. So the way to work with strong emotions is to sit and feel the emotions, which you know on the other hand we tend to run away from, but as long as we run away from it, it never resolves. So the notion here is that you sit and feel the emotion, and whenever it produces as strongly as possible, but you don't let your mind run off with all sorts of thinking. So I'm devastated by [my wife] saying she's leaving me, well, you know, to sit with those feelings, and then not get caught into "Oh, why is she leaving me? Oh, she's having an affair with him." However you want to go on, those are just making it worse. So the practice is basically trying to sit there and allow the emotions to come and go and to feel it but not let your mind take off. When you take off, you cut your thoughts, which is basically meditation. When you get caught in thought, you just label it, and then

you come back to your breath. So you are cutting your thinking without judgment, without getting caught, and coming back. So that's the essential practice. (Jake)

I think my Buddhist practice [helped me to make my forgiveness process easy for me]. (Interviewer asked, "Really, how so?") Well, because what we practice is letting go. That's one of [this sangha's] main practices. Letting go is when something comes up in your mind, and you've got emotion attached to it, or desire, or anger, or anything like that, you know, you just sort of touch and let go. Touch and go. Those are the words of Chögyam Trungpa. Touch and go. That's how you deal with anger or passion. Touch and go. (Interviewer asked, "Where do you go after you 'touch'?") Well, I go back to my other parts of my mind. I let that question or that doubt or that feeling or that anger or whatever, I just let that go and come back to my everyday life. You know, I don't feel I need to hang on to it. (Interviewer responded, "Right. So you stop thinking about it.") Yeah, when it comes up in my mind, I look at it. You don't wanna shut down your mind, you see... You're not trying to stop your thought. You let your thought be there, but you don't wanna follow it... 'cause if you follow it, you go into anger. But if you let go, you just stay where you are. Don't follow the thought... letting go means you just you see the thought and then you know you just touch it, notice it, what kind of thought it is, and then let go and come back to something else.

(Interviewer asked, "Come back to?") Come back to every day life or whatever you are doing. Suppose you are sitting doing meditation practice. Then you are not doing anything, right? You are just sitting practice, maybe following your

breath. And thought comes up about someone who did something to you, you look at the thought and then you come back to your breath. (Steve)

Both interviewees detailed several steps in their meditative practices to work with their emotions in their forgiveness processes: “noticing” or becoming aware of emotions arising in their minds and thoughts feeding the emotions; allowing themselves to feel or “touch” the emotions without letting their minds “follow” or ruminate on the thoughts behind the emotions; when noticing their minds “get caught” in a thought, “labeling” or acknowledging what the thought is and coming back to where they intended their minds to be or bringing their awareness back to what they originally intended to focus (e.g., sitting with emotions). They also indicated certain attitudes that they held in their meditative practices, such as openness, non-judgment, and acceptance toward whatever arises in their minds and what their minds tend to do.

Psychological distance. This theme represented the interviewees’ descriptions of how temporary psychological distance helped them to overcome the challenges in their forgiveness processes. Transcript examples included:

Just time enough to put [the offense] into perspective. Also, I think removing myself from the sangha so that it’s not as much part of me, so then it doesn’t matter as much what happens there. (Tracy)

...the contradiction of asking for help and then refusing it (Pause) was hard to take, but I didn’t find that so affecting as my response to [the offense], which I thought was very exaggerated, once I started getting over it. (Alice)

Both interviewees indicated that the passage of time was helpful for them to put the offense into perspective or to put their reactions aside to understand what happened more

deeply. One interviewee further described how she physically removed herself from the place where the offense occurred in order to disidentify herself from the psychological impact of the offense on her. They both suggested that such temporary psychological distance (including physical distance that promoted psychological distance) from the impact of the offenses on themselves helped them to reflect on the offenses in a more emotionally detached manner, which helped them to make progress in their forgiveness processes.

Compassion toward self and the offender. This theme represented the interviewees' descriptions of how their empathic understanding of the offenders' possible emotional difficulties promoted their forgiveness processes. Transcript examples included:

I knew, despite how much it hurt me to hear what [my wife] had to say, I also recognized she took a tremendous amount of courage, and she was trying very hard not to hurt anybody any more than necessary in the process [of divorce]. And within that process, she was quite hurt herself... [Forgiveness was for] both myself and her, you know...I had to forgive myself, too. I mean, marriage wasn't ending just because of her. And I had to make sure I didn't fall into the trap of (Pause) "I'm worthless," that sort of stuff. (Jake)

I remember the irritation of [the female leader's] behavior towards me, but I wouldn't say that it is strongest in my memory. Strongest is the kind of coldness that I showed [the female leader] was not helpful to me. It was hurtful to both of us. (Alice)

I assume [my wife] had reasons to leave. She was hurt, and we had lots of bad fights, and she was unhappy, and I was unhappy, so she decided to leave. I was concerned about my daughter mainly. So when I found out where my daughter was, then I let it all go, you know. (Steve)

When the interviewees were able to empathize with the offenders' possible emotional difficulties without dismissing their own, their perspectives on the offenses appeared to be transformed in a way that the boundary between the offender and the offended became permeable. One interviewee articulated that his process of forgiving the offender was interrelated with his process of forgiving himself. They all realized that not forgiving was harmful to both self and the offender, which inspired them to be more willing to forgive to alleviate the emotional difficulties evoked by the offense for both. In other words, the interviewees experienced compassion toward self and the offender in a sense that they understood the suffering of self and the offender and wanted to alleviate the suffering for both. During the follow-up interview, one participant, who did not describe anything relevant to this theme during the first interview, reported that "loving-kindness" and "self-compassion" contributed to her progress in her forgiveness process in a sense that she decided to "let go" of the offense in order to be "good" for herself.

Outcomes of the process of forgiveness. When the interviewees were asked about the results of their forgiveness processes, they referred to their intrapsychic and interpersonal changes. Also, from two interviewees' forgiveness processes, other distinct yet interrelated processes of reconciliation, grief, and self-forgiveness also emerged. Outcomes described by the interviewees were not necessarily the final results of their

forgiveness processes but changes about themselves or their relationships with the offenders that they recognized at the time of interviews.

Intrapsychic changes. This theme represented the interviewees' descriptions of their intrapsychic changes, including emotional and attitudinal changes, as an outcome of their forgiveness processes. All interviewees addressed emotional change as follows:

...at first I was just complete raw and hurt...It's kind of a relief because...it can just be behind me, and not has to be something that's a part of me, you know, because if you are not forgiving, you are holding onto something, and now it's, just like it's over, and it doesn't matter, can't go back, so it's less burden, I suppose. (Tracy)

I think when I got in touch with my daughter, I was able to let go of my wife and anger. (Steve)

I think I begin to really appreciate. (Pause) I could work through very strong feelings, especially very strong negative feelings (Pause) and be able to resolve them in a way that actually feels good. (Jake)

I think I'm much more aware, but it's funny like being tender hearted is not like an awareness...but it's an emotional state. And we were taught [by our Buddhist teacher] that mind is here (Pointing her chest) that heart is mind, and if you open your heart, it's not something that you need to crank it open, it's just naturally that way...(Interviewer asked, "Maybe you've already answered the next question, but how would you describe the results of forgiving the offender?") Well, there's tremendous appreciation [for the offender] who had been so very kind to me. (Alice)

In the first and second quotes, the interviewees described how their emotional reactions to the offenders and the offenses changed from the negative to the neutral (e.g., feeling relieved or less burdened of the impact of the offense on oneself and not holding onto anger any longer). In the third and fourth quotes, the interviewees described how their emotional reactions to the offenders and the offenses changed from the negative to the positive (e.g., appreciation for what they had learned from their experiences of the offenses and gratitude toward the offenders). All interviewees indicated different degrees of change in their initial reactions to the offenses or the offenders on the emotional level. During the follow-up interview, one interviewee stated that the degree of “emotional relief” was more complete than what she had experienced at the time of the first interview.

One interviewee also addressed general attitudinal change concerning how to deal with interpersonal conflicts and their emotional reactions as an outcome of his forgiveness process:

My being able to open to her and to forgive was very powerful and very significant. That was pretty amazing milestone in my life. [It] makes it easier to apply the same thing to the same sorts of situations. So somebody says something to that you ordinarily might react to or take as a slam or some kind of insult, whatever. It's rather minor compared to the situations [that I've experienced]...what I worked through there expands then to any sort of relationships...I think there's more of (Pause) an openness to people and their behavior, less reactivity, more tendency to see them as acting in a sense without

malice. Careful to judge malice, and careful to judge why people are reacting.
(Jake)

There was this tendency at times, which I think was cultural...that I should be acting in certain ways or I should be doing certain things, and there was a real struggle not to fall into the trap of those should's. One of those is that you should be really angry, and you should be feeling like this or that. And after that the realization that it all wasn't necessary, that you could act in a very friendly manner, and still feel good. It's almost like, you have to feel angry and you have to hate somebody, in order to feel better. But I don't feel that way now. So as far as the feeling goes, that was, you don't have to feel angry and hurt to resolve the situation. (Jake)

This interviewee described his attitudinal change in several different areas. In the first quote, he identified his improved ability to deal with his own emotional reactions to others and his increased openness and positive regards toward others. In the second quote, he identified his unlearning of his restrictive emotional tendency conditioned by masculine gender socialization.

Interpersonal changes. This theme represented the interviewees' descriptions of a change of their relationships with the offenders as an outcome of their forgiveness processes. Three interviewees attested their current positive relationships with the offenders. Transcript examples included:

[My former wife and I] are friends. We're close friends, we care for each other...We are able to have a relationship with our children. We are able to share them. Problems, difficulties, you know, we still work in a sense as a family unit in

relationship to the kids. We are able to share our personal lives up to whatever level is comfortable. I'm still connected with her family, and if something happens, I think, where to one or the other of us, where you know, we need each other's help, we would be there. So I think that's pretty much where it currently stands. (Jake)

[My former second wife and I] still communicate once in a while by email. (Steve)
...before the hurtful behavior on [the female leader's] part and my part we were never that close as we are now. (Alice)

In the first and second quotes, the interviewees described that their marital relationships with their spouses ended, but they were able to reconnect and foster friendship with their former spouses. In the third quote, the interviewee suggested that forgiveness helped her to not only reconnect with the female leader but also increased closeness in her relationship with the female leader. These quotes indicated the interviewees' reconciliation with the offenders as an outcome of their forgiveness processes.

During the follow-up interview, the other interviewee, who did not report any positive interpersonal change in her forgiveness process at the time of the first interview, reported that her relationship with the members of the sangha (secondary offenders) became more positive over time.

Reconciliation, grief, and self-forgiveness as interrelated processes. From some interviewees' forgiveness processes, the issues of reconciliation, grief, and self-forgiveness emerged as distinct yet interrelated processes. One interviewee defined reconciliation as "coming back to some kind of common mind, healing, or connection after splitting apart in some fashion." He also described his experience of reconciliation

as a process in which “the whole relationship,” “self identities,” and “mutual identity” were “reconstructed.” He then discussed the relationship between forgiveness and reconciliation as follows:

Forgiveness I think is essential to reconciliation. I mean, you can have reconciliation on simply a functional basis, and I think it probably happens a lot in relationships. People stay together for their kids, but they don’t care much for each other, and they’re not together emotionally any more...I think going to a Buddhist view of this forgiveness would have been seen at many levels, you know, mind, body, spirit, if you will, but mentally you can have all the logic that says to forgive somebody, you can forgive them logically, but it’s not gone emotionally or physically...the deeper you can make [the forgiveness], the deeper the reconciliation...[Forgiveness and reconciliation] are both process. I mean, at some point, they may be perceived to be an end, but you know, become more and more subtle, less and less pervasive. (Jake)

This interviewee previously identified his reconciliation with his former spouse as an outcome of his forgiveness process. In this quote, he stated that forgiveness was “essential” to reconciliation, thereby indicating the reciprocal relationship between forgiveness and reconciliation in his experience. He also emphasized the process-oriented nature of forgiveness and reconciliation and described his experience of progress in such processes in terms of level or depth (i.e., completing from the “logical” or “functional,” to the “emotional” or “physical, and to the “spiritual” levels) as well as subtlety and pervasiveness in his consciousness (i.e., the deeper the process becomes, the more subtle and less pervasive it becomes).

During the follow-up interview, this interviewee described further improvement of his friendship with his former wife in his forgiveness process and reported that his process became even more subtle and less pervasive in his consciousness as he had predicted during the first interviews. Also, he assessed his level of forgiveness by his visceral and emotional reactions to his former spouse. He described that he was “still slightly bothered” when he recently got together with his former wife and her boyfriend and anticipated that he “would not be bothered at all” when he will have completely forgiven his former spouse.

All participants previously discussed their sense of loss as an essential part of their experiences of the offenses. While describing the outcomes of their forgiveness processes, two interviewees suggested that they were still grieving for what they lost due to the offenses:

There’s a certain separation there in a sense that she’s been married once since the divorce, and now she’s in another relationship, you know, I’m not particularly interested in knowing a lot about her personal in that area. I mean, there’s still that sensitivity, the loss of our closeness and intimacy in that sense...there’s still an element of forgiveness still going on. I mean, there’s still pain...I wouldn’t have a feeling of her renewing our relationship as a couple or anything like that, there’s still sadness, you know. (Jake)

I just feel all I could do is cry... not wanting to think about [my pain] or experiencing it, I guess, because (Choking in tears) forgiveness doesn’t mean that the pain goes away, really, I guess... even though I’m not being in the past.

Something is really lost...[Sangha] is just not providing me what I would need from [it]. (Tracy)

In the first quote, the interviewee identified his loss was of “closeness” and “intimacy” with his spouse of over 20 years. In the second quote, the interviewee identified her loss was her relationship with the sangha that used to fulfill her needs. They suggested that their grief processes emerged from their forgiveness processes, and that their grief processes were ongoing while their forgiveness processes were reaching their completion. They no longer felt angry but still sad about something invaluable and irreplaceable that they lost due to the offenses.

One interviewee articulated how his process of forgiving the offender was interrelated with his process of forgiving himself. While describing the outcomes of his forgiveness process, he revisited the issue of self-forgiveness as follows:

[My wife and I] are trying to still work over or let go of some of the hurt on both our parts, and some of the blame, not so much I think we blame each other as much as we blame ourselves, you know. (Jake)

This interviewee indicated that self-forgiveness in a sense of letting go of self-blame was an ongoing process that emerged from his process of forgiving his former spouse in a sense of letting go of his own hurt.

During the follow-up interview, this interviewee reported that he neither blamed himself nor regretted what he had done in his relationship with his former wife any longer. However, he stated that he recognized his own self-critical tendency, which was hard for him to separate from his self-forgiveness process for this particular offense. He also discussed a difference between self-forgiveness and self-compassion as follows: self-

compassion helped him to get out of his ego and have a broader perspective on what happened while self-forgiveness involved letting go of his attachment to self-blame and regret.

Experiential definitions of forgiveness. Two interviewees' experiential definitions of forgiveness included a component of emotional relief, described as "letting go" or "not holding resentment" and its visceral effect as "lightening up." The other two interviewees elaborated on what they let go from a Buddhist perspective:

I think [forgiveness] is basically letting go of all of the feelings of personal hurt and pain that somebody has caused you... a process of recognizing more and more where my own ego was involved in this and generating the hurt and damage, suffering... be willing to give up that ego aspect. This notion that something has been done to you intentionally by some evil person is where we tend to go...the big thing was to find the connections to [the offender's] basic goodness... you begin seeing the other person by getting out of yourself, and once you begin seeing the other person, you also begin to see how you could be doing the same sort of thing, you know. These are human things... I think it all really stems from having some basic Buddhist concept of letting go of your ego, and once you get out of yourself, you open up, and then it's difficult to hold onto the anger because most of all of that is "my" hurt, and once you get out of "my," you know, it's no longer your hurt. (Jake)

...the issue of forgiveness is very much related to tender heart...In a very good way, forgiveness expresses the Buddhist teaching that...none of us exists individually. We are totally dependent on all the others, even just to be alive. It

certainly is recognition that...we want to erase our thought of separateness.

(Pause) And it just makes the ways of separating from others look completely unnecessary in forgiveness. (Alice)

In the first quote, the interviewee pointed out that of what he let go in his forgiveness process was feelings of “hurt and pain” and thoughts or “notions” that the offender was an “evil” person who intentionally offended him and caused him feelings of hurt and pain. Furthermore, he pointed out that letting go of such feelings and thoughts meant to “be willing to give up” his “ego aspect” that was holding onto such feelings and thoughts with a sense of entitlement. He discussed letting go of his ego involved recognizing how he was generating his own suffering by his attachment to such feelings and thoughts. By “getting out” of his ego, he was able to “open up” his mind to “connect” with the offender through the “basic goodness” within them, recognize the potential of being the offender within himself and the universal aspect of the hurt shared by all human beings. In the second quote, the interviewee described her visceral experience of forgiveness as recovering her “tender heart.” Like the other participant, she discussed recovering one’s tender heart by forgiveness involved recognizing the falsity of the thought that separates the offended from the offender according to the principle of interdependence. She also provided this researcher her written feedback after the follow-up interview stating that she believes “forgiveness promotes compassion, instead of ego maintenance, as the basic value in society.” These two interviewees’ definitions of forgiveness were indicative of their self-transformative experiences in their forgiveness processes.

Summary: Themes and elements of the four Buddhists’ forgiveness processes.

A summary table of the common themes and elements of the interviewees’ forgiveness

processes is available in Table 4. Three elements (aggression, breach of commitment, and betrayal) emerged from the nature of the offense described by all interviewees.

Psychological investment was an element found in the contexts of the offense for all interviews, while psychological trauma and sexism were elements described by two female interviewees. Two elements (broken ego and a sense of loss) emerged from the meaning of the offense described by all interviewees. Initial reactions to the offense were described in four domains: visceral, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. Interviewees' visceral reactions to the offense were characterized by shock, confusion, fear, irritation, and/or pain. Their cognitive reactions were characterized by speculation on the reason for the offense and/or rumination on the unfairness of the offense. Their emotional reactions were characterized by feeling anxious, sad, hurt, unsupported, and/or put off. Their behavioral reactions were characterized by their engagement in fight-or-flight responses or resistance to acting out initial reactions. Interviewees' descriptions of their motivation to forgive were characterized by their aspiration to forgive as a Buddhist practice, and their recognition of benevolence in the offenders on a condition of their prior positive relationships with the offenders. Dealing with a sense of loss was an element found in all interviewees' descriptions of challenges in their forgiveness processes. Socio-cultural conditioning, such as religious and gender socialization, were described by some interviewees. The offender's lack of acknowledge of the offense was described by one female interviewee. Compassion toward self and the offender was a theme emerged from all interviewees' descriptions of facilitating factors for their forgiveness processes. Two male interviewees also described meditation as a Buddhist practice as a facilitating factor, while two female interviewees described psychological distance by the passage of time or

physically removing oneself from the reminders of the offense as a facilitating factor. Outcomes of forgiveness processes were described in two domains, intrapsychic and interpersonal. Two interviewees described negative-to-neutral emotional change, while the other two interviewees described negative-to-positive emotional change. Also, two interviewees described the issue of grief. One interviewee described general attitudinal change and the issue of self-forgiveness. All interviewees described reconciliation as an outcome of their forgiveness processes on a condition of their prior positive relationships with the offenders. Two interviewees' descriptions of their experiential definitions of forgiveness were characterized by emotional relief and/or its visceral experience, while those of the other two interviewees were characterized by self-transformation and/or its visceral experience.

Table 4.2

Summary of Themes and Elements of Interviewees' Forgiveness Processes

Categories	Themes	Elements	Described by
Descriptions of the offense	Nature of the offense	Aggression	Tracy, Alice
		Breach of commitment	Jake, Steve
		Betrayal	Jake, Steve, Tracy
	Contexts of the offense	Psychological investment	All
		Psychological trauma	Tracy
		Sexism	Alice
	Meanings of the offense	Broken ego	All
		A sense of loss	All
Initial reactions to the offense	Visceral	Shock, confusion, fear, irritation, and/or pain	All
	Cognitive	Speculation on the reason for the offense and/or rumination on the unfairness of the offense	All
	Emotional	Anxiety, sadness, hurt, unsupported, and/or put-off	All
	Behavioral	Fight-or-flight responses	Tracy, Steve, Alice
		Resisting acting out initial reactions	Jake

Table 4.2 (continued)

Summary of Themes and Elements of Interviewees' Forgiveness Processes

Categories	Themes	Elements	Described by
Motivation to forgive	Aspiration to forgive as a Buddhist practice		All
	Recognition of benevolence in the offender on a condition of prior positive relationship with the offender		All
Challenges in forgiveness process	Dealing with a sense of loss		All
	Socio-cultural conditioning	Religious socialization (Catholic)	Jake, Steve, Tracy
		Gender socialization	Jake, Tracy
	Offender's characteristics and behaviors	Personality traits (e.g., narcissistic)	Tracy
		Lack of acknowledgement of the offense	Tracy
Facilitating factors for forgiveness process	Meditation as a Buddhist practice		Jake, Steve
	Psychological distance	The passage of time	Tracy, Alice
		Physically removing oneself from the reminders of the offense	Tracy
	Compassion toward self and the offender		All

Table 4.2 (continued)

Summary of Themes and Elements of Interviewees' Forgiveness Processes

Categories	Themes	Elements	Described by
Outcomes of forgiveness process	Intrapsychic	Negative-to-neutral emotional change	Tracy, Steve
		Negative-to-positive emotional change	Jake, Alice
		General attitudinal change	Jake
		Grief	Jake, Tracy
		Self-forgiveness	Jake
	Interpersonal	Reconciliation on a condition of prior positive relationship	All
Experiential definitions of forgiveness	Emotional relief	Letting go or not holding onto anger	Steve, Tracy
	Visceral experience of emotional relief	Lightening up	Tracy
	Self-transformation	Letting go or not holding onto one's ego	Jake, Alice
	Visceral experience of self-transformation	Tender heart	Alice

Quantitative Results

Quantitative data were collected from 112 Buddhists via online self-report survey. No data were missing. Response validity was assessed for two criteria. First, responses must be provided by individuals who have been practicing Buddhism in the United States. SurveyGizmo, which was the online survey management tool used for this study, automatically collected and recorded respondents' locations. Four cases were excluded from the data set because they indicated that their locations were other than the United States. Second, responses to the Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI) must be based on respondents' actual experiences of having been unfairly and deeply hurt by someone and being in the process of forgiving the person or having forgiven the person without denying the hurt or condoning the person who hurt them. EFI includes one response validity item (Question 1) and the Pseudo Forgiveness Scale (Questions 61 through 65). According to the guideline provided by the developers of the instrument (Enright & Rique, 2000), seven cases were excluded because they indicated that they experienced "no hurt" when the incident occurred and/or that their scores on the Pseudo Forgiveness Scale were 20 or higher. Additionally, three cases caught this researcher's attention for a possible response validity concern. Those three cases indicated that they did not consider themselves "Buddhist" (Question 2 of the Buddhist Practice Questionnaire [BPQ]), but they also indicated that they were affiliated with a Buddhist community (Question 6 of BPQ), and that they have been practicing Buddhism (Question 8 of BPQ). Since people can practice Buddhism whether or not they identify themselves as Buddhist, those three cases were retained in the data set. Thus, statistical analyses were conducted on the remaining sample ($N = 101$).

Table 5 shows demographic characteristics of the sample used in the quantitative component of this study. One hundred one participants included: 50 males and 51 females whose age ranged from 24 to 70 years old ($M = 50.8$, $SD = 10.76$). The highest level of education that the participants had completed ranged from middle school to doctorate. The majority (81.2 %) had completed a bachelor's level or higher degree. They also included 15 people of color (14.9 %) and 17 people who identified their sexual/affectional orientation as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (16.8 %). Table 6 shows the diversity of the sample in terms of their Buddhist affiliation and practices. Typical participants were affiliated with a sangha based on a *Mahayana* Buddhist tradition and regularly meditated as a part of their Buddhist practice.

Table 4.3

Summary of Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 101)

Variable	N	Percentage
Gender		
Male	50	49.5
Female	51	50.5
Age		
24-29	5	5.0
30-39	9	8.9
40-49	26	25.7
50-59	40	39.6
60-69	20	19.8
70	1	1.0
Race/ethnicity		
White/Caucasian/European (and not Hispanic)	86	85.1
People of color*	15	14.9
Sexual/affectional orientation		
Heterosexual	84	83.2
Lesbian, gay, or bisexual	17	16.8

*People of color included Asian/Pacific Islander, Black/African, Hispanic/Latino(a), and Other or Mixed Race/Ethnicity.

Table 4.3 (continued)

Summary of Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 101)

Variable	N	Percentage*
Highest level of education completed		
Junior high (middle) school	3	3.0
High school	12	11.9
Associate degree	4	4.0
Bachelor's degree	31	30.7
Master's degree	32	31.7
Doctoral degree	19	18.8

*Percentages do not total 100 due to rounding.

Table 4.4

Summary of Buddhist Affiliation and Practice Variables of Participants (N = 101)

Variable	N	Percentage*
Affiliation with any sangha		
Yes	95	94.1
No	6	5.9
Traditions of Buddhism		
Tibetan/ <i>Vajrayana</i>	24	23.8
Order of Interbeing	5	5.0
Nichiren	27	26.7
Zen	24	23.8
Pure Land	5	5.0
Theravada	4	4.0
Other	11	10.9
No Response	1	1.0
Years Spent for Practicing Buddhism		
< 1	2	2.0
1-9	31	30.7
10-19	22	21.8
20-29	23	22.7
30-39	18	17.8
40-49	5	5.0

*Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Table 4.4 (continued)

Summary of Buddhist Affiliation and Practice Variables of Participants (N = 101)

Variable	N	Percentage*
Primary Buddhist practice		
Meditation	43	42.6
Chanting a <i>mantra(s)</i> and/or reciting a <i>sutra(s)</i>	26	25.7
Attending Buddhist services and/or rituals	3	3.0
Studying <i>Dharma</i>	18	17.8
Community services or social activism	4	4.0
Other activity	7	6.9
Frequency of meditation		
Every day	49	48.5
Several times a week	31	30.7
Once a week	9	8.9
A few times a month	6	5.9
A few times a year	3	3.0
Never	3	3.0

*Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Quantitative analysis results. Quantitative analyses of the survey data included: preliminary examination of data, reliability analysis, multiple regression analysis, and mediation analysis. First, the assessment of normality, variability, outliers, and linearity of all quantitative variables, and multicollinearity among the independent variables is presented. Second, the results of reliability analysis for the Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI), the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS), and the Psychological Well-Being Scales (PWBS) are presented. Third, the results of multiple regression analysis for Regression Model 1 and Regression Model 2 are examined. Fourth, the results of mediation analysis for Mediation Model are examined. Finally, a summary of the results of quantitative analysis are presented.

Preliminary examination of data. Histograms of frequency distributions (along with mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis), bivariate scatter plots, Mahalanobis distances, and a correlation matrix of all quantitative variables included in this study (age, years spent in Buddhist practice, state forgiveness, self-compassion, and psychological well-being) (Table 7) were examined to assess the normality of their distributions, univariate and multivariate outliers, the linearity of the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variables, and the multicollinearity among the independent variables for the appropriateness of performing correlational and multiple regression analysis. All distributions were found to be fairly normal with skewness and kurtosis being within ± 2.00 . No significant univariate outliers or problems with linearity were observed. However, one bivariate outlier was detected, and the case was further examined. The case was found to have a combination of unusually low scores on self-compassion and psychological well-being compared to the other cases.

Nevertheless, the case was still in line with the other cases (i.e., low discrepancy), and it was kept in the data. The other variable, gender, was coded as a categorical variable (Female =1 and Male = 0). All bivariate correlations among the independent variables were .50 or less, and no significant problems with multicollinearity among the independent variables were indicated.

Table 4.5

Correlation Matrix of All Quantitative Variables: Age, Years Spent in Buddhist Practice (YBP), State Forgiveness (SF), Self-Compassion (SC), and Psychological Well-Being (PWB) (N = 101)

	Age	YBP	SF	SC	PWB
Age	1.00	.50	.07	.29	.16
YBP	.50	1.00	.04	.37	.23
SF	.07	.04	1.00	.37	.41
SC	.29	.37	.37	1.00	.72
PWB	.16	.23	.41	.72	1.00

Reliability analysis. The three main variables in this study (state forgiveness, self-compassion, and psychological well-being) were measured by the total scores of the Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI), the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS), and the Psychological Well-Being Scales (PWBS), respectively. Reliability analysis (Cronbach's Alpha) was performed on the three scales. They were found to be highly reliable (EFI's $\alpha = .98$, SCS's $\alpha = .93$, and PWBS's $\alpha = .91$).

Multiple regression analysis. To test Regression Model 1, a standard multiple regression analysis was performed with gender, age, and the years spent in Buddhist practice as the independent variables, and state forgiveness as the dependent variable. Then a sequential multiple regression analysis was performed with gender, age, the years spent in Buddhist practice, and state forgiveness as the independent variables, and psychological well-being as the dependent variable. As for the sequence, gender, age, and the years spent in Buddhist practice were entered at the first step; state forgiveness was entered at the second step. Gender, age, and the years spent in Buddhist practice did not predict state forgiveness. However, with gender, age, and the years spent in Buddhist practice being statistically controlled, state forgiveness significantly positively predicted psychological well-being accounting for 21.5% of the variance, $F(4, 96) = 7.846, p < .001$ (Table 7). As expected, state forgiveness significantly positively predicted psychological well-being ($\beta = .389, p < .001$), which was the strongest predictor of psychological well-being in comparison to the years spent in Buddhist practice ($\beta = .199, p < .05$) and gender ($\beta = .173, p < .05$). Age did not predict psychological well-being whether or not state forgiveness was taken into account. Overall, the greater the degree of state forgiveness experienced by Buddhists, the higher their level of psychological well-

being, although spending more years in Buddhist practice and being female also contributed to a higher level of psychological well-being. *Figure 6* shows Resulting Regression Model 1 with revised results by re-running the sequential multiple regression equation with the significant independent variables only.

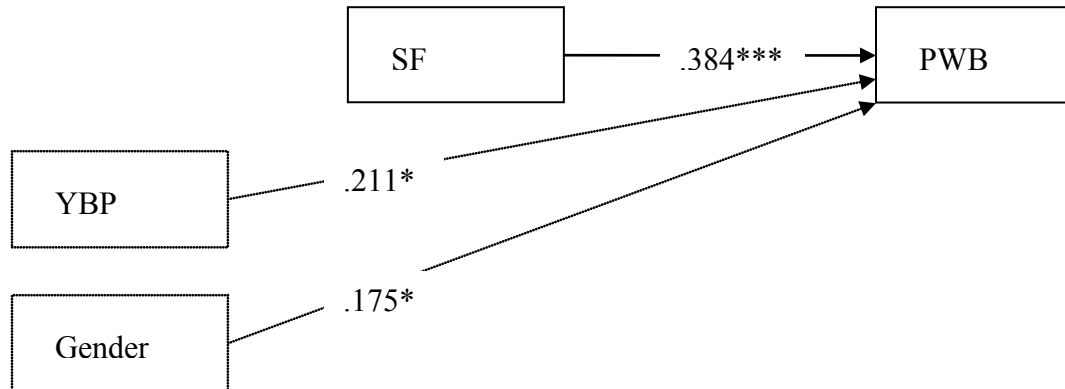
Table 4.6

State Forgiveness (SF) Predicting Psychological Well-Being (PWB) with Gender, Age, and Years Spent in Buddhist Practice (YBP) Being Statistically Controlled

Model	Variable	<i>B</i>	SE <i>B</i>	β	<i>t</i>
1	(Constant)	4.583	.254		18.028
	Gender	.211	.103	.199*	2.051
	Age	.002	.006	.041	.365
	YBP	.009	.005	.203*	1.817
2	(Constant)	3.651	.316		11.547
	Gender	.183	.094	.173*	1.936
	Age	.001	.005	.018	.175
	YBP	.009	.005	.199*	1.939
	SF	.212	.048	.389***	4.370

Note. Model 1 $R^2 = .096$, Adjusted $R^2 = .069$ ($p < .05$); Model 2 $R^2 = .496$, Adjusted $R^2 = .215$ ($p < .001$). * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (p values for directional tests). Gender was coded as Female = 1 and Male = 0.

Figure 4.1. Resulting regression model 1: State forgiveness predicting psychological well-being with years spent in Buddhist practice and gender being statistically controlled



Note. SF = state forgiveness. Gender was coded as male = 0, female = 1. YBP = years spent in Buddhist practice. PWB = psychological well-being. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (p values for directional tests).

To test Regression Model 2, a standard multiple regression analysis was performed with gender, age, and the years spent in Buddhist practice as the independent variables, and self-compassion as the dependent variable. Then, a sequential multiple regression analysis was performed with gender, age, the years spent in Buddhist practice, and self-compassion as the independent variables, and psychological well-being as the dependent variable. As for the sequence, gender, age, and the years spent in Buddhist practice were entered at the first step, and self-compassion was entered at the second step. Gender and age did not predict self-compassion, but the years spent in Buddhist practice significantly positively predicted self-compassion accounting for 12.6% of the variance, $F(3, 97) = 5.827, \beta = .300, p < .01$ (Table 9). The more years spent in Buddhist practice, the greater self-compassion experienced by Buddhists. Furthermore, with gender, age, and the years spent in Buddhist practice being statistically controlled for, self-compassion significantly positively predicted psychological well-being accounting for 54.1% of the variance, $F(4, 96) = 30.441, p < .001$ (Table 10). As expected, self-compassion significantly positively predicted psychological well-being ($\beta = .739, p < .001$), which was the strongest predictor of psychological well-being in comparison to gender ($\beta = .178, p < .05$). Age did not predict psychological well-being whether or not self-compassion was taken into account. The years spent in Buddhist practice significantly positively predicted psychological well-being ($\beta = .203, p < .05$), but its impact became non-significant when self-compassion was taken into account. Overall, the greater the degree of self-compassion experienced by Buddhists, the higher their level of psychological well-being, although being female also contributed to a higher level of psychological well-being. *Figure 7* shows Resulting Regression Model 2 with revised

results by re-running the sequential multiple regression equation with the significant independent variables only.

Table 4.7

Gender, Age, and Years Spent in Buddhist Practice (YBP) Predicting Self-Compassion (SC)

Variable	<i>B</i>	SE <i>B</i>	β	<i>t</i>
(Constant)	3.165	.288		10.976
Gender	.035	.116	.028	.303
Age	.008	.006	.136	1.253
YBP	.016	.006	.300**	2.771

Note. $R^2 = .153$, Adjusted $R^2 = .126$ ($p < .01$). * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (p values are for directional tests). Gender was coded as Female = 1 and Male = 0.

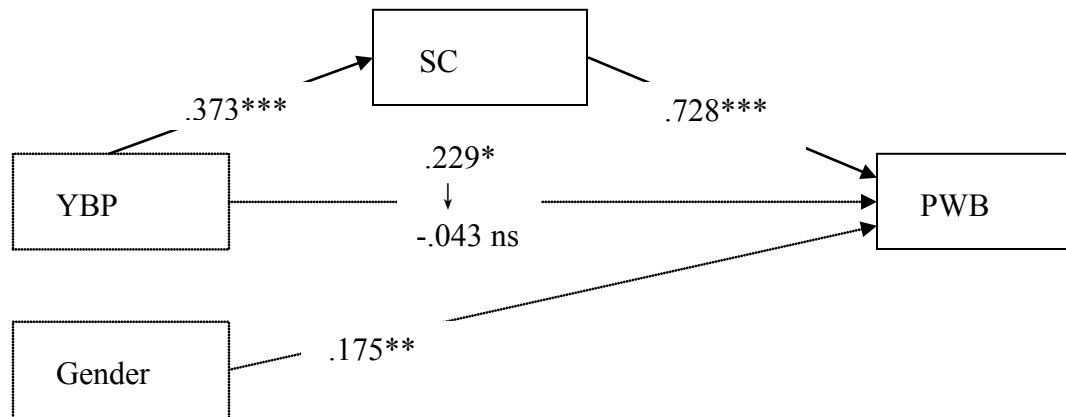
Table 4.8

Self Compassion (SC) Predicting Psychological Well-Being (PWB) with Gender, Age, and Years Spent in Buddhist Practice (YBP) Being Statistically Controlled

Model	Variable	<i>B</i>	SE <i>B</i>	β	<i>t</i>
1	(Constant)	4.583	.254		18.028
	Gender	.211	.103	.199*	2.051
	Age	.002	.006	.041	.365
	YBP	.009	.005	.203*	1.817
2	(Constant)	2.587	.267		9.677
	Gender	.188	.072	.178*	2.612
	Age	-.003	.004	-.060	-.751
	YBP	.000	.004	-.019	-.228
	SC	.631	.063	.739***	10.038

Note. Model 1 $R^2 = .096$, Adjusted $R^2 = .069$ ($p < .05$); Model 2 $R^2 = .559$, Adjusted $R^2 = .541$ ($p < .001$). * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (p values for directional tests). Gender was coded as Female = 1 and Male = 0.

Figure 4.2. Resulting regression model 2: Years spent in Buddhist practice predicting self-compassion, and self-compassion predicting psychological well-being with years spent in Buddhist practice and gender being statistically controlled



Note. SC = self-compassion. Gender was coded as male (m) = 0, female (f) = 1. YBP = years spent in Buddhist practice. PWB = psychological well-being.
 $*p < .05$, $**p < .01$, $***p < .001$ (p values for directional tests).

Mediation analysis. A Mediation Model was assessed with state forgiveness as the exogenous variable, psychological well-being as the endogenous variable, and self-compassion as the hypothesized mediating variable. To test mediation, I took the following four steps, including three regression analysis, suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986) and Frazier, Barron, and Tix (2004). First, I examined if state forgiveness significantly positively predicted self-compassion (Path A). Second, I examined if self-compassion significantly positively predicted psychological well-being (Path B). Third, I examined if state forgiveness significantly positively predicted psychological well-being (Path C). Finally, I examined if the degree of relationship between state forgiveness and psychological well-being (Path C) was reduced to zero (i.e., full mediation) or was reduced but not to zero (i.e., partial mediation) when self-compassion was included in the equation (Path C').

The first standard multiple regression analysis was performed with state forgiveness as the independent variable and self-compassion as the dependent variable. State forgiveness significantly positively predicted self-compassion accounting for 13.2% of the variance, $F(1, 99) = 16.266$, $\beta = .376$, $p < .001$ (Table 10). The results of this regression indicated that the greater the degree of state forgiveness experienced by Buddhists, the greater their degree of self-compassion. The second standard multiple regression analysis was performed with self-compassion as the independent variable and psychological well-being as the dependent variable. Self-Compassion significantly positively predicted psychological well-being accounting for 52% of the variance, $F(1, 99) = 109.484$, $\beta = .725$, $p < .001$ (Table 11). The results of this regression indicated that the greater the degree of self-compassion experienced by Buddhists, the higher their level

of psychological well-being. The third standard multiple regression analysis was performed with state forgiveness as the independent variable and psychological well-being as the dependent variable. State forgiveness significantly positively predicted psychological well-being accounting for 16.1% of the variance, $F(1, 99) = 20.218$, $\beta = .412$, $p < .001$ (Table 13). The results of this regression indicated that the greater the degree of state forgiveness experienced by Buddhists, the higher their level of psychological well-being.

In the final step of the mediation analysis, the fourth standard multiple regression analysis was performed with state forgiveness and self-compassion as the independent variables and psychological well-being as the dependent variable. State forgiveness and self-compassion significantly positively predicted psychological well-being accounting for 53.9% of the variance, $F(2, 98) = 59.366$, $p < .001$ (Table 13). The results of this regression were consistent with previously presented regression results, in that the greater the degree of state forgiveness and self-compassion experienced by Buddhists, the higher their level of psychological well-being. Furthermore, when self-compassion ($\beta = .664$, $p < .001$) was included in the analysis, the beta for state forgiveness was reduced from .412 ($p < .001$) to .163 ($p < .05$), which demonstrated that self-compassion partially mediated the relationship between state forgiveness and psychological well-being (*Figure 8*). In other words, self-compassion partially explained the relationship between state forgiveness and psychological well-being.

Table 4.9

State Forgiveness (SF) Predicting Self-Compassion (SC)

Variable	<i>B</i>	SE <i>B</i>	β	<i>t</i>
(Constant)	2.728	.288		9.462
SF	.240	.059	.376***	4.033

Note. $R^2 = .141$, Adjusted $R^2 = .132$ ($p < .001$). * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (p values for directional tests).

Table 4.10

Self-Compassion (SC) Predicting Psychological Well-Being (PWB)

Variable	<i>B</i>	SE <i>B</i>	β	<i>t</i>
(Constant)	2.564	.232		11.073
SC	.619	.059	.725***	10.463

Note. $R^2 = .525$, Adjusted $R^2 = .520$ ($p < .001$). * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (p values for directional tests).

Table 4.11

State Forgiveness (SF) Predicting Psychological Well-Being (PWB)

Variable	<i>B</i>	SE <i>B</i>	β	<i>t</i>
(Constant)	3.890	.242		16.074
SF	.224	.050	.412***	4.496

Note. $R^2 = .170$, Adjusted $R^2 = .161$ ($p < .001$). * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (p values for directional tests).

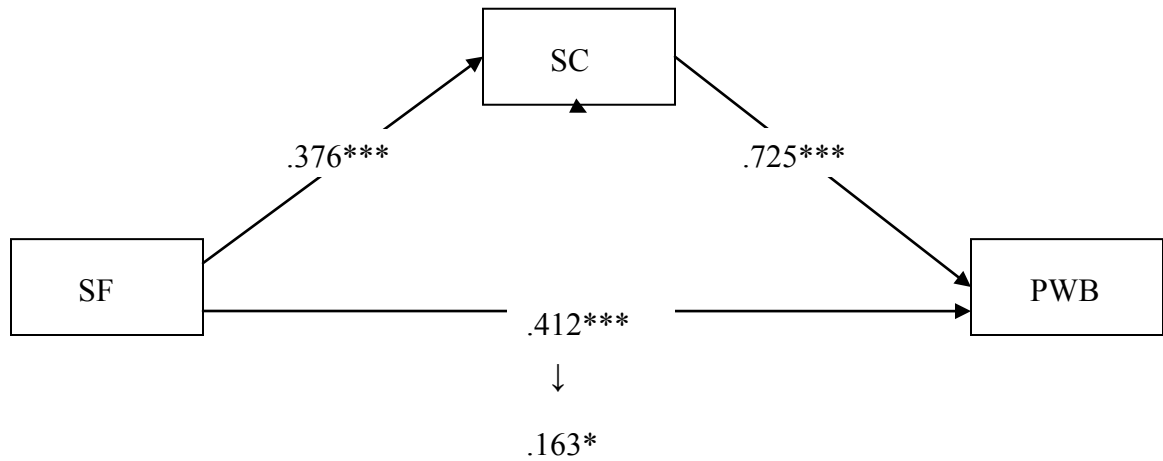
Table 4.12

State Forgiveness (SF) and Self-Compassion (SC) Predicting Psychological Well-Being (PWB)

Variable	<i>B</i>	SE <i>B</i>	β	<i>t</i>
(Constant)	2.345	.248		9.467
SF	.088	.040	.163*	2.217
SC	.567	.063	.664***	9.054

Note. $R^2 = .548$, Adjusted $R^2 = .539$ ($p < .001$). * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (p values for directional tests).

Figure 4.3. Resulting mediation model: Self-compassion mediating state forgiveness and psychological well-being



Note. SF = state forgiveness, SC = self-compassion, PWB = psychological well-being.
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (p values for directional tests).

Summary of the quantitative results. A final summary of theoretical and statistical hypotheses with measurements and analyses is available in Table 15.

Quantitative results can be summarized as follows. First, the greater the degree of state forgiveness experienced by Buddhists, the higher their level of psychological well-being, although spending more years in Buddhist practice and being female also contributed to a higher level of psychological well-being. Second, the more years spent in Buddhist practice, the greater the degree of self-compassion experienced by Buddhists. Furthermore, more self-compassionate Buddhists experienced a higher level of psychological well-being, although being female also contributed to a higher level of psychological well-being. The years spent in Buddhist practice also predicted psychological well-being, but its impact became non-significant when self-compassion was taken into account. Third, self-compassion partially mediated the relationship between state forgiveness and psychological well-being. Additionally, age neither predicted state forgiveness, self-compassion, nor psychological well-being.

Table 4.13

*Final Summary of Theoretical and Statistical Hypotheses with Measurements and**Analyses (N = 101)*

Research Hypotheses	Statistical Hypotheses	Instrumentation	Analyses	Significance
1. Gender (MF), age, and the years spent in Buddhist practice (YBP) will significantly predict Buddhists' levels of state forgiveness (SF). (a) Being female Buddhists, as compared to being male Buddhists, will significantly positively predict their levels of SF. (b) Being older Buddhists, as compared to being younger Buddhists, will significantly positively predict their levels of SF. (c) YBP will significantly positively predict Buddhists' levels of SF.	$H_1: \beta_{mf} > 0$ $\beta_{age} > 0$ $\beta_{ybp} > 0$ $(H_0: \beta_{mf} = 0$ $\beta_{age} = 0$ $\beta_{ybp} = 0)$	Demographic Questionnaire (DQ): Q1 (Male = 0, Female = 1) DQ: Q2 (continuous variable) Buddhist Practice Questionnaire (BPQ): Q3 (continuous variable) Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI) total scores	Standard multiple regression	Not supported
2. With gender, age, and YBP being statistically controlled, state forgiveness (SF) will significantly positively predict Buddhists' levels of psychological well-being (PWB).	$H_1: \beta_{sf \cdot mf, age, ybp} > 0$ $(H_0: \beta_{sf \cdot mf, age, ybp} = 0)$	DQ: Q1 (Male = 0, Female = 1) DQ: Q2 (continuous variable) BPQ: Q3 (continuous variable) EFI total scores Psychological Well-Being Scales (PWBS) total scores	Sequential multiple regression	Supported

Table 4.13 (continued)

*Final Summary of Theoretical and Statistical Hypotheses with Measurements and**Analyses (N = 101)*

Research Hypotheses	Statistical Hypotheses	Instrumentation	Analyses	Significance
3. Gender, age, and the number of years spent in Buddhist practice (YBP) will significantly predict Buddhists' levels of self-compassion (SC).	$H_1: \beta_{mf} < 0$ $\beta_{age} > 0$ $\beta_{ybp} > 0$ $(H_0: \beta_{mf} = 0$ $\beta_{age} = 0$ $\beta_{ybp} = 0)$	DQ: Q1 (Male = 0, Female = 1) DQ: Q2 (continuous variable)	Standard multiple regression	Partially Supported
(a) Being female Buddhists, as compared to being male Buddhists, will significantly negatively predict their levels of SC.		BPQ: Q3 (continuous variable)		Not Supported
(b) Being older Buddhists, as compared to being younger Buddhists, will significantly positively predict their levels of SC.		Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) total scores		Not Supported
(c) The number of years spent in Buddhist practice will positively predict Buddhists' levels of SC.				Supported
4. With gender, age, and the number of years spent in Buddhist practice (YBP) being statistically controlled, self-compassion (SC) will significantly positively predict Buddhists' levels of psychological well-being (PWB).	$H_1: \beta_{sc \cdot mf, age, ybp} > 0$ $(H_0: \beta_{sc \cdot mf, age, ybp} = 0)$	DQ: Q1 (Male = 0, Female = 1) DQ: Q2 (continuous variable) BPQ: Q3 (continuous variable) SCS total scores Psychological Well-Being Scales (PWBS) total scores	Sequential multiple regression	Supported

Table 4.13 (continued)

*Final Summary of Theoretical and Statistical Hypotheses with Measurements and**Analyses (N = 101)*

Research Hypotheses	Statistical Hypotheses	Instrumentation	Analyses	Significance
5. Self-compassion (SC) will mediate the relationship between state forgiveness (SF) and psychological well-being (PWB) among Buddhists.	$H_1: \beta_{sf} > 0$ $\beta_{sc} > 0$ $\beta_{sf} > 0$ β of Path C' = 0	Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) total scores Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI) total scores	Mediation assessment	Partial Mediation Supported
(a) Buddhists' levels of SF will significantly positively predict their levels of SC (Path A).	$(H_0: \beta_{sf} = 0$ $\beta_{sc} = 0$ $\beta_{sf} = 0$ β of Path C' > 0)	Psychological Well-Being Scales (PWBS) total scores		Supported
(b) Buddhists' levels of SC will significantly positively predict their levels of PWB (Path B).				Supported
(c) Buddhists' levels of SF will significantly positively predict their levels of PWB (Path C).				Supported
(d) The degree of relationship between Buddhists' levels of SF and their levels of PWB (Path C) will be reduced when their levels of SC are included in the equation (Path C').				Supported

Chapter Five: Discussion

In this chapter, first, I discuss qualitative findings about the process of forgiveness experienced by the four Buddhist interviewees in contrast to the stage and process models of forgiveness developed by Enright and his colleagues (Enright, 2001; Enright et al., 1998; Enright & The Human Development Study Group, 1991; Enright et al., 1989) and other relevant theories and studies. Second, I discuss quantitative results based on the 101 Buddhist participants' responses to the self-report survey in the following areas: state forgiveness as a route to psychological well-being, the role of self-compassion in the relationship between state forgiveness and psychological well-being, and the impact of gender, age, and the years spent for Buddhist practice on state forgiveness and self-compassion, respectively. The quantitative results are also contrasted to the qualitative findings of this study and other relevant theories and studies. Finally, I discuss clinical and research implications and recommendations as well as limitations of this study.

Unique Features of Each Buddhist's Story of Forgiveness

The results of the modified holistic-content narrative analysis of the qualitative data revealed unique features of each Buddhist interviewee's process of forgiveness intertwined with his or her religious/spiritual path leading to his or her Buddhist practice. Themes that run through their narratives of life experiences were identified as openness for Jake, letting go for Steve, belongingness for Tracy, and the impact of gender for Alice. Each interviewee's theme appeared to represent challenges in his or her life path, attempts to resolve conflicts or crises, and milestones for his or her personal growth. They all experienced discontent in a certain area, which motivated them to fulfill their

needs in that area for further self-development. This metaplot of the interviewees' narratives resonates with stage models of human development.

Buddhist's experience of forgiveness and the Enright's stage model.

According to the Enright stage model of forgiveness (Enright et al., 1989; Enright & The Human Development Study Group, 1991), the Buddhist interviewees' narratives appear to encompass some characteristics of several different stages of forgiveness. Steve's reasoning for forgiveness shows some characteristics of restitutive forgiveness (Stage 2), expectational forgiveness (Stage 3), and lawful expectational forgiveness (Stage 4). He "let go" of his negative reactions to his first wife who took his daughter away from him when he was able to resolve the conflict with his wife and reconnect with his daughter. Similarly, he let go of his hurt and anger evoked by his second wife who left him for another man because she made efforts to reconnect and remain friends with him. Such reasoning is indicative of his sense of reciprocity as a condition for forgiveness (Stage 2). Also, his current motivation to let go of anger was associated with "being a good Buddhist" and "creating a good *karma*." Such reasoning is indicative of his decision to forgive based on what other Buddhists may think is good or bad (Stage 3) and his sense of being expected to forgive (or in his words, let go of anger) according to his understanding of the Buddhist principles (Stage 4).

Tracy's reasoning for forgiveness also shows some characteristics of restitutive forgiveness (Stage 2), expectational forgiveness (Stage 3), and lawful expectational forgiveness (Stage 4). She stated that she would have been more motivated and willing to forgive the male sangha leader if he had been her good friend prior to the offense; and that she let go of her resentment toward other sangha members when they "eventually

came around” and communicated their understanding of her and their willingness to reconnect with her. Such reasoning is indicative of her sense of reciprocity as a condition for forgiveness (Stage 2). Also, she expressed her sense of failure and self-disappointment that she was unable to deal with the offense as other Buddhists might expect her to (Stage 3) and that she was unable to follow Buddhist principles as she was supposed to do (Stage 4).

Jake’s reasoning for forgiveness shows some characteristics of forgiveness as social harmony (Stage 5) and love (Stage 6). He attempted to understand his former wife and to generate compassion toward her without any expectations for her to change or do something for him despite a hurtful act on her part. He also stated that what he learned from forgiving his former wife is applicable for any other interpersonal conflicts that he may encounter. Such reasoning is indicative of his intention for unconditional forgiveness (Stage 6) and forgiveness for promoting positive relationships in society (Stage 5). At the same time, his reasoning also shows some characteristics of compensational forgiveness (Stage 2). He translated his motivation to forgive the offender into his motivation to learn how to be open to and deal with his own emotions evoked by the offense according to Buddhist teachings, which is indicative of his decision to forgive based on self-interest (Stage 2).

Alice’s reasoning for forgiveness shows some characteristic of restitutive forgiveness (Stage 2). She was motivated to forgive the female sangha leader as well as ask for forgiveness when she recognized the female leader’s kindness toward her after the offense took place. In her second narrative, she suggested that forgiveness is possible only if the offender is also willing to engage in the process. Such reasoning is indicative

of her decision to forgive based on the reciprocity orientation (Stage 2). At the same time, her reasoning expressed in her definition of forgiveness shows some characteristics of forgiveness as social harmony (Stage 5). She referred to the Buddhist principle of interdependence to discuss her experiential knowledge of forgiveness as restoring harmony in her relationship with others, which is indicative of her decision based on promoting positive relationships in society (Stage 5).

In summary, Jake and Alice appeared to be capable of employing higher stages of reasoning for forgiveness (Stage 6 and Stage 5, respectively) than Steve and Tracy (Stage 4) for a particular experience of forgiveness that they chose to describe for this study. This difference in their reasoning for forgiveness may be reflective of the outcomes of their forgiveness processes (e.g., negative-to-neutral or negative-to-positive emotional change) and their experiential definitions of forgiveness (e.g., emotional relief or self-transformation) as I will discuss in the following section.

Themes and Elements of the Process of Forgiveness Experienced by Buddhists

From the modified phenomenological analysis of the qualitative data, common themes and elements in the four Buddhist interviewees' forgiveness processes emerged in the following categories: descriptions of the offense, reactions to the offense, motivation to forgive, obstacles/challenges in the forgiveness process, what facilitated the forgiveness process, outcomes of the forgiveness process, and experiential definitions of forgiveness. First, the qualitative findings are discussed by category in contrast to existing theories and prior studies. Then, psychological variables that emerged from the qualitative findings are examined in contrast to those identified in the Enright and his

colleagues' (Enright, 2001; Enright et al., 1998; Enright & The Human Development Study Group, 1991) process model of forgiveness.

Descriptions of the offense. All interviewees described their experiences of the offenses in multiple layers consisting of the nature, the contexts, and the meaning of the offenses. The nature of the offense was found to be characterized by aggression, breach of commitment, and/or betrayal. The contexts of the offense included their psychological investment in their relationships with the offenders or the community where the offense took place, and past experiences of psychological trauma and sexism for two female interviewees. Two elements found in the meaning of the offense were broken ego and a sense of loss. Understanding the offense from each interviewee's perspective was a crucial step for understanding his or her forgiveness process. Especially, the contexts of the offense, which all interviewees willingly described in detail, explained how they interpreted certain incidents as offensive, that is, hurtful and unfair to them.

Based on the findings of prior studies of forgiveness experienced by different groups of people (for elderly females, Hebl & Enright, 1993; for college students, Al-Mabuk & Enright, 1995; for late adolescents and middle-age adults, Subkoviak et al., 1995), Enright (2001) stated that people tend to be more deeply hurt by their loved ones (e.g., family members and romantic partners) than by acquaintances and strangers. This pattern was found in the descriptions of the offense provided by the four Buddhist interviewees. Three interviewees reported that their former spouses or a friend in the sangha hurt them deeply. The other interviewee reported that the primary offender was an acquaintance in the sangha; however, what hurt her most was losing her relationship with

her friends in the sangha as a consequence of the offense that took place in the sangha, thereby losing her sense of belongingness to the sangha.

The contexts of the offense described by the interviewees suggested that their psychological investment in their relationships with the offenders or the sangha where the offense took place contributed to the intensities of their hurt. They felt betrayed when their trust was broken, their loving care was unrequited, and/or their efforts to maintain positive relationships turned out fruitless; and this sense of betrayal was most painful to them. The link between psychological investment and psychological distress has been found in prior studies with participants in various contexts (Forand, Gunthert, German, & Wenzel, 2010, for appearance investment and distress among college women; Magee, MacLeod, Tata, & Regan, 2003, for goal/role investment and distress among women who experienced recurrent miscarriage; Wisniewski, Robinson, & Deluty, 2010, for obligate investment and distress among fathers of gay sons).

Enright (2001) also pointed out that uncovering anger is an important step in the process of forgiveness, that the origin of one's anger is often found in childhood, and that such unresolved anger tends to continue to influence one's relationships in adulthood. This notion was found to be relevant for understanding the two female Buddhist interviewees' forgiveness processes that seemed to be complicated by their prior experiences of interpersonal injury. More specifically, their unresolved emotional pain and anger appeared to color their perceptions and interpretations of an interpersonal offense, thereby heightening their sensitivity to the offense and/or amplifying their reactions to the offense. Arguing possible gender differences in the interviewees' emotional responding to the offense based on the experiences of two females of the four

interviewees is difficult. However, this qualitative finding is compatible with a prior study (El-Sheikh, Buckhalt, & Reiter, 2000) indicating that interpersonal conflict and its resolution had a greater impact on females' emotional responding than males' and that females reported more anger during unresolved conflict than males.

Although the interviewees' descriptions of the natures and the contexts of the offenses varied, the meanings of the offenses for the interviewees turned out to have two elements: broken ego and a sense of loss. Their identities (e.g., man, husband, and Buddhist) were greatly disturbed by the offenses due to their experiences of rejection and/or violation, which resulted in their senses of loss (e.g., an important part of themselves, their worldviews, their connection with the people and the community they loved). This qualitative finding fits Firman and Gila's (1997) theory of "primal wound" that the most painful human emotional experience comes from a violation of one's relational sense of self, which often results in a profound sense of loss. This meaning of the offense naturally influenced the rest of the interviewees' forgiveness processes.

Initial reactions to the offense. The interviewees described their initial reactions to the offenses on visceral, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral levels. Their visceral reactions (e.g., shock, fear, irritation, and confusion) were followed by a mixture of cognitive (e.g., speculation of the reason for the offense, and/or rumination on the unfairness of the offense) and emotional reactions (e.g., anxiety, sadness, and anger). Furthermore, three interviewees engaged in fight-or-flight responses, while the other interviewee resisted acting out fight-or-flight responses.

Considering the meanings of the offenses described by the interviewees (i.e., broken ego and a sense of loss), their visceral reactions and fight-or-flight responses

make sense. Kohut (1972) theorized that a threat or an injury to one's sense of self commonly evokes narcissistic rage (fight reaction) or shamefaced withdrawal (flight reaction). Recent research has shown that such an injury to one's sense of self initiates a neuro-physiological process that causes visceral reactions by way of change in heart rate, blood pressure, and stress hormones (Newberg, d'Aquili, Newberg, & deMarici, 2000). Thus, fight-or-flight responses to an offense (e.g., seeking revenge or avoiding harm) can be considered as biological responses to protect oneself from his or her perceived danger (Luskin, 2002). What helped one interviewee to control his aggressive impulse (i.e., a fight response) as his initial reaction to the offense was the amount of value that he placed on his relationship with the offender prior to the offense, as well as his religious aspiration to deal with anger non-aggressively.

Motivation to forgive. Two themes emerged from the interviewees' descriptions of their motivation to forgive the offender. One theme was that they aspired to apply Buddhist teachings and practices to deal with difficulties in their lives. The other theme was that they recognized benevolence in the offenders if they had positive relationships with the offenders prior to the offenses.

Enright (2001) stated that people are commonly motivated to forgive for its possible positive consequences or its intrinsic quality. For example, they may forgive for their own psychological well-being and physical health, their relationships with others, and/or the offenders' well-beings. Or they may forgive because they regard forgiveness as love and/or a moral good. As for religious populations, Covert and Johnson (2009) reported that participants in their study (mostly Christians) forgave for religious reasons, relational reasons, desire for well-being, feelings of sorrow for the offender or

understanding of the offender, the offense perceived as unintentional, or self-blame. Also, the stronger their religious motivations to forgive, the stronger their commitments to practice their Christian faiths (Covert & Johnson, 2009). This link between one's commitment to practice his or her faith and his or her religious motivation to forgive also existed for the interviewees in this study who were committed to practicing Buddhism.

Another motive for forgiveness among the interviewees was found to be their recognition of benevolence in the offenders with whom they had positive relationships prior to the offenses. Their prior positive relationships with the offenders may have contributed to the intensities of their emotional pain caused by the offenses, but they were motivated to forgive the offenders when they were able to find something positive about the offenders. This qualitative finding is in line with the study conducted by Williamson and Gonzales (2007) indicating that the injured parties' prior positive relationships with the offenders (characterized by interdependence and intimacy) contributed to the injured parties' restoration of positive regards for the offenders, which increased the injured parties' likelihood of reconciliation with the offenders. Furthermore, they found that these tendencies existed despite the fact that the injured parties experienced more psychological pain when being harmed by others who were closer to them.

Challenges in the process of forgiveness. Three themes that emerged from the interviewees' descriptions of challenges or obstacles in their forgiveness processes. The first theme was about their senses of loss. The second theme was about their socio-cultural conditioning, such as religious and/or gender socialization. The third theme was about the offender's certain characteristics and behaviors, such as narcissistic personality traits and a lack of acknowledgement of the offense.

All interviewees addressed their difficulties dealing with their senses of loss caused by the offenses. This qualitative finding is consistent with Patton's (1985) clinical observation that people who are struggling with forgiving are often dealing with "a brokenness in relationships which questioned the whole structure of their selfhood" (p. 66). In fact, the interviewees previously reported such brokenness in the areas of their identities, worldviews, and/or connections with the people and the community they loved while describing what the offenses meant to them and what really hurt them. Therefore, logically, they elaborated on their difficulties dealing with their senses of loss while describing their challenges in their forgiveness processes.

Three interviewees suggested that their socio-cultural conditioning, such as religious and/or gender socialization, interfered with their forgiveness processes. Those who were brought up as Catholic suggested that they internalized some Catholic beliefs (e.g., divorce is condemned) or teachings (e.g., forgiveness is expected), which may have contributed to self-judgment and self-blame or initial resistance to the idea of forgiveness. Also, two interviewees (one male and one female) discussed how they felt like they were expected to deal with their emotional reactions to the offense (particularly anger) according to gender stereotypes, which made making progress in their forgiveness processes difficult for them. In short, expectations for forgiveness, which came from socio-cultural conditioning for the interviewees, interfered with their forgiveness processes. Trainer's (1981) study indicated that intrinsic forgiveness (i.e., freely chosen forgiveness for its intrinsic worth) was significantly positively correlated with the forgiver's positive intrapsychic and interpersonal changes across time, but expedient forgiveness (i.e., forgive to fulfill social goals) and role-expected forgiveness (e.g.,

forgive to fulfill socially expected roles) was not. Expectation seems to be detrimental in the process of forgiveness.

One interviewee reported that certain characteristics and behaviors of the offender, such as narcissistic personality traits (e.g., a lack of empathy and a sense of entitlement) and a lack of acknowledgement of the offense, made forgiving the offender difficult for her. This qualitative finding makes sense in light of the role of apology in the process of forgiveness. Prior studies (Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Enright et al., 1989; Weiner, Graham, Peter, & Zmuidinas, 1991) indicated that a positive link existed between apology from the offender and the injured party's forgiveness. More specifically, apology offered by the offender out of guilt and/or shame (not out of pity) can help with the injured party's willingness to forgive and reconcile with the offender (Hareli & Eisikovits, 2006). Some reasons for the positive impact of the offender's apology on the injured party's forgiveness have been suggested by prior studies with undergraduate psychology students. For example, apology facilitated the injured party's empathy with the offender, thereby facilitating forgiveness among U.S. students (McCullough, Worthington, et al., 1997). Apology inhibited the injured party's aggressive reactions against the offender by improving the injured party's impression of the offender, and reducing the injured party's negative affect toward the offender as well as the injured party's desire for an apology among Japanese students (Ohbuchi, Kameda, & Agarie, 1989).

Facilitating factors for the process of forgiveness. As for facilitating factors for the process of forgiveness, some interviewees identified meditative practices; others identified psychological distance from their experiences of the offense. Also, the

interviewees suggested that generating compassion toward self and the offender promoted their forgiveness processes.

Two male interviewees articulated how meditation as a part of their Buddhist practice helped them to overcome the challenges in their forgiveness processes. Main components of their meditative practices were mindfulness and letting go. A positive link between mindfulness-based meditative practice and one's tendency to forgive has been suggested by a prior study (Oman, Shapiro, Thorsen, Plante, & Flinders, 2008). On the other hand, two female participants stated that the passage of time, which provided them temporary psychological distance from the impact of the offense on themselves, was helpful in their forgiveness processes. This finding is consistent with another prior study (Orr, Sprague, Goetzen, Cornock, & Taylor, 2004) indicating a positive link between one's willingness to forgive and the passage of time. A common psychological function that the interviewees experienced due to meditative practices or the passage of time appears to be disidentification from their reactions to the offenses, which helped to broaden their perspectives on the offenses.

All interviewees implied that, at some point in their forgiveness processes, they experienced compassion toward themselves and the offender, which fostered their forgiveness processes. They described compassion as something to do with empathizing with emotional pain and attempting to alleviate it. This qualitative finding compliments the results of prior studies conducted by McCullough and his colleagues (McCullough et al., 1998; McCullough, Sandage, & Worthington, 1997; McCullough, Worthington, et al., 1997) indicating that the injured party's empathy toward the offender was the strongest social-cognitive determinant of forgiveness compared to offense-related, relational, and

personality-related determinants. They explained that such empathy plays a key role in facilitating forgiveness by helping the injured party to experience common humanity, reducing the injured party's motivation to seek revenge against the offender, and increasing his or her conciliatory behaviors toward the offender.

The interviewees suggested that the direction of compassion in their forgiveness processes was not one-way but two-way. When they were able to empathize with the offender's possible emotional pain without dismissing their own, their perspectives on the offense were transformed in a way that the boundary between themselves and the offender became permeable, and they experienced compassion toward both the offenders and themselves. This two-way compassion facilitated their forgiveness processes. This qualitative finding makes sense in light of the paradox of forgiveness as healing (Enright, 2001; Hope, 1987) (i.e., by forgiving, the forgiver is healed rather than the forgiven). Also, the Buddhist principle of interdependence appeared to guide the interviewees in their forgiveness processes, as Buddhist teachers (The Dalai Lama & Chan, 2004) attested, when people realize the interdependent nature of reality, their perspectives are broadened, their attachments to destructive emotions (e.g., hatred) are softened, their empathy increases, and their compassion is reinforced, all of which are likely to help them to forgive.

Outcomes of the process of forgiveness. Interviewees recognized their intrapsychic and interpersonal changes as the outcomes of their forgiveness processes. On the intrapsychic level, all interviewees addressed negative-to-neutral or negative-to-positive change in their emotional reactions to the offenses, and one interviewee addressed general attitudinal change in how he tends to deal with interpersonal conflicts

and emotional reactions. The difference in the degree of emotional change and the presence of general attitudinal change may reflect where the person is in the process of forgiveness (Enright, 2001; Enright et al., 1998) and/or the developmental stage of forgiveness (Enright & The Human Development Study Group, 1991; Enright et al., 1989). Negative-to-neutral emotional change (e.g., renouncing resentment toward the offender) may be a step toward negative-to-positive emotional change (e.g., experiencing benevolent feelings and thoughts toward the offender). Also, possibly, those who are capable of employing higher stages of reasoning for forgiveness (e.g., forgiveness as social harmony or forgiveness as love) are more likely to experience negative-to-positive emotional changes and general attitudinal changes.

From two interviewees' forgiveness processes, the issue of grief emerged as a distinct yet interrelated process. Considering the meaning of the offense described by the interviewees (i.e., broken ego and a sense of loss), understandably, they grieved for the brokenness and the loss in their forgiveness processes, although why the issue of grief did not emerge from the other two interviewees' forgiveness processes is unknown. The link between forgiveness and grief was also suggested by prior studies. Sharma and Cheatham (1986) observed, in their women's center support group for sexual assaults survivors, that their grief for a sense of loss (e.g., identity, security, and control) was expressed in the first session, their anger with personal and societal targets was expressed in the mid-sessions, and their resolution was marked by their discussion of forgiveness, acceptance, and letting go in the later sessions. In Coyle and Enright's (1997) study, men who were hurt by their partners who decided to go through abortion reported that fostering their forgiveness contributed to reduction of their grief.

One interviewee articulated how his process of forgiving the offender was interrelated with his process of forgiving himself in a sense of letting go of self-blame and regret for his possible part in the context of the offense (i.e., breach of commitment and betrayal by his former spouse). However, he also stated that he found separating his self-critical tendency from his self-forgiveness process for the particular offense that he described for this study hard. The temporal relationship between other-forgiveness and self-forgiveness is unclear. Prior studies are scarce (Hall & Fincham, 2005), and the findings are inconclusive (Hodgson & Wertheim, 2007). Some studies showed that other-forgiveness and self-forgiveness had different patterns of associations with some personality traits. For example, Ross, Kendall, Matters, Wrobel, and Rye (2004) found that other-forgiveness was positively related to agreeableness and unrelated to neuroticism, whereas self-forgiveness was negatively related to neuroticism and unrelated to agreeableness. Macaskill et al. (2002) found that emotional empathy (one's tendency to recognize others' feelings and to share the emotion) was positively correlated with other-forgiveness, but not with self-forgiveness. Ranganathan and Todorov (2010) found that shame-proneness and personal distress empathy (i.e., self-oriented discomfort or fear when faced with another's distress), rather than guilt-proneness and other-oriented empathy (i.e., other-oriented feelings of compassion and concerns for another's distress), were the key personality traits involved in inhibiting self-forgiveness. Possibly, the issue of self-forgiveness emerged from this particular interviewee's forgiveness process due to the context of the offense and his certain personality traits.

On the interpersonal level, all interviewees reported positive changes (e.g., reconnecting and fostering friendship, increased closeness, and recovering closeness) in

their relationships with the offenders as an outcome of their forgiveness processes. Whether or not reconciliation is required for forgiveness has been debated between psychologists and Christian theologians, as well as among psychologists. Frise and McMinn (2010) found that Christian theologians who are experts in forgiveness research and more religious psychologists who are not experts in this field tend to agree that reconciliation is a necessary part of forgiveness, while less religious psychologists who are experts in this field of study contend otherwise. Buddhist interviewees in this study suggested that forgiveness and reconciliation are interrelated, and that reconciliation was a part of their forgiveness processes as a condition of their prior positive relationships with the offenders.

Experiential definitions of forgiveness. Two interviewees' experiential definitions of forgiveness were centered on emotional relief (e.g., letting go or not holding onto anger) and/or its visceral experience (e.g., lightening up). The other two interviewees' experiential definitions of forgiveness were centered on change in their perspectives or relationships with their own egos (e.g., letting go or not holding onto one's ego) and/or its visceral experience (e.g., tender heart). Notably, these two interviewees' experiential definitions of forgiveness are indicative of a self-transforming potential of forgiveness, which has been overlooked in prior research on forgiveness. This qualitative finding supports recent empirical findings (Williamson & Gonzales, 2007) indicating that people's actual experiences of forgiveness encompass not only change of certain feelings, thoughts, motivations, and behaviors, but also transformations of their senses of self and perspectives on meaning and purpose in life.

Buddhists' experiences of forgiveness and the Enright's process model.

According to the process model of forgiveness developed by Enright and his colleagues (Enright, 2001; Enright et al., 1998; Enright & The Human Development Study Group, 1991), the four Buddhist interviewees' descriptions of the offenses and their initial reactions to the offenses provided data relevant to the uncovering or pre-forgiving phase. Identified psychological variables were cathexis, cognitive rehearsal, and permanent or adverse change in their senses of self. For example, they indicated that their speculations of the reasons for the offenses, rumination on the unfairness of the offenses, and/or being reminded of their old emotional pains exacerbated their emotional pains caused by the offenses. They also indicated that they struggled with disturbances of their identities (e.g., man, husband, or Buddhist) and/or the just-world view, and loss of connections with the people and the community they loved.

The four Buddhist interviewees' descriptions of motivation to forgive provided data relevant to the decision phase of forgiveness (Enright, 2001; Enright et al., 1998; Enright & The Human Development Study Group, 1991). Identified psychological variables were philosophical and/or religious education and conversion. All interviewees indicated that they aspired to apply Buddhist teachings and practices to their lives, which motivated them to begin their forgiveness processes, although one interviewee described her struggle with dealing with the offense according to her understanding of Buddhist teachings. Two interviewees who made conscious decisions to forgive recalled the moments when they experienced new insights or changes of heart, which made them decide to forgive.

All psychological variables for the work phase of forgiveness listed by Enright and his colleagues (Enright, 2001; Enright et al., 1998; Enright & The Human Development Study Group, 1991) were identified in the four Buddhist interviewees' descriptions of motivation to forgive and facilitating factors in their forgiveness processes. They recognized benevolence in the offenders by understanding the offenders in the contexts, which helped them to reframe their understandings of the offenders. Their empathic understandings of the offenders' possible emotional difficulties without dismissing their own promoted their forgiveness processes.

Additionally, the Buddhist interviewees' empathy and compassion were directed not only toward the offenders but also toward themselves. At a certain point in their forgiveness processes, they realized that not forgiving was harmful to both themselves and the offenders, which inspired them to forgive the offenders to alleviate the suffering for both. Two interviewees' experiential definitions of forgiveness illuminated the impact of Buddhist teachings, particularly the principle of interdependence, on this two-way empathy and compassion as a facilitating factor for their forgiveness processes.

To make progress in their forgiveness processes from the work phase to the deepening phase, the four Buddhist interviewees' descriptions of challenges suggested that they needed to resolve a dilemma. This dilemma was essentially a tension between their aspiration to forgive as a Buddhist practice and their difficulties letting go of attachments to their emotional bond with the offenders, their identifications with certain beliefs and stereotypes, their senses of entitlement to their negative thoughts and feelings toward the offenders, and their desires to blame something or someone to escape from the emotional pain. According to their descriptions of facilitating factors for their forgiveness

processes, what helped two interviewees to resolve the dilemma was to practice mindfulness-based Buddhist meditative practices that fostered their attitudes of openness, non-judgment, and acceptance. The other two interviewees identified the passage of time and/or physically removing themselves from the reminders of the offenses as what helped them to resolve the dilemma. Such temporary psychological distance from the impact of the offenses helped them to put the offenses into perspective and reflect on the offenses and their reactions to the offenses in a more emotionally-detached manner.

The four Buddhist interviewees' descriptions of the outcomes and experiential definitions of forgiveness provided data relevant to the deepening phase of the forgiveness process (Enright, 2001; Enright et al., 1998; Enright & The Human Development Study Group, 1991). Identified psychological variables were finding the meaning of suffering, insights into common humanity, and experience of emotional release. All interviewees reported different degrees of emotional release characterized by letting go of anger (i.e., negative-to-neutral emotional change) and its visceral experience (e.g., lightening up) or experiencing appreciation toward the offenders for what the interviewees had learned from forgiving the offenders (i.e., negative-to-positive emotional change) and its visceral experience (e.g., tender heart). Two interviewees who reported negative-to-positive emotional change were the ones whose stage of reasoning for forgiveness appeared to be higher (Stage 5 or 6) than those of the other two participants (Stage 4), and their experiences of forgiveness highlighted the self-transforming and self-growth aspect rather than reduction of negative affect.

A number of psychological variables identified by Enright and his colleagues (Enright, 2001; Enright et al., 1998; Enright & The Human Development Study Group,

1991) were relevant to the four Buddhist interviewees' experiences of forgiveness processes (e.g., cathexis, cognitive rehearsal, and permanent or adverse changes in one's sense of self in the uncovering phase; religious education and conversion in the decision phase; reinterpretation of the offender and the offense, development of empathy and compassion toward the offender, acceptance of the emotional pain in the work phase; and finding the meaning of suffering, insights into common humanity, and experience of emotional release in the deepening phase). The qualitative findings of this study illustrated how one's Buddhist identity and aspiration to apply Buddhist teachings and practices can influence his or her way to deal with anger in the uncovering and work phases; motivation to forgive and possible conversion experience in the decision phase; development of two-way empathy and compassion (i.e., toward self and the offender) in the work phase. Also, they suggested that one's social cognitive developmental stage of reasoning for forgiveness was possibly related to the depth of the forgiveness experience (e.g., from reduction of negative affect to self-transformation and self-growth).

Relationship Among State Forgiveness, Self-Compassion, and Psychological Well-Being for Buddhists

In this section, the quantitative results of this study are discussed in the following areas: state forgiveness as a route to psychological well-being as positive psychological functioning, the role of self-compassion in the relationship between state forgiveness and psychological well-being, and the impact of gender, age, and the years spent for Buddhist practice on state forgiveness and self-compassion. First, the results of hypothesis testing are discussed in contrast to prior empirical studies, then how the quantitative results correspond to the qualitative findings are examined.

State forgiveness as a route to psychological well-being. Quantitative results supported the hypothesis that state forgiveness (manifested on the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral levels) would significantly positively predict psychological well-being (as positive functioning) with gender, age, and the years spent in Buddhist practice being statistically controlled. This outcome means that the greater the degree of state forgiveness experienced by Buddhists, the higher their levels of psychological well-being. This quantitative finding is in line with prior studies (McCullough, Bellah, Kilpatrick, & Johnson, 2001; Subkoviak et al., 1995) indicating a positive relationship between state forgiveness and some aspects of psychological well-being as emotional well-being (e.g., increased global life satisfaction, and decreased severity of depression and anxiety) among college students. This quantitative finding complemented prior studies because it suggested that a positive relationship also exists between state forgiveness and psychological well-being as positive functioning (characterized by self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth) among Buddhists.

These quantitative findings about the positive relationship between state forgiveness and psychological well-being correspond to the qualitative findings of this study concerning the outcomes and experiential definitions of forgiveness described by the four Buddhist interviewees. Their descriptions of the outcomes included a combination of some aspects of positive psychological functioning (Ryff & Keyes, 1995), such as positive relations with others and environmental mastery (e.g., general attitudinal change in how to deal interpersonal conflicts and emotional reactions), as well as some aspects of emotional well-being (Diener, 1994; Diener et al., 1999), such as decreased

negative affect and/or increased positive affect. Two interviewees' descriptions of experiential definitions were characterized by emotional relief (i.e., emotional well-being), while those of the other two interviewees were characterized by self-transformation (i.e., personal growth as a part of positive psychological functioning).

The role of self-compassion in the relationship between state forgiveness and psychological well-being. Quantitative results supported the hypothesis that self-compassion (as attitudes toward self characterized by kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness) would significantly positively predict psychological well-being as positive functioning with gender, age, and the years spent in Buddhist practice being statistically controlled. This outcome means that the greater the degree of self-compassion experienced by Buddhists, the higher the level of psychological well-being. This quantitative finding is consistent with prior studies (Neff et al., 2005; Neff, Kirkpatrick, & Rude, 2007) indicating that self-compassion was positively associated with some aspects of psychological well-being (e.g., life satisfaction, social connectedness, emotional intelligence, and emotion-focused coping strategies), and that self-compassion was negatively associated with negative affect and mental health variables (e.g., anxiety, depression, neurotic perfectionism, performance goals, and avoidance-oriented coping strategies) among undergraduate psychology college students. This quantitative finding suggested that such a positive relationship between self-compassion and psychological well-being existed among Buddhists as well.

Furthermore, quantitative results partially supported the hypothesis that self-compassion would mediate the relationship between state forgiveness and psychological well-being. This outcome means that self-compassion partially explained why or how

state forgiveness significantly positively predicted psychological well-being. This quantitative finding supports the experiential knowledge of Buddhist teachers (Brach, 2003; Chödrön, 2004; Kornfield, 2002; Salzberg, 2008) that compassion plays a key role in forgiveness as a route to psychological well-being; and practically, compassion needs to begin with self before it can be extended to others.

These quantitative findings about the role of compassion in the relationship between state forgiveness and psychological well-being correspond to the qualitative findings of this study concerning the facilitating factors for forgiveness described by the four Buddhist interviewees. The interviewees implied that they experienced compassion toward themselves as well as toward the offenders at some point in their forgiveness processes. Such two-way compassion was described as softening of the boundary between themselves and the offenders while empathizing with the universal aspect of their suffering, realizing not forgiving was harmful to both themselves and the offenders, and desiring to alleviate the suffering for both. These descriptions are congruent with how compassion works in relation to forgiveness and psychological well-being according to some Buddhist teachers (Brach, 2003; Chödrön, 2004; Kornfield, 2002; Salzberg, 2008) as well as the conceptualization of self-compassion proposed by Neff (2003a).

Impact of gender, age, and the years spent for Buddhist practice on state forgiveness and self-compassion. According to the quantitative results, the hypothesis that gender, age, and the years spent in Buddhist practice would significantly positively predict state forgiveness was not found to be tenable. Some explanations for these quantitative results can be speculated in reference to the qualitative findings. As for the relationship between gender on state forgiveness suggested by the Buddhist interviewees,

the difference in males and females' experiences of sexism and gender socialization may influence their perceptions and interpretations of an offense, their reactions to the offense, and their tendencies to deal with their reactions to the offense, all of which can pose different kinds of challenges in their forgiveness processes. As for the relationship between age and state forgiveness, the impact of age on state forgiveness may be confounded by many other factors (e.g., one's development of certain skills, psychological issues and personality traits). As for the relationship between the years spent in Buddhist practice and state forgiveness, Buddhist practice, particularly mindfulness-based meditation, may be helpful for facilitating one's forgiveness process when he or she is ready to forgive. Buddhist identification may have mixed influences: fostering of one's aspiration for forgiveness according to Buddhist teachings and causing self-blame when he or she resists or fails to forgive.

Quantitative results only partially supported the hypothesis that age and the years spent in Buddhist practice would significantly positively predict self-compassion, and that being female would significantly negatively predict self-compassion. The years spent in Buddhist practice was found to positively predict self-compassion (i.e., the more years spent in Buddhist practice, the greater the degree of self-compassion). However, neither age nor gender was found to predict self-compassion. This quantitative finding is in line with a prior study (Neff, 2003b) indicating that Buddhists reported a significantly higher degree of self-compassion than non-Buddhists. Considering that the majority of the quantitative participants in this study reported that their primary Buddhist practice was meditation, this quantitative finding is also consistent with a prior study (Kyrimis, 2006) indicating that the amount of mindfulness-based meditation practice was positively

associated with self-compassion reported by Buddhists. These quantitative findings about the impact of years spent in Buddhist practice (particularly mindfulness-based meditation) on self-compassion correspond to the qualitative findings concerning the facilitating factors for forgiveness described by the four Buddhist interviewees. Their descriptions are indicative of a positive link between Buddhist practice and self-compassion.

According to the quantitative results, age did not significantly positively predict self-compassion, and being female did not significantly negatively predict self-compassion. This quantitative finding contradicts prior studies (Neff, 2003b; Neff et al., 2005) indicating that females reported a significantly lower degree of self-compassion than males among non-Buddhist college students, and does not appear to support a speculation based on developmental psychology literature (Neff, 2003a) that people are more likely to be self-compassionate as they grow older, either. Another speculation can be offered that any possible impact of age and being female on self-compassion among non-Buddhists may be cancelled out for Buddhists due to their aspiration to follow Buddhist teachings and engage in Buddhist practices that are likely to foster compassion toward themselves as well as others. The four Buddhist interviewees did not address any relationship between age and self-compassion or between being female and self-compassion while describing their experiences of forgiveness.

Implications, Limitations, and Suggestions for Future Research

Little empirical research has been conducted on forgiveness with Buddhists, and this mixed-method study was the first attempt to understand their subjective experiences of forgiveness in a context-sensitive manner. This mixed-method study also responded to several areas of concerns raised by psychological researchers and clinicians in the

following areas: conceptual definitions of forgiveness; generalizability of psychological research on forgiveness for diverse populations, including non-Christian religious populations; the implications of forgiveness for women; forgiveness as a route to psychological well-being; and methodology of forgiveness research. In this section, I discuss research and clinical implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

Research implications. This study supports a conceptualization that the forgiveness is a transformative experience. More specifically, this study follows recent empirical findings (Mihalache, 2008; Williamson & Gonzales, 2007) that people's subjective experiences of forgiveness, especially for those identified with religious/spiritual traditions, tend to include not only change of one's affect, cognition, and behavior, but also transformation of self. Also, this study supports a conceptualization that forgiveness and reconciliation are interrelated processes as suggested by prior studies with religious populations and/or conducted by researchers who identify themselves as spiritual and/or religious (Frise & McMinn, 2010). Self-transformation and reconciliation may be two important components or dimensions of people's subjective experiences of forgiveness that need to be integrated into the conceptualization of forgiveness, as well as the measurement of forgiveness, in future research.

This study shows that one's religiosity is potentially facilitative and restrictive for his or her forgiveness process. This conclusion adds some complexity to the current understanding of the relationship between religiosity and forgiveness in psychological research as generally positive (McCullough & Worthington, 1999). For Buddhist participants in this study, their Buddhist practices, particularly mindfulness-based

meditation, appeared to facilitate their forgiveness processes by way of nurturing compassion. In particular, self-compassion was found to positively predict state forgiveness as a route to psychological well-being. However, their strong identification with Buddhism appeared to have mixed influences on their forgiveness processes. Their aspiration for forgiveness can be fostered as a Buddhist practice, but that condition does not necessarily make forgiveness easy for them. Their difficulties in their forgiveness processes can result in a sense of failure because of their Buddhist identities, which can interfere with their forgiveness processes. What about religiosity facilitates or restricts state forgiveness is still unclear.

This study suggests that gender difference in forgiveness exists in its process, not its outcome. Based on a meta-analysis of empirical studies indicating gender difference in forgiveness, Miller et al. (2008) recommended that in order to clarify gender difference in forgiveness, possible moderators (e.g., functional differences in the processing of emotional hurts, differences in dispositional qualities, differences in situations that may influence males and females differentially, gender differences in religiosity) should be further investigated in future research. Possible variables indicated by Buddhist participants interviewed for this study were one's experience of sexism, identification with gender stereotypes (e.g., Males are aggressive, females should not be angry), and personality traits (e.g., self-critical tendency).

Clinical implications. This study has clinical implications, especially for therapists who are often in a position of assisting clients to heal emotional wounds inflicted by interpersonal conflicts and offenses. The findings of this study are based on Buddhists' experiences of forgiveness. However, the results seem to be relevant for

helping not only Buddhist clients but also non-Buddhist clients, considering the results are consistent with existing theories and prior research findings, as well as my own clinical experience as a therapist in training.

This study supports the notion that forgiveness can be a therapeutic strategy for healing. State forgiveness (i.e., one's actual experience of forgiveness manifested as his or her emotions, thoughts, and behaviors toward the offender) was found to promote psychological well-being in an eudaimonic sense (i.e., one's positive psychological functioning manifested as his or her level of self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth). Furthermore, this study shows that self-compassion can be an entry point into one's forgiveness process. Self-compassion (i.e., one's attitude toward self consisting of kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness) was found to play an important role in facilitating state forgiveness as a route to psychological well-being.

Does this mean that therapists should encourage clients to forgive as quickly as possible for the sake of their own psychological well-being? The qualitative findings of this study illuminate one's readiness to forgive as an important factor for forgiveness to be healing. Buddhist participants interviewed for this study suggested that feeling pressured to forgive or feeling expected to deal with anger in a prescribed manner according to religious and/or gender socialization impeded with their forgiveness processes. Forgiveness is indeed a process that takes time and commitment, and one needs to freely choose to forgive for its intrinsic worth for his or her experience of forgiveness to be genuine and for its outcomes to be psychologically beneficial (Enright, 2001; Trainer, 1981). Also, therapists may find the McKay, Hill, Freedman, and

Enright's (2007) assessment and transformation of potential sexist biases in the process model of forgiveness (Enright, 2001; Enright et al., 1998; Enright & The Human Development Study Group, 1991) based on the Worell and Remer's (2003) feminist empowerment model helpful for conceptualizing and strategizing how to support clients in their forgiveness processes, particularly when they struggle with the impact of gender role stereotypes on their forgiveness processes.

Limitations. The quantitative component of this study was designed to be a cross-sectional study based on a non-random convenience sample. This research design and sampling method have two major limitations. First, in a cross-sectional study, data are collected only one time, and change over time is not assessed; therefore, inferring causal relationships between the variables included in the study is impossible. Second, the generalizability of the results based on a non-random convenience sample is limited, and the results may only be generalized to the specific population.

Quantitative results of this study showed a pattern of associations among the main variables (state forgiveness, self-compassion, and psychological well-being) observed among Buddhist participants who responded to the survey at a certain point in time. Their responses to the survey may be different at a different point in time due to their circumstances and conditions that change over time, which may influence the pattern of associations among the variables (e.g., significant relationships at one time may turn out to be non-significant at a different time or vice versa).

The Buddhist participants of the quantitative component of this study were solicited by email from Buddhist communities listed on the World Buddhist Directory (BuddhaNet, 2006), the Dharma Directory (Tricycle, 2008), and the Buddhist

Organizations and Temples (E-Sangha, 2004), and they were self-selected to respond to the online survey. Due to the nature of this sampling method, factors possibly involved in self-selection (e.g., interest in the topic of this study) may have biased the results.

As for demographic representativeness, the quantitative sample of this study underrepresented those who are in their 20s, Asian or Pacific Islander, and less formally educated, and overrepresented those who are in their 50s to mid 60s, White/European/Caucasian, and highly educated, compared to the demographic composition of Buddhists in the U.S. according to the U. S. religious landscape survey (based on a national representative random sample) conducted by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life (2008). (Data on sexual/affectional orientation of Buddhists in the United States were unavailable from the Pew Forum survey for comparison.) Furthermore, an examination of the years to the initiation of Buddhist practice (calculated by the years spent in Buddhist practice subtracted from the ages) revealed that the quantitative participants were likely to have begun actively engaging in Buddhist practice later in their lives ($M = 32.73$). In other words, they were likely to be “convert” Buddhists who made a conscious decision to embrace Buddhist teachings in their adulthood, according to the Seager’s (1999, p. 9) classification of the three broadly defined groups of the U.S. Buddhists (convert Buddhists, immigrant/refugee Buddhists, and Asian Americans who grew up as Buddhists). Thus, the quantitative results of this study may be generalizable only to Buddhists whose demographic and religious characteristics are similar to those of the participants of this study.

The qualitative component of this study was conducted within a hybrid of post-positivistic and interpretivism/constructivism paradigms. Morrow (2005) discussed that

the trustworthiness in qualitative research can be evaluated by the paradigm-specific criteria (i.e., credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability for post-positivist research; and fairness, authenticity, and construction of meaning for the interpretivist/constructivist research) as well as the paradigm-transcendent criteria (i.e., social validity, subjectivity and reflexivity, adequacy of data, and adequacy of interpretation). According to these guidelines developed by Morrow, I recognize limitations of the qualitative component of this study in the areas of confirmability and transferability.

The four Buddhist participants of the qualitative component of this study were purposefully selected based on certain criteria (i.e., males and females who have been practicing Buddhism for five years or longer and have experienced forgiving people who unfairly and deeply hurt them), and the sample size was minimally set (i.e., two males and two females) to make this mixed-method study manageable as a dissertation research project. A small sample size is not inherently problematic in qualitative research. However, considering the qualitative findings of this study that emerged from the phenomenological analysis, determining if a lack of density of some themes comes from true variance in people's experiences or insufficient data is difficult. Having another researcher as a collaborator would have helped this researcher to check the adequacy of interpretation, thereby enhancing the confirmability of the results of the qualitative component of this study. A larger sample size might have helped this researcher to achieve a fuller sense of data saturation and rule out the possibility of insufficient data.

A caution should be given to the transferability of the results of the qualitative component of this study. The participants were selected from one Tibetan Buddhist

sangha in Kentucky. They were demographically homogeneous, except for gender and age (e.g., highly educated heterosexual European Americans). Their experiences of forgiveness were considerably influenced by their spiritual/religious history and practice environment of the sangha. The severity of the offenses that they experienced is considered as relatively mild to moderate. Experiences of Buddhists who are racial/ethnic or sexual minorities, belong to another sangha of a different Buddhist tradition, and/or experienced severe offenses may be significantly different from those of the participants in this study.

Comments on conducting mixed-method research. I reviewed a reflexive journal that I kept throughout my research process to consider how the quantitative and qualitative research processes were intersected in this mixed-method study, as well as highlights and pitfalls that I experienced while conducting this mixed-method study. My reflections entailed objective and subjective levels. On the objective level, I extracted the timelines for quantitative and qualitative data collections and analyses (see Table 16) so that readers could see when and what I had actually done. On the subjective level, I attempted to describe my interior experience. I could only hope that readers would understand better by reading my account of what had happened in my mind and how my interior experience could have influenced my research process.

Table 5.1

Timelines for Quantitative and Qualitative Data Collections and Analyses

Date	Quantitative	Qualitative
12/1/2008	Began distributing the online survey	
12/13/2008	↓	Began conducting first interviews
12/23/2008	↓	↓ Completed first interviews
2/28/2009	↓	↓ Completed transcribing first interviews
3/1/2009	Completed data collection	↓
3/10/2009	↓ Completed statistical analyses	↓
3/16/2009	↓	Began phenomenological analysis
5/25/2009	↓	↓ Began narrative analysis
6/30/2009	↓	↓ Completed phenomenological analysis
8/27/2010	Completed writing the quantitative results	↓
10/5/2010	↓	Completed narrative analysis
11/11/2010	↓	↓ Completed writing the qualitative findings from first interviews
11/16/2010	↓	↓ Began conducting second interviews
11/22/2010	↓	↓ Completed second interviews
11/23/2010	↓	↓ Completed writing the summaries of second interviews
11/30/2010	↓	↓ Incorporated the findings from second interviews into the findings from first interviews
12/2/2010	Brought the quantitative and qualitative results together and began interpreting the correspondences and discrepancies within the integral feminist framework	↓
1/3/2011		↓ Completed all interpretations

Table 16 shows that I collected quantitative data from the online survey and qualitative data from the first interviews simultaneously, analyzed the quantitative and qualitative data separately within each research paradigm, and brought the quantitative and qualitative results together to interpret the correspondences and discrepancies between the two different kinds of results within the integral feminist framework. In other words, quantitative and qualitative studies were conducted separately yet concurrently, and then they were intersected at the phase of interpretation. Creswell and Plano Clark (2010) called this way of conducting mixed-method research “the convergent parallel design” (p. 77).

On the subjective level, however, the quantitative and qualitative research processes of this study never appeared to be a parallel, which influenced some decisions that I made in the course of conducting this study. One observable example is how I formulated the personalized questions for the second interviews (see Appendix M). After completing the quantitative analysis and the qualitative analyses of the first interviews, I found that self-compassion played a mediating role in the relationship between state forgiveness and psychological well-being according to the quantitative results, but that the interviewees’ experiences of “self-compassion” was only implicit according to the qualitative findings from the first interviews. Consequently, I decided to ask the interviewees to describe more in detail different areas of their experiences of forgiveness processes that appeared to be related to their experiences of self-compassion. Thus, I can say that both the quantitative results and the qualitative findings from the first interviews influenced the phase of qualitative data collection from the second interviews. I tried very hard not to impose the quantitative results onto the qualitative findings. My intention was

set to deepen my understanding of the interviewees' experiences and see if the qualitative findings correspond to the quantitative results, not to generate qualitative data to confirm the qualitative results.

The interactions between the quantitative and qualitative research processes on the subjective level also occurred in a more subtle and intricate way. Conducting this mixed-method study meant conducting two studies simultaneously without violating the principles of either quantitative or qualitative research paradigms. A challenge was to allow the quantitative and qualitative research processes to co-exist and interact in my mind. Another challenge was to bring the quantitative and qualitative results together for a discussion, which was another process in itself. Both highlights and pitfalls in my research process seem to stem from how I met these two challenges.

My quantitative research process was fairly straightforward with few unexpected issues. All I had to do was to follow the procedures that I had laid out in my proposal. Having little control over how fast I could receive a sufficient number of survey responses was frustrating, but once that part was complete, with each step I took, I knew I was closer to finishing the process with some answers to my research questions. This sense of linearity and assurance turned out to be both a highlight and a pitfall. It gave me an instant boost for my confidence as a researcher at a few points in my research process, which helped me to go through the whole process. When I felt stuck and overwhelmed by seemingly endless circularity and uncertainty in my qualitative research process, however, the sense of linearity and assurance was so appealing that I was tempted to let my quantitative research process take over my qualitative research process (e.g., letting

quantitative results guide qualitative analysis and showing inductive thinking out of the qualitative research process).

Speaking of the seemingly endless circularity and uncertainty in my qualitative research process, the experience was like going through a maze with many branches and dead ends. I thought that I had a map and directions in my proposal to navigate the maze, but they turned out to be not as definitive as I had hoped. Every time I felt stuck, I attempted to improve my map by marking the paths I had taken as well as the dead ends into which I had bumped. I also read more and more books and articles written by qualitative researchers and consulted with a qualitative researcher in person, hoping to get better directions. I eventually realized that no other researcher could lead me through my maze, and that no way out of my maze existed without making trials and errors by myself. Making those trials and errors was what brought me closer to answering my research questions. On a similar note, reflecting on my own reactions to the interviewees, the contents of their stories, and my own issues provoked and triggered in my qualitative research process was an extremely time and energy consuming task with no guarantee that it would lead me to anything useful to complete my research. However, my insights often sprang from working through my own reactions, especially unpleasant ones. For example, I experienced an interpersonal conflict in the middle of my research process and found myself needing to work on forgiveness. The situation was analogous to a parallel process in therapy. Depending on how I handled my strong emotions, I could have contaminated or enhanced my research process. Fortunately, I had an opportunity to talk to a therapist and received support in processing my own difficulties in my forgiveness process, which helped me to empathize with the interviewees' difficulties in their

forgiveness processes more deeply and to understand how important self-compassion could be in many people's forgiveness processes.

Bringing together the quantitative and qualitative results for a discussion was a complicated process that was more than just combining the outcomes of the quantitative and qualitative research processes. Merging the two involved stepping in and out of the two research paradigms, like switching between the two different operating systems. I was also involved in picking up and integrating what I had learned in both research processes, like weaving a tapestry. Having the integral feminist framework in my mind was a constant reminder of the principles of the two different research paradigms as well as my intention and purpose of this mixed-method study, which helped me to organize so much information in a coherent way. However, I still had to figure out what I could claim based on both quantitative and qualitative results, where the results of my study could be related to other researchers' studies and theories, and how to present my discussion to communicate that I conducted a mixed-method study, not two separate studies, and that a difference existed between the two approaches. A framework is not a methodology, an important lesson that I learned.

Having reflected on how much work was required of me to complete this mixed-method study, I wonder what I learned from conducting this mixed-method study that I would not have learned if I had conducted the quantitative component and the qualitative component of this study separately. I have two answers to the question. First, the qualitative results helped me to understand the quantitative results more deeply, which enabled me to develop a more comprehensive understanding of forgiveness in relation to self-compassion and psychological well-being in one research project. Finding the

corresponding aspects between the quantitative and qualitative results was helpful in the confirmatory sense. More interestingly, the discrepancy between the quantitative and qualitative results helped me to speculate on the reasons for unsupported statistical hypotheses. Second, conducting this mixed-method study helped me to become more comfortable and more confident in speaking the languages of quantitative and qualitative researchers, engaging in both inductive and deductive reasonings as well as systematic/linear and creative/intuitive processes in research, and operating in each research paradigm/culture as well as crossing the boundaries between the two research paradigms/cultures. In other words, conducting this mixed-method study helped me as a researcher to enhance my “bilingual” and “bicultural” competencies in the Ponterotto and Grieger’s (1999, p. 49) sense, which was well worth the effort.

Suggestions for future research. Based on the findings and the limitations of this study, I offer the following suggestions for future research. First, the quantitative component of this study needs to be replicated to confirm the pattern of associations among the primary variables (i.e., state forgiveness, self-compassion, and psychological well-being) observed in this study. The qualitative component of this study can also be conducted with another group of Buddhist interviewees to confirm the themes and elements of the forgiveness processes emerged from this study. In particular, further exploration of the forgiveness processes experienced by socio-culturally underrepresented Buddhist interviewees (e.g., racial/ethnic or sexual minorities, in their 20s, and without post-secondary education), affiliated with different traditions of Buddhism, and/or experienced severe offenses would be helpful.

Second, further examination of self-transformation and reconciliation as potentially important components or dimensions of people's subjective experiences of forgiveness is recommended. Again, more qualitative studies with socio-culturally diverse interviewees are needed to gain more comprehensive understanding of people's subjective experiences of forgiveness and refine the conceptualization of forgiveness accordingly. Quantitatively, the Forgiveness Experience Scale recently developed by Williamson and Gonzales (2007) seems to be a promising instrument to measure state forgiveness on multiple dimensions, including self-transformation and reconciliation. Quantitative studies to validate the instrument with socio-culturally diverse participants are awaited.

Third, the impact of gender and religiosity on the process of forgiveness as a route to psychological well-being needs to be clarified. What about gender and religiosity facilitate or impede with one's forgiveness process is a question that can be explored in qualitative studies. Some possible gender- and religiosity-related variables suggested in the findings of this study (e.g., the presence or absence of one's negative experience with religion and sexism, and the strength of one's identification with religious and gender stereotypes) can be measured and analyzed if those variables moderate the relationship between state forgiveness and psychological well-being.

Fourth, the research design of the quantitative component of this study can be modified and improved. Using a random sample would increase the generalizability of the quantitative results. Researchers could make instruments available in multiple languages (e.g., English, Japanese, and Thai) to maximize prospective Buddhist participants' accessibility to a study. Experimental and longitudinal studies would help

researchers to assess possible causal links among the primary variables investigated in this study. For example, a randomized treatment outcome study or a study of a within subject/repeated measures design might provide a stronger evidence for possible causal inferences.

Finally, from an integral feminist perspective, the interior-collective (i.e., inter-subjective and cultural) and the exterior-collective (i.e., objective, social, and organizational) dimensions need to be investigated for a more holistic understanding of Buddhists' experiences of forgiveness. Focus-group and participant-observation would be appropriate qualitative methods to explore the interior-collective dimension (e.g., How does the culture of a sangha influence its members' inter-subjective experiences of forgiveness?). An organizational survey would be an appropriate quantitative method to examine the exterior-collective dimension (e.g., Is the frequency of members' experiences with sexism in a sangha associated with their difficulties with forgiving other members who hurt them?).

Conclusions

Three conclusions can be reached from the results of the quantitative component of this study. First, this study supported the results of prior quantitative studies indicating positive correlations between state forgiveness and some aspects of psychological well-being. This study extended prior understanding of such a relationship by measuring psychological well-being as positive psychological functioning and providing additional empirical support that state forgiveness is positively associated with psychological well-being for Buddhists. Second, this study supported the results of prior quantitative studies indicating positive predictive relationships between self-compassion and psychological

well-being. This study also provided additional empirical support that Buddhist practice (measured by the years spent for Buddhist practice in this study) is positively associated with self-compassion for Buddhists. Third, this study provided initial empirical support for self-compassion as mediating the relationship between state forgiveness and psychological well-being in Buddhists' experiences.

The qualitative component of this study provided information that corresponded to the results of the quantitative component of this study and that helped this researcher to generate speculations for unsupported quantitative hypotheses tested in this study and the quantitative results of this study that contradicted those of prior studies. Specifically, the qualitative findings from this study corresponded to the quantitative results from this study concerning state forgiveness as a route to psychological well-being, the positive relationship between Buddhist practice and compassion, the role of self-compassion in the relationship between state forgiveness and psychological well-being. The following speculations were generated from the qualitative findings of this study for unsupported quantitative hypotheses tested in this study and quantitative results from this study that contradicted those of prior studies. First, the difference in males and females' experiences of sexism and gender socialization may pose different kinds of challenges in the process of forgiveness (e.g., one's perceptions and interpretations of an offense, reactions to the offense, tendencies to deal with the reactions to the offense), but not necessarily the outcomes. Second, Buddhist practice, particularly meditation, may be helpful for facilitating one's process of forgiveness, but Buddhist identification might have mixed influences (e.g., aspiration for forgiveness as a Buddhist practice and self-blame when resisting or failing to forgive) on one's process of forgiveness. Third, the impact of age

on state forgiveness may be confounded by many other factors (e.g., one's development of certain skills, psychological issues and personality traits). Fourth, the negative impact of being female on self-compassion among non-Buddhists indicated by prior studies may be cancelled out for Buddhists due to their aspiration to follow Buddhist teachings and engage in Buddhist practices that are likely to foster compassion toward themselves as well as others.

The qualitative component of this study also contributed to the knowledge base of the psychology of forgiveness by providing qualitative information about Buddhists' experiences of forgiveness in the following four areas. First, qualitative findings from this study described the role of compassion in the process of forgiveness (i.e., two-way compassion toward self and the offender facilitating forgiveness) that may be unique to Buddhists. Second, qualitative findings from this study suggested that one's actual experience of forgiveness encompasses not only one's own cognitive, affective, and behavioral changes, but also transformation of one's sense of self and perspective on meaning and purpose in life. The latter component is lacking in the construct of forgiveness investigated in prior quantitative psychological research. Third, the Enright and the Human Development Study Group's (1991) stage and process models of forgiveness were found to be useful to understand Buddhists' experiences and processes of forgiveness. Particularly, qualitative findings of this study suggested that the difference in the degree of emotional change and the presence of general attitudinal change as the outcomes of the process of forgiveness described by the four Buddhist interviewees in this study may reflect where they were in their processes and/or their developmental stages of forgiveness.

Additionally, qualitative findings from this study corresponded to prior quantitative results with non-religious and non-Buddhist participants relevant to various components of the process of forgiveness. Positive links were observed in the following relationships of relevant psychological constructs: (a) psychological investment and psychological distress, (b) religious commitment/faith and religious motivation to forgive, (c) the injured party's prior positive relationship with an offender and the likelihood of reconciliation, (d) apology from an offender and the injured party's willingness to forgive and reconcile with the offender, (e) mindfulness-based meditation and trait forgiveness, and (f) one's willingness to forgive and the passage of time. Also, an injury to one's sense of self appeared to be related to his or her neurophysiological process that causes visceral reactions. The impact of interpersonal conflict appeared to be greater for females than males, and females tended to experience greater emotional responding than males. Reconciliation appeared to be an expected outcome of forgiveness for religious populations.

Appendix A: A Summary of the Life Story of Gautama Siddhartha

Becoming Shakyamuni Buddha

Shakyamuni Buddha once lived in India as a prince named Gautama Siddhartha of the *Shakya* clan. One day he went out of his palace and observed people and animals suffering from birth, old age, illness, and death in his kingdom, and his *bodhicitta* (the mind that aspires to attain buddhahood) was awakened. He desired to seek the unsurpassed wisdom for the welfare of all sentient beings. As spiritual seekers in ancient India commonly practiced, he left material wealth and belongings behind and lived as an ascetic in spiritual search. After his vigorous practice of meditation and freeing himself from one attachment after another, his mind entered into the state of *nirvana* (extinction of all defilements, including greed, hatred, and ignorance) and realized *Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi* (Perfect Enlightenment). He did not remain in the bliss of *nirvana*, but returned to this world of *samsara* (the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth) to teach *Bodhisattvas* (beings with bodhicitta who have vowed to help all sentient beings to be Buddha). He then exercised *upaya* (skillful means) and taught Dharma to countless beings according to their conditions and capacities so that they would attain buddhahood as quickly as they could.

Appendix B: Parable of King Dighiti, Prince Dighavu, and King Brahmadatta

There was a king named Brahmadatta. His kingdom was rich, had a strong army, and conquered many kingdoms, but King Brahmadatta's desire to expand his kingdom was insatiable. At that time, King Dighiti in another city heard that King Brahmadatta's army was coming to defeat his small and poor kingdom. Knowing his kingdom was defenseless, King Dighiti left the castle and fled with his queen.

While King Dighiti and his queen were living as wanderers on disguise, the queen gave birth to Prince Dighavu. King Dighiti decided to send Prince Dighavu out of the town to be raised somewhere else because he thought that if King Brahmadatta somehow found them, he would kill not only himself and his wife but also their son. One day, a barber, who used to serve King Dighiti but now served King Brahmadatta, saw King Dighiti and his queen disguised as wanderers and reported that to King Brahmadatta. Soon King Dighiti and his queen were captured to be executed.

Grown-up Prince Dighavu happened to visit the city of King Brahmadatta. When he realized that those who were on the execution grounds were his parents and tried to approach them, he heard the voice of King Dighiti repeating the following words three times: "I am not insane. What I am saying is not nonsense. Those with heart will understand the meaning of these words. Dighavu, do not look too long. Do not look short. The reason is that hatred is not allayed by hatred. Hatred is allayed by the absence of hatred" (Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2003, p. 360). No one knew who Prince Dighavu was, and he helplessly saw his parents executed in front of his eyes.

Prince Dighavu spent many days in a forest, grieving and contemplating. When he finally decided to leave the forest and go back to the city of King Brahmadatta, he met an elephant trainer, who took him as his apprentice. While Dighavu was playing the flute and singing outside of the palace, King Brahmadatta happened to hear it and was moved by the beautiful sound. Without knowing that this apprentice of the elephant trainer was Dighavu, King Brahmadatta told him to work for him as an attendant. Dighavu obeyed King Brahmadatta's command, worked hard, and earned his trust.

One day Dighavu accompanied King Brahmadatta for hunting. King Brahmadatta became tired and took a nap. He trusted Dighavu so deeply that he fell asleep on Dighavu's lap. Dighavu thought, "This king...is the enemy of my deceased father and mother. Because of him they lost their kingdom and their lives. Now is the time to take revenge" (Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2003, p. 361). Dighavu pulled out his sword and tried to kill King Brahmadatta. At this instance, he remembered his father's last words, which dissuaded his reason to retaliate.

When Dighavu finally put his sword back, King Brahmadatta awoke from his nap and told Dighavu about his nightmare in which the son of King Dighiti came to kill him to avenge. Dighavu said, "I am Dighavu, son of Dighiti...You brought misery to my kingdom. You killed my father and mother. I shall never have a better chance to cleanse myself of hatred" (p. 361). Dighave remembered his father's last words again and regretted his previous intention to kill King Brahmadatta. King Brahmadatta was moved by the wisdom of King Dighiti and Prince Dighavu and begged Dighavu to spare his life. They promised to help each other's kingdom and not to harm each other from then on.

Appendix C: Parable of Angulimala

Ahimsaka was a disciple of a *brahmin* (the priestly caste of India) who was gentle, intelligent, handsome, and physically strong. One day the brahmin's wife, who secretly desired Ahimsaka, attempted to seduce him while her husband was away. As Ahimsaka resisted her attempts of seduction, she felt bitter and lied to her husband that Ahimsaka forcibly slept with her. The brahmin felt unbearably jealous and decided to make Ahimsaka suffer by commanding him to commit murder in a cruel and perverted way for a brahmin: killing one hundred people, cutting their fingers, and make a necklace with those fingers. Ahimsaka felt so dreadful and distressed that his agony turned into anger and then hatred. He totally lost himself and began killing people, and people began to call him Angulimala, the Finger Necklace.

Some disciples of Shakyamuni Buddha heard about Angulimala from people who were terrified of him and reported that to the Buddha. Ahimsaka had already killed ninety nine people. When Ahimsaka saw his mother passing by and was about to kill her to complete his master's command, Buddha stopped him. Ahimsaka raised his sword and tried to kill the Buddha but could not move further:

[Ahimsaka] yelled, "Monk, stop." The World-Honored One (Buddha) answered, "I am right here. You are the one who is moving around." "What is happening?" Ahimsaka cried. The World-Honored One said, "Because of ignorance, you are taking people's lives. Because I have unlimited wisdom, my mind is tranquil even here. Out of pity for you, I have come here"... The World-Honored One's voice was like water pouring over Ahimsaka's burning heart. As though waking from a nightmare, he returned to himself. He threw away the sword and prostrated

himself. “World-Honored One, please take pity on me for my delusions! I tried to attain the way by collecting fingers. Please save me and count me among your disciples!” (Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2003, p. 382).

Ahimsaka took refuge in the Buddha, mastered his teachings, and quickly attained enlightenment. However, people were still scared of him because they remembered him as Angulimala. During his begging rounds, people were hostile to him, threw rocks at him, and injured him with sticks. As he returned to the Buddha, he bowed at his feet and said:

To train horses and cows, a staff is used; to train elephants, an iron hook is used. But the World-Honored One used neither sword nor staff to train this inhuman heart of mine. It is as though the moon were obscured by clouds, and after the clouds cleared away, its light shone. I have now received just recompense.

Listening to the right *Dharma*, I have gained the eye of the pure *Dharma*. I am mastering the mind of forbearance, and I shall never again fight. World-Honored One, I do not desire to live; neither do I hope to die. I am simply waiting for the time to enter nirvana.” (p. 383).

Other disciples of the Buddha were surprised by Angulimala’s change in his attitudes. Upon their request, Buddha told a story of the past lives of Angulimala. The story goes as follows.

There was a prince called Prince Pure, for he would not accept a princess. His father, King *Mahaphala*, worried that no heir-successor would be born if the prince remained single. The king announced throughout the kingdom that he would award a

thousand pieces of gold to whoever would be able to make the prince experience sexual desire and pleasure. A woman succeeded to seduce the prince, and once he gave in to sexual pleasure, he could not control his sexual desire. The prince commanded throughout the kingdom that all new brides must sleep with him on their first nights. People were ashamed of the prince's immoral act and were angry at the king's lack of virtue. To protect himself from people's anger, King Mahaphala turned over Prince Pure to the people, and they tortured the prince to death. As he was dying, he despised the king, cursed the people, and made a wish to meet a teacher and attain enlightenment in his next life. Buddha concluded:

O disciples, that King Mahaphala is Angulimala's former teacher; the woman who seduced the prince is the master's wife; the prince is Angulimala; and the people who killed the prince then are the people killed now by Angulimala. That is, the promise made by the prince just before he died came to fruition now. He avenged himself and then attained enlightenment (p. 384).

Appendix D: Verses on Anger, Hatred, and Patience in Relation to Well-Being from Dhammapada

The following quotes were taken from the second-edition of *Buddha-Dharma* published by Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research (2003), which is a collection of English translation of selected texts from the Japanese version of the Tripitaka. Here are the verses on hatred:

3. “He abused me; he beat me; he defeated me; he robbed me.” The hatred in him who harbors such thoughts is never pacified.
4. “He abused me; he beat me; he defeated me; he robbed me.” The mind of one who has no such thoughts is always at peace.
5. Indeed, hatred is never pacified by hatred; it is pacified by the absence of hatred. This is the law from antiquity (p. 428).

The following verses are about the relationship between anger and well-being:

166. Do not forget your own well-being because of others’ well-being; you must concentrate on your own well-being (p. 437).
231. Guard against anger caused by the body, and restrain the body; refrain from evil bodily acts, and do good bodily acts.
232. Guard against anger caused by speech, and restrain speech; give up evil speech, speak good words.
233. Guard against anger caused by the mind, and restrain the mind; give up evil thoughts, and have good thoughts (p. 440).

Here are some verses on how to understand the consequence of wrong-doing and how to deal with wrong-doing:

119. An evildoer sees happiness as long as his evil deeds do not bear fruits; but when they bear fruits, he sees unhappiness.

136. A fool does wrong deeds without experiencing enlightenment; as if he were being burnt by fire, the fool is burnt by the fire of his deeds (pp. 434-435).

165. Evil is done by oneself; one is defiled by oneself; evil is discarded by oneself; one is purified only by oneself. Purity or impurity depends on oneself. No one purifies another (p. 437).

50. Rather than watching the evils of others or what they have done or left undone, reflect on what you yourself have done or left undone. (p. 430).

253. For him who is irritated on seeing other's faults, defilements increase and never diminish (p. 441).

Finally, the following verses are on the practice of patience in relation to anger and hatred:

184. Patience is the highest austere practice, and nirvana is supreme, so have said all the buddhas. The World-Honored One never afflicts nor harms others.

197. Oh, let us live happily without hate among the hating; among hating persons, let us live without hate (p. 438).

223. Overcome anger by having no anger; overcome evil by good; overcome miserliness by giving; overcome lies by truth (p. 440).

Appendix E: Demographic Questionnaire (DQ)

Please tell me about yourself.

1. What is your gender? (Please choose one group with which you identify most.)

Male
Female

2. What is your age in years? _____

3. What is your race/ethnicity? (Please choose one group with which you identify most.)

White/Caucasian/European (and not Hispanic)
Asian/Pacific Islander
Black/African (and not Hispanic)
Hispanic/Latino(a)
American Indian/Alaskan Native
Other or Mixed Race/Ethnicity (Please specify: _____)

4. What is your sexual/affectional orientation? (Please choose one group with which you identify most.)

Heterosexual
Gay
Lesbian
Bisexual

Please tell me about your Buddhist practice.

5. How many years have you been practicing Buddhism? _____

6. Are you affiliated with any Buddhist community?

Yes
No

If yes, please briefly describe your community (e.g., the name of your community, and the branch of Buddhism studied and practiced).

Appendix F: Buddhist Practice Questionnaire (BPQ)

1. Do you consider yourself “Buddhist”?

Yes
No

2. Are you affiliated with any sangha (Buddhist community)?

Yes
No

If yes, which tradition of Buddhism is your sangha (Buddhist community) most influenced by? (Please choose one.)

Tibetan/Vajrayana
Order of Interbeing
Nichiren
Zen
Pure Land
Theravada
Other (Please specify: _____)

3. How many years have you been practicing Buddhism? _____ years.

4. How often do you spend time in any of the following activities as a part of your Buddhist practice?

(a) Meditation (Please specify the type of meditation: _____)

Every day
Several times a week
Once a week
A few times a month
A few times a year
Once a year or less
Never

(b) Chanting a *mantra(s)* and/or reciting a *sutra(s)* (Buddhist scriptures)

Every day
Several times a week
Once a week
A few times a month
A few times a year

BPQ (continued)

Once a year or less
Never

(c) Attending Buddhist services and/or rituals

Every day
Several times a week
Once a week
A few times a month
A few times a year
Once a year or less
Never

(d) Studying Dharma (Buddhist teachings)

Every day
Several times a week
Once a week
A few times a month
A few times a year
Once a year or less
Never

(e) Community services or social activism based on Buddhist principles

Every day
Several times a week
Once a week
A few times a month
A few times a year
Once a year or less
Never

(f) Other activity (Please specify:)

Every day
Several times a week
Once a week
A few times a month
A few times a year
Once a year or less
Never

5. Please indicate which of the activities listed above is your primary Buddhist practice.

Appendix G: Self-Compassion Scale (SCS)

How often do you tend to act in the manner described in each statement? Please circle the number that best describes the frequency (1 = almost never to 5 = almost always).

	Almost Never - Almost Always				
1. I try to be understanding and patient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I'm kind to myself when I'm experiencing suffering.	1	2	3	4	5
3. When I'm going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I'm tolerant of my own flaws and inadequacies.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I try to be loving towards myself when I'm feeling emotional pain.	1	2	3	4	5
6. When I see aspects of myself that I don't like, I get down on myself.	1	2	3	4	5
7. When times are really difficult, I tend to be tough on myself.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I can be a bit cold-hearted towards myself when I'm experiencing suffering.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I'm disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I'm intolerant and impatient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like.	1	2	3	4	5
11. When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I try to see my failings as part of the human condition.	1	2	3	4	5
13. When I'm down and out, I remind myself that there are lots of other people in the world feeling like I am.	1	2	3	4	5
14. When things are going badly for me, I see the difficulties as part of life that everyone goes through.	1	2	3	4	5
15. When I fail at something that's important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure.	1	2	3	4	5
16. When I think about my inadequacies, it tends to make me feel more separate and cut off from the rest of the world.	1	2	3	4	5
17. When I'm feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am.	1	2	3	4	5

SCS (continued)

	Almost Never - Almost Always				
18. When I'm really struggling, I tend to feel like other people must be having an easier time of it.	1	2	3	4	5
19. When something upsets me, I try to keep my emotions in balance.	1	2	3	4	5
20. When I'm feeling down, I try to approach my feelings with curiosity and openness.	1	2	3	4	5
21. When something painful happens, I try to take a balanced view of the situation.	1	2	3	4	5
22. When I fail at something important to me, I try to keep things in perspective.	1	2	3	4	5
23. When something upsets me, I get carried away with my feelings.	1	2	3	4	5
24. When I'm feeling down, I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that's wrong.	1	2	3	4	5
25. When something painful happens, I tend to blow the incident out of proportion.	1	2	3	4	5
26. When I fail at something important to me, I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix H: Psychological Well-Being Scales (PWBS)

The following set of statements deals with how you feel about yourself and your life. Circle the number that best describes your present agreement or disagreement with each statement (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree somewhat, 3 = disagree slightly, 4 = agree slightly, 5 = agree somewhat, and 6 = strongly agree). Please remember that there are no right or wrong answers.

	Strongly Disagree			-	Strongly Agree	
1. Most people see me as loving and affectionate.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. I am not interested in activities that will expand my horizons.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. In general, I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Maintaining close relationships has been difficult and frustrating for me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. I am not afraid to voice my opinions, even when they are in opposition to the opinions of most people.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. The demands of everyday life often get me down.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. I live life one day at a time and don't really think about the future.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. In general, I feel confident and positive about myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. I often feel lonely because I have few close friends with whom to share my concerns.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. My decisions are not usually influenced by what everyone else is doing.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. I do not fit very well with the people and the community around me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. I tend to focus on the present, because the future nearly always brings me problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. I feel like many of the people I know have gotten more out of life than I have.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. I enjoy personal and mutual conversations with family members or friends.	1	2	3	4	5	6

PWBS (continued)

	Strongly Disagree			-	Strongly Agree	
16. I tend to worry about what other people think of me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. I am quite good at managing the many responsibilities of my daily life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. I don't want to try new ways of doing things - my life is fine the way it is.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. Being happy with myself is more important to me than having others approve of me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. I often feel overwhelmed by my responsibilities.	1	2	3	4	5	6
21. I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how you think about yourself and the world.	1	2	3	4	5	6
22. My daily activities often seem trivial and unimportant to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
23. I like most aspects of my personality.	1	2	3	4	5	6
24. I don't have many people who want to listen when I need to talk.	1	2	3	4	5	6
25. I tend to be influenced by people with strong opinions.	1	2	3	4	5	6
26. When I think about it, I haven't really improved much as a person over the years.	1	2	3	4	5	6
27. I don't have a good sense of what it is I'm trying to accomplish in life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
28. I made some mistakes in the past, but I feel that all in all everything has worked out for the best.	1	2	3	4	5	6
29. I generally do a good job of taking care of my personal finances and affairs.	1	2	3	4	5	6
30. I used to set goals for myself, but that now seems like a waste of time.	1	2	3	4	5	6
31. In many ways, I feel disappointed about my achievements in life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
32. It seems to me that most other people have more friends than I do.	1	2	3	4	5	6
33. I enjoy making plans for the future and working to make them a reality.	1	2	3	4	5	6
34. People would describe me as a giving person, willing to share my time with others.	1	2	3	4	5	6

PWBS (continued)

	Strongly Disagree			-	Strongly Agree	
	1	2	3	4	5	6
35. I have confidence in my opinions, even if they are contrary to the general consensus.	1	2	3	4	5	6
36. I am good at juggling my time so that I can fit everything in that needs to be done.	1	2	3	4	5	6
37. I have a sense that I have developed a lot as a person over time.	1	2	3	4	5	6
38. I am an active person in carrying out the plans I set for myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6
39. I have not experienced many warm and trusting relationships with others.	1	2	3	4	5	6
40. It's difficult for me to voice my own opinions on controversial matters.	1	2	3	4	5	6
41. I do not enjoy being in new situations that require me to change my old familiar ways of doing things.	1	2	3	4	5	6
42. Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them.	1	2	3	4	5	6
43. My attitude about myself is probably not as positive as most people feel about themselves.	1	2	3	4	5	6
44. I often change my mind about decisions if my friends or family disagree.	1	2	3	4	5	6
45. For me, life has been a continuous process of learning, changing, and growth.	1	2	3	4	5	6
46. I sometimes feel as if I've done all there is to do in life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
47. I know that I can trust my friends, and they know they can trust me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
48. The past had its ups and downs, but in general, I wouldn't want to change it.	1	2	3	4	5	6
49. I have difficulty arranging my life in a way that is satisfying to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
50. I gave up trying to make big improvements or changes in my life a long time ago.	1	2	3	4	5	6
51. When I compare myself to friends and acquaintances, it makes me feel good about who I am.	1	2	3	4	5	6
52. I judge myself by what I think is important, not by the values of what others think is important.	1	2	3	4	5	6

PWBS (continued)

	Strongly Disagree			-	Strongly Agree	
	1	2	3	4	5	6
53. I have been able to build a home and a lifestyle for myself that is much to my liking.						
54. There is truth to the saying that you can't teach an old dog new tricks.						

Appendix I: Cover Letter to Prospective Participants for the Quantitative Component of This Study

I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational and Counseling Psychology at the University of Kentucky. As a student in psychology who advocates feminism and practices Buddhism, I have been interested in learning how to help people to heal and empower themselves and have decided to conduct a relevant study for my dissertation. The purpose of this study is to investigate how one's experiences of forgiveness and self-compassion influence his or her level of psychological well-being among people who practice Buddhism in the United States.

I am seeking people who regularly practice Buddhism in the United States and are willing to participate in this study by completing an online survey. I am writing this letter to ask you to do two things:

1. Please consider volunteering your time to complete this online survey.
2. Please forward this invitation to people in your Buddhist community.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be one of about 100 people to do so. It will take 30-45 minutes to complete this confidential and secure online survey. This survey study is totally anonymous. To the best of my knowledge, responding to this online survey has no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life. You will not get any personal benefit from participating in this study. However, I will be grateful for your time and contribution to this study and hope that this study will inform psychological researchers, clinicians, and Buddhist readers of the relationships among Buddhist practices, forgiveness, self-compassion, and psychological well-being.

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to participate in this study, please ask any questions that may come to mind now. If you have questions about this study, you can email me at masami.matsuyuki@uky.edu or call me at 859-373-9999. You can also contact my advisors: Pam Remer, Ph.D. (premer@email.uky.edu, 859-257-4158) or Rory Remer, Ph.D. (rremmer@email.uky.edu, 859-257-7877). If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you can call the staff in the Office of Research Integrity at the University of Kentucky at 859-257-9428 or toll free at 1-866-400-9428.

Thank you for considering participating in this study.

Sincerely,

Masami Matsuyuki, M.S., Ed.S.

To participate in this study, please click the following link to the online survey (or copy and paste it to your browser):

<http://www.surveygizmo.com/s/81367/examination-of-the-relationships-among-state-forgiveness-self-compassion-and-psychological-well-being-for-buddhists-in-the-united-states>

Appendix J: Consent to be Interviewed

WHY ARE YOU BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?

You are being invited to be interviewed for this study because: (a) you have been actively practicing Buddhism; (b) you have experienced forgiving people who unfairly and deeply hurt you; and (c) you expressed your interest in sharing the experience with me. I believe that you can provide valuable information relevant to the topic of this study. If you participate in this study, you will be one of about four people to do so.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?

The person in charge of this study is Masami Matsuyuki, M.S., Ed.S. in the Educational & Counseling Psychology department of the University of Kentucky. She is being guided in this research by her advisor, Pam Remer, Ph. D.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

The purpose of this study is to add a Buddhist perspective to the current knowledge base of the psychology of forgiveness and psychological well-being. I am particularly interested in understanding how our Buddhist practices may or may not influence our responses to people who unfairly and deeply hurt us, which may or may not promote our psychological well-being.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

This study will be conducted at an appointed time and place agreed upon between you and me. You will be asked to do the following: (a) to be interviewed twice (once in this fall and again in next spring), (b) to read the results of your interviews and provide me with your feedback, and (c) to fill out a set of questionnaires after the interviews. Each interview will take approximately 90 minutes. It will take 45 to 60 minutes to fill out the questionnaires. You can spend as little or much time as you would like to provide me with your feedback.

WHAT WILL YOU BE ASKED TO DO?

You will be asked to verbally respond to some questions in a semi-structured interview format in person. Questions include your unique experience of forgiveness and your learning and understanding from the experience. Several weeks after each interview, you will be asked to read my description of your stories being told during the interview and provide feedback on its accuracy and appropriateness. After the interviews, you will be asked to fill out a set of questionnaires.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

There are no reasons why you should not take part in this study.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life.

WILL YOU BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

You will not get any personal benefit from participating in this study. However, I would appreciate your contribution to this study and hope that this study will facilitate deeper understanding of this topic concerning Buddhist practice, forgiveness, and psychological well-being.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer.

WHAT WILL IT COST YOU TO PARTICIPATE?

There are no costs associated with taking part in this study.

WILL YOU RECEIVE ANY PAYMENT OR REWARDS FOR TAKING PART IN THE STUDY?

You will not receive any payment or reward for taking part in this study.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION YOU GIVE?

When I write up this study to share it with other researchers, your case will be presented using pseudonym, and any other personal identifiers will be disguised to protect your privacy.

However, I may be required to show information which identifies you to people who need to be sure that she has done the research correctly; these would be people from such organizations as the University of Kentucky.

CAN YOUR TAKING PART IN THE STUDY END EARLY?

If you decide to take part in the study, you still have the right to decide at any time that you no longer want to continue. You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study.

WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS?

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can call me at 859-389-6710 or email me at masami.matsuyuki@uky.edu, or my advisor, Dr. Pam Remer, at 859-257-4158 or email her at premer@uky.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research volunteer, contact the staff in the Office of

Research Integrity at the University of Kentucky at 859-257-9428 or toll free at 1-866-400-9428.

If you agree to volunteer to be interviewed for this study, please print and sign your name, and put the date of consent below:

Print Your Name: _____

Your Signature: _____

Date of Consent: _____

Please keep one copy for your information.

Thank you again for your time and interest,

Masami Matsuyuki, M.S., Ed.S.
Counseling Psychology Doctoral Candidate
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Appendix K: Screening Questions to Assess the Eligibility of Interviewees

1. Have you experienced forgiving someone who hurt you unfairly and deeply? If you have, to what extent have you forgiven the person on the scale of 1 to 5 as 1 indicating “not at all,” 3 indicating “in progress,” and 5 indicating “complete forgiveness”?
2. How many years have you been practicing Buddhism?
3. What do you do regularly as a part of your Buddhist practice? (Examples may be given from the options used for Question #4 of BPQ.)
4. Please tell me your socio-cultural background. What is your gender? What is your age? What is your race/ethnicity? What is your sexual/affectional orientation?

Appendix L: Questions for Guiding the First Interviews

1. Tell me about your personal background and life history leading to your Buddhist practice. Approach your answer as telling the story of your religious or spiritual path that has led you to where you are now.
 - a. Try to include any significant events that have influenced your path.
Describe each event and how the event influenced your path.
 - b. Tell me how your Buddhist practice is influenced by your sangha.
2. I would like you to recapitulate your experience of forgiving someone who unfairly and deeply hurt you. Tell me as if it were your story of forgiveness.
 - a. Who hurt you? How long ago was the offense? What happened when this person hurt you?
 - b. Describe your initial reactions to the offender.
 - c. How did you (or what made you) decide to forgive the offender?
 - d. Tell me about obstacles that you experienced with forgiving the offender?
 - i. What was most challenging for you?
 - ii. What helped you to overcome the challenge?
 - e. Did being female or male make an impact on your process of forgiveness?
(Alternative question using role-reverse: If your gender had been different, how do you think your process of forgiveness might have been different?)
 - i. (Yes) Describe how being female or male make an impact on your process of forgiveness?
 - ii. (No) Tell me why you think that being female or male did not make an impact on your process of forgiveness.

- iii. Did any other socio-cultural background of yours make an impact on your process of forgiveness (e.g., age, race/ethnicity, sexual/affectional orientation, and any other background that is important for you)?
- f. Describe any changes in you before and after forgiving the offender. Include changes in you in terms of thought, feeling, behavior, or perspective.
- g. How would you describe the result of your forgiving the offender? (Alternative question: What kind of impact did your experience of forgiveness have on any aspects of you, your relationship with others, or your life as a whole?)
- h. What did forgiving the offender mean for you?

Appendix M: Questions for Guiding the Follow-Up Interviews

Questions for all interviewees

1. Is there any part of my understanding of your experiences of religious/spiritual path and forgiveness that is not accurate? If you feel that I did not understand your experiences accurately, please help me to better understand your experiences.
2. Please share with me any reflections, comments, or anything to elaborate on what you have just read.
3. Between the time of our first interview and today, did you experience any change in your process of forgiveness that you described for me before? If you experienced any change in your process of forgiveness, please tell me what you think contributed to the change.
4. (Oral administration of EFI in the end of the interview) Last time I asked you to share with me your experience of forgiving someone who hurt you deeply and unfairly. This time I would like to ask you to think of the most recent experience of someone hurting you deeply and unfairly whom you may or may not have forgiven. Do you have such an experience? If you have such an experience, please answer the following questions.

Personalized questions for Jake

(Ask Jake more about his experience of self-forgiveness – Possibly related to his experience of self-compassion?)

1. You said that you “had to forgive” yourself in the process of forgiving your former wife. Could you tell me more about that?
 - a. How did you come to know that you had to forgive yourself?

- b. What happened in your process of forgiving yourself?
 - c. How was forgiving yourself related to forgiving your former wife?
2. What does self-forgiveness mean to you?
 3. How may self-forgiveness be similar to self-compassion or different from self-compassion?

Personalized questions for Steve

(Ask Steve more about his motivation for Buddhist practice and the content and outcomes of Buddhist practice.)

1. You talked about how you were introduced to Buddhism during the New Age movement. What was it about Buddhism that initially attracted you so much?
Also, what motivated you to continue to practice Buddhism for over 30 years?
2. You talked about a meditative practice of “letting go” as your Buddhist practice. Are there any other Buddhist practices you regularly do? What are the outcomes of such practices?

(Ask Steve to elaborate on how he developed his empathy toward his first wife in his process of “letting go” – Possibly related to his experience of self-compassion?)

3. When you were describing your process of “letting go” of your anger toward your first wife, you said, “I assume [my wife] had reasons to leave. She was hurt, and we had lots of bad fights, and she was unhappy, and I was unhappy, so she decided to leave.” Can you elaborate on what was happening inside you?

(Ask Steve to clarify the description of his divorce with his second wife.)

4. You said, you and your second wife “went together for quite a long time. And then we separated. And then she came back and decided she wanted to get

married. So we got married...and then a year later she said she decided she didn't want to be married anymore, but she left with a poet." You emphasized the word, "poet." What was significant to you about her leaving with a poet?

(Ask Steve more about what he meant by "Forgiveness is a hard word to think about.")

5. You said, "Forgiveness is a hard word to think about." Can you tell me more about what you meant by that?

Personalized questions for Tracy

(Ask Tracy to clarify her educational background.)

1. Just to clarify, what is your formal educational background? What is the highest academic degree that you have earned? In what discipline? Where did you take Buddhist classes, in college or in your sangha?

(Ask Tracy more about her motivation to forgive – Possibly related to her experience of self-compassion?)

2. You said that it was "a matter of time" and "healing wounds" that motivated you to forgive the people who offended you. Could you tell me more about what motivated you to forgive them?

Personalized questions for Alice

(Ask Alice to clarify her family/marriage circumstances.)

1. You said, you lived in New York for a long time, and then your two grown daughters wanted you to move to Kentucky to live closely to them in 1970s. Just to clarify, what happened between the years when you lived in New York and when you moved to Kentucky in terms of your marriage and family?

(Ask Alice about her motivation for Buddhist practice.)

2. You said, while growing up, you developed no desire to be religious or have a religion. What made you become interested in Buddhism?

(Ask Alice to elaborate on her experience of forgiving the offender.)

3. You said, you could not have asked for forgiveness if you had not forgiven the person who offended you already, even though that part was not discussed. Could you tell me more about your experience of “forgiving” her before you asked her to forgive you?

(Ask Alice to elaborate on her motivation for forgiveness – Possibly related to her experience of self-compassion?)

4. You said, you realized at a certain point in your forgiveness process that your own “unfriendliness” in response to “unfriendliness” of the person who offended you was not helpful to you and was hurtful to her, which motivated you to forgive and ask for forgiveness. Can you tell me more about your motivation behind your decision to forgive her and ask for forgiveness?

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Publications and Presentations

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