

INDIRECT EFFECTS OF SELF-COMPASSION ON SELF-FORGIVENESS
THROUGH SELF-ESTEEM AND SELF-CONDEMNATION
WITH GENDER MODERATION:
A PARALLEL MODERATED MEDIATION ANALYSIS

by

Jill A. Marin

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

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December, 2023

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ABSTRACT

Two studies explored the relationship between self-compassion and self-forgiveness as well as the role of self-esteem, self-condemnation, and gender in that relationship. Since self-forgiveness is associated with greater well-being, the studies' importance included gaining knowledge to increase well-being by investigating factors that contribute to self-forgiveness. Research questions were if the relationship between self-compassion and self-forgiveness was mediated by self-esteem and self-condemnation and if gender moderated those mediations. Two quantitative correlational studies, of 94 MTurk and 114 social media participants, used online Qualtrics surveys with established measurements to collect data. Associations, mediators, and moderators were examined by bivariate correlations, mediation analysis, and moderated mediation analysis. Results of both studies showed support for the parallel mediation model, but there was support only for the mediating role of self-esteem, not for the mediating role of self-condemnation. There was no support for moderated mediation by gender, but some gender differences were found in the self-forgiveness process. Implications included that existing theories and future interventions may be informed to address roles of self-compassion, self-esteem, and self-condemnation as well as gender-related differences in the self-forgiveness process. By knowledge gained, new education, interventions, and self-help materials addressing cognitions, framing, and concepts of self-compassion and self-forgiveness can be established to increase the well-being of individuals. Successful navigation of the self-forgiveness process can lead to increased freedom in individuals' lives.

Keywords: self-forgiveness, self-compassion, self-condemnation, self-esteem

Dedication

This work is dedicated

to my husband and constant encourager, George;

to Suzie and Robby for their enduring support;

to Elisha for teaching me to look forward with joy; and,

to my sweet Wesley for giving me new breath for my soul.

Done by one!

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Many have helped me along this doctoral journey.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their support.

First, I thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for the life work to which He has called me, and for the mercies, grace, and strength He gives me along the way.

I thank Him that He took what was meant for evil and turned it for good.

I thank my dissertation committee chair, Dr. J.J. Kim, who has provided much wisdom, direction, and encouragement to me in this journey.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

Self-forgiveness, forgiveness of others, feeling forgiven by God, and forgiving God all have been found to have positive psychological benefits for individuals (Rasmussen et al., 2019; Toussaint et al., 2020; Upenieks, 2021). This dissertation will present current research concerning self-forgiveness, self-compassion, self-condemnation, self-esteem, and gender. It will also present a Biblical foundation regarding this topic. The need will be addressed for knowledge concerning self-forgiveness and self-compassion, and how self-condemnation and self-esteem mediate the process in individuals. The need will also be addressed for knowledge concerning gender as a moderator in this mediation.

Research was needed to determine if there are effects of self-condemnation and self-esteem on the relationship between self-compassion and self-forgiveness. Research indicated a gap in the effect of social comparison upon self-forgiveness. There also appeared to be a research gap in describing and researching whether individuals were more likely to perceive others as more worthy of self-forgiveness than themselves, which has been related to self-esteem. Other factors which were considered in self-forgiveness included gender, guilt and shame, rumination, self-acceptance, and the cognitions associated with these concepts.

Background

Self-Forgiveness

Self-forgiveness occurs when one has identified a wrong and has released themselves from the guilt and other negative emotions associated with their part in the

wrong. It can impact one's self-esteem and self-worth as well as potentially lead to greater satisfaction with life (da Silva et al., 2017). The ability to self-forgive is imperative to moving on and continued growth (Pierro et al., 2021).

Self-forgiveness begins with the understanding that one is deserving and worthy of forgiveness, unrelated to their ability to forgive others (Mastrocola, 2023). Self-forgiveness also leads to a perception of greater control of one's life and one's emotions (da Silva et al., 2017). Forgiving oneself can help one be intentional to have a plan in place to avoid making the error again in the future (Mastrocola, 2023). Oftentimes, a hindrance of self-forgiveness, is the sense that forgiveness itself might not stop one from making the same error twice (Mastrocola, 2023).

Self-forgiveness is also related to an individual's past or future orientation. It has been proposed that self-forgiveness is strictly associated to the propensity toward motion, thus addressing past errors and moving ahead can be inhibited by tendencies for evaluation and comparison (Pierro et al., 2021). In addition to future orientation, personality traits also have a relationship with the tendency to self-forgive. Cowden et al. (2020) conducted a study of personality traits using the subgroups of self-forgiveness, self-punishment, and self-exoneration. It was found that the subgroup of self-forgiveness had higher levels of trait self-forgiveness and grandiose narcissism than the subgroup of self-punishment (Cowden et al., 2020). The subgroup of self-forgiveness also had lower levels of self-forgiveness and higher levels of shame-proneness compared to the subgroup of self-exoneration (Cowden et al., 2020). It was found that the subgroup of self-punishment had higher levels of shame-proneness than the other two groups (Cowden et al., 2020).

In addition to personality traits, rumination can also have an impact upon an individual's self-forgiveness and self-condemnation. Rumination has been found to affect the mental functioning of individuals and is defined as “obsessional thinking involving excessive, repetitive thoughts or themes that interfere with other forms of mental activity” (American Psychological Association, 2022). Rumination combined with anger has been found to be negatively associated with forgiveness and self-compassion (Wu et al., 2019).

While individuals may ruminate on past wrongdoings, God grants forgiveness freely to all who repent and confess their sins to him (*New International Bible*, 1978/2011, Romans 3:23-24). He is faithful and just to forgive (1 John 1:9). When believers receive the new nature through salvation and regeneration, they should follow God's example of forgiveness (Colossians 3:13). This forgiveness is to be extended to oneself as well since it has been freely granted to those who seek his forgiveness by God according to his nature (Acts 13:46). However, this forgiveness must be received by the individual (Psalm 32:1-5). Perceptions of unworthiness can be obstacles to individuals receiving and applying forgiveness to themselves (Psalm 32:1-5). Christ paid the cost of every individual's redemption (Romans 5:8-9). However, that redemption often goes unclaimed and even rejected.

Self-Condensation

Rumination has been associated with higher levels of guilt when compared with self-forgiveness (da Silva et al., 2017). Self-condemnation may result when needs of moral-social identity, agency, or meaning of life are unresolved and at risk (Worthington & Wade, 2020). The negative emotions felt when thinking about a wrongdoing can be

made even more intense by ruminating. These intense negative emotions are seen by individuals who find self-forgiveness difficult as more reason that they are not able to move past the event, that they should not, and that they are worthy of suffering (Worthington & Wade, 2020).

The Apostle Paul stated in Romans 8:1, “Therefore there is now no condemnation [no guilty verdict, no punishment] for those who are in Christ Jesus [who believe in Him as personal Lord and Savior],” (*Amplified Bible*, 1987/2015). Paul writes that there is no condemnation, no guilty verdict nor punishment. Although believers experience correction and discipline throughout their lives, there is no punishment imposed. In other words, there is no divine sentence imposed by God upon those who put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ or their salvation, who live according to the Holy Spirit and not the sinful flesh.

Self-Esteem

Self-forgiveness has been found to be related to self-esteem. Individuals with higher self-esteem were more likely to forgive themselves (Krause, 2017). Self-esteem is impacted toward the positive with self-forgiveness (Kim et al., 2022). In addition to self-esteem, self-compassion relates to self-forgiveness.

Self-Compassion

Self-compassion concerns being kind to oneself rather than judging oneself. Thoughts of being unworthy are less when the self-acceptance brought by self-compassion is experienced. Well-being has been found to be related with self-compassion (Neff et al., 2018). Those who have compassion on self have a higher tendency to forgive offenders and experience less rumination and anger (Wu et al., 2019). Self-compassionate

individuals have been found to not participate in self-condemnation (Vazeou-Nieuwenhuis & Schumann, 2018). Cleare et al. (2019) found significant relationships existed between greater self-forgiveness or self-compassion and less self-harm and suicidal ideation.

It seems clear that an individual who does not know Christ as savior has no way of knowing the reality of true self-worth. Only those who have turned to Christ and put their faith in him are able to discover true self-worth. The veil has been removed and the believer can now see that they are being fashioned into the image of Christ (*New International Bible*, 1978/2011, II Cor. 3:18).

Gender

When considering gender, it has been found that neuroticism (the propensity to have a negative feeling and processing when encountering a perceived punishment or threat) is at higher levels in women than men (Weisberg et al., 2011). In addition, self-esteem has also been found to be at lower levels in women than in men (Weisberg et al., 2011).

Differences were found in conventional self-esteem models which reflect the thought that females align with negatively phrased statements about self, while men align more often with positively phrased statements about the self. It was concluded that females are dispositioned to unconscious self-derogation (Magee & Upenieks, 2019). Women were found to have slightly lower self-compassion levels as compared to men (Neff, 2023; Yarnell et al., 2019).

Problem Statement

The problem which was addressed through this study was the effect of contributing factors of self-compassion, with mediators of self-condemnation and self-esteem, as moderated by gender, on self-forgiveness. Self-condemnation and low self-esteem are problems that contribute to low self-forgiveness (Wu et al., 2019). And greater wellness is related to self-forgiveness and to forgiveness of others (Toussaint et al., 2020). In addition, there are fewer negative feelings such as guilt with self-forgiveness, while there is a greater perception of control and self-acceptance with self-forgiveness (da Silva et al., 2017).

If this problem was not studied, individuals would have been affected by decreased well-being. Unforgiveness of self increases depression and distress, and decreases self-esteem (Hodgetts et al., 2021; Ingersoll-Dayton et al., 2010; Kolubinski et al., 2021). And rumination of unforgiven events causes individuals to reexperience the offending event (Wu et al., 2019). It appears that individuals who choose to ruminate on past mistakes judge themselves critically, feel low self-esteem compared to others, and face hindrances in achieving self-forgiveness and relief for themselves. This may be especially true for women.

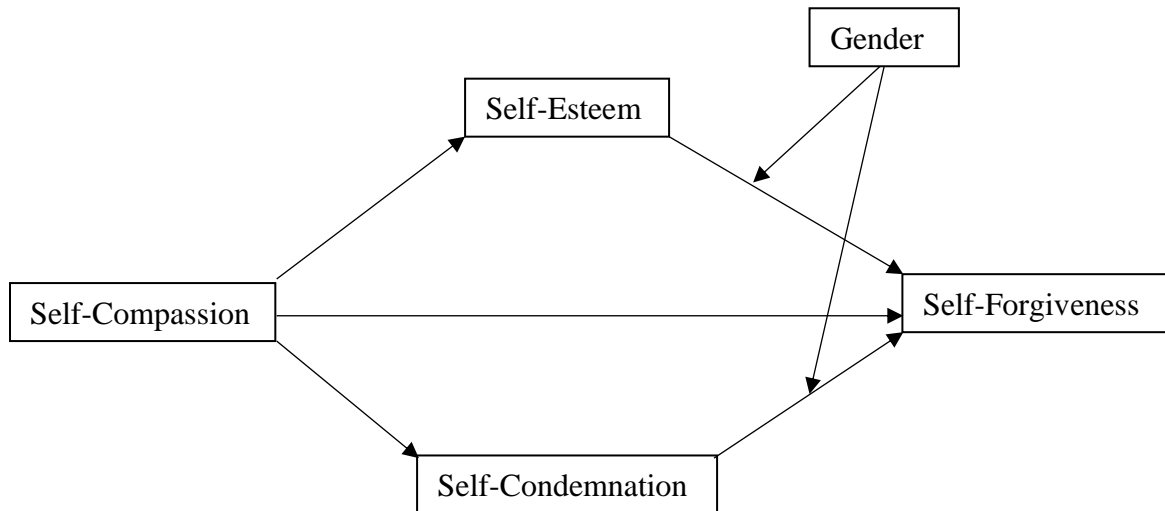
The current body of research did not sufficiently address the self-forgiveness issue and factors which contribute to self-forgiveness or self-unforgiveness. It was not known how an individual's self-condemnation and self-esteem impacted the relationship between self-compassion and self-forgiveness. It was unknown if gender moderated the mediation of self-condemnation and self-esteem in that process. Research was needed to determine if there were effects of self-condemnation, self-esteem, and gender upon self-

forgiveness. Another gap in knowledge existed as to whether individuals, who did not self-forgive, were more likely to esteem others as more worthy of forgiveness than themselves. In addition, there was a gap in knowledge concerning the effect of social comparison upon self-forgiveness, which has been related to one's self-esteem.

Scripture instructs believers to “forgive as the Lord forgave you,” (*New International Bible*, 1978/2011, Colossians 3:13). Scripture also teaches, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness,” (1 John 1:9). The effects of self-condemnation and self-esteem upon self-forgiveness required exploration so that individuals may realize the fruition and freedom provided from these scriptures. Individuals can then receive relief from distress (Kolubinski et al., 2021). Concerning gender differences, scripture illustrates that women's worth is equal to that of men as humankind was created in God's own image as described in Genesis 1 (*New Living Translation*, 1996/2015).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to examine how self-compassion predicted self-forgiveness in adults; how self-compassion and self-condemnation mediated the relationship on parallel paths between self-compassion and self-forgiveness; and, how gender moderated the relationship between self-compassion and self-forgiveness, and how gender moderated the mediation paths between self-esteem and self-forgiveness and between self-condemnation and forgiveness (see Figure 1).

Figure 1*Research Model***Research Questions and Hypotheses****Research Questions**

RQ 1: Is the relationship between self-compassion and self-forgiveness mediated by self-esteem?

RQ 2: Is the relationship between self-compassion and self-forgiveness mediated by self-condemnation?

RQ 3: Is the mediation of self-esteem and self-condemnation between self-compassion and self-forgiveness moderated by gender?

Hypotheses

H₀1: Self-compassion has no indirect effect on self-forgiveness via greater self-esteem.

H_a1: Self-compassion has an indirect effect on self-forgiveness via greater self-esteem.

H₀2: Self-compassion has no indirect effect on self-forgiveness via lower self-condemnation.

H_a2 Self-compassion has an indirect effect on self-forgiveness via lower self-condemnation.

H₀3: There is no gender moderation of the mediation of self-esteem and self-condemnation on the path between self-compassion and self-forgiveness.

H_a3: Gender moderates the mediation of self-esteem and self-condemnation on the path between self-compassion and self-forgiveness, with females showing a stronger positive correlation between self-esteem and self-forgiveness and a stronger negative correlation between self-condemnation and self-forgiveness compared to males.

Assumptions and Limitations of the Study

There were assumptions which pertained to the study. Participants' honesty, understanding of questions, following of instructions, adequate effort, attention, and accuracy of self-reporting were included in study assumptions. Bounds of the study included adults in the United States with access to and who participated in Amazon MTurk. In addition, participants were screened for pseudo self-forgiveness, and those scoring above the benchmark were excluded from analysis (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015).

Limitations of the study included limited generalizability of the results as the participants were limited to those operating in Amazon MTurk. The self-reporting, anonymous, and online nature of the study may have resulted in disingenuous or

misguided answers which would have resulted in unreliable data. In addition, the correlational nature of the study does not indicate causality.

Other limitations included the use of an online platform, with which participants may or may not have taken the questionnaires seriously. The study also used self-report measures which were a limitation because they relied on the participants' chosen answers which may or may not reflect reality. Also, the reading level and comprehension of participants would have affected their responses. The use of a quantitative study could also have been a limitation in that the questionnaires were not in depth, but rather used categories of concepts to measure and quantify participants' responses.

Theoretical Foundations of the Study

Theory provided a foundation for the topic. Virtue Theory served as the foundational theory of the study. With Virtue Theory, forgiveness is viewed as a moral virtue following the virtue ethics teachings of Aristotle (Kim et al., 2021). The Virtue Theory includes several themes. First, forgiveness has to do with the good of humankind. Next, forgiveness is a choice and incorporates shifts in cognition, emotion, and action. Also, forgiveness may be expressed and processed in different ways. In addition, there will be consistency in forgiveness regardless of the circumstance or individuals involved (Simon, 1986).

Other theories which are not foundational, but which informed the study include the social comparison theory. This theory posits individuals learn concerning the validity of their personal skills, opinions, and status by comparing their own beliefs, attitudes and behaviors with those of other individuals (Jhangiani et al., 2022). Also, the social

cognitive theory has been used to formulate self-forgiveness assessment tools (Griffin et al., 2018; Fiske & Taylor, 2021).

Other theories included Berger's religion theory, which reflects that religious views are social constructs (Krause, 2017). The concept of psychological flexibility may be applied, which pertains to being able to, without defense, experience a situation and make behavior changes if desired (Bem et al., 2021). Also, incremental theory and entity theory pertain to self-forgiveness and continued self-harming behaviors (Peetz et al., 2021). The stress-and-coping model of forgiveness considers two assertions. The first is that wrongdoings cause a stress reaction for victims (Worthington & Wade, 2020). And the second is that a coping technique to deal with the stress is through forgiveness (Worthington & Wade, 2020).

Biblical constructs which were relevant to the study included the regeneration of self and the putting off of the old self, forgiveness, and self-condemnation. Concerning the theological connection to the concept of self-forgiveness, themes of renewal emerged in the Apostle Paul's teachings in Ephesians 4:22, 23 (*Amplified Bible*, 1987/2015). Concerning self-condemnation, the Apostle Paul, in his writings to the believers in Rome, stated in Romans 8:1, "Therefore there is now no condemnation [no guilty verdict, no punishment] for those who are in Christ Jesus [who believe in Him as personal Lord and Savior]." According to Webster's dictionary, judgment is "a divine sentence or decision" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Paul's words to the believers in Rome were that there is no condemnation, no guilty verdict nor punishment (*New International Bible*, 1978/2011, Romans 8:1).

Concerning self-condemnation, believers must not judge even themselves. Jesus teaches, “Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven,” (*New International Bible*, 1978/2011, Luke 6:37).

Definition of Terms

The following is a list of definitions of terms that were used in this study.

Self-Compassion - Self-compassion refers to the relationship one has with oneself when there is a perception of circumstances of having failed, being inadequate, or suffering on the personal level (Neff, 2023). It is the orientation toward self of compassion, which is defined as the tendency to want to help an individual who has suffered (Neff, 2023).

Self-Condensation – Self-judgment is defined as “the capacity to recognize relationships, draw conclusions from evidence, and make critical evaluations” of self (American Psychological Association, 2022).

Self-Esteem – Self-esteem is defined as “the degree to which the qualities and characteristics contained in one’s self-concept are perceived to be positive...” (American Psychological Association, 2022).

Self-Forgiveness - Self-Forgiveness is defined as when an individual identifies that they have offended themselves and their own value of justice, but then self-forgive by freely dismissing any self-resentment and consequential responses and trying to respond to the self by following the beneficence morality principle (Kim et al., 2021).

Self-forgiveness is also defined as the relinquishing of resentment against the self for a perceived commitment of a wrongdoing and as the relinquishing of self-resentment

resulting from an acknowledged wrongdoing, and facilitating compassion, love, and generosity for the self (Worthington & Wade, 2020).

Self-forgiveness is not only a psychological construct, but also a moral virtue which encompasses letting go and the development of good (Kim et al., 2021). Moral virtue, emotions, thoughts, behaviors including self-care. Acknowledging wrong, self-reconciliation, and making things right (Kim et al., 2022). Self-forgiveness is strictly associated with a desire to fix the transgression so that the individual's value would be affirmed (Pierro et al., 2021).

For this study, self-forgiveness is defined as when an individual acknowledges a self-committed wrongdoing, then accepts self-compassion and relinquishes resentment against the self.

Significance of the Study

The significance that this study brings to the research literature, to theory, to practice, or to the world include that knowledge has been added concerning self-compassion, self-condemnation, self-esteem, gender, and self-forgiveness. This knowledge can lead to new education, therapeutic interventions, and self-help materials which will bring wellness and relief to individuals suffering from unforgiveness of self and its consequences. When individuals experience increased wellness and compassion, positive social change can be realized.

The Bible instructs believers that, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness,” (*New International Bible*, 1978/2011, 1 John 1:9). If God forgives individuals from all things, then

individuals can find a way to accept this forgiveness. They can then choose to forgive themselves and be free.

Summary

Current research was presented concerning self-forgiveness, self-compassion, self-esteem, and self-condemnation. A Biblical foundation regarding the topic was also presented. Self-forgiveness leads to greater wellbeing in individuals (Toussaint et al., 2020). The current research addressed the research gap of how an individual's self-condemnation and self-esteem impacts the process from self-compassion to self-forgiveness. Other factors considered in self-forgiveness included the effect of gender on this process.

These quantitative correlational studies have examined how self-compassion predicts self-forgiveness in adults; how self-esteem and self-condemnation mediate the relationship between self-compassion and self-forgiveness; and how gender moderates that mediation. Methodology of the quantitative correlational studies included the use of online Qualtrics surveys, and established measurement tools have been used to collect data. Correlations, predictors, mediators, and moderators were identified by data analysis including bivariate correlations, mediation analysis, and moderated mediation analysis. The studies have involved a variety of limitations and challenges. The significance of the studies is substantial in that findings will contribute to knowledge in the area of forgiveness and may be used to formulate education and interventions to help bring relief to individuals. Chapter 2 will provide an overview of current research on the topic.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Current literature will be explored concerning self-forgiveness, self-compassion, self-condemnation, and self-esteem. Gender differences concerning these topics will also be explored. Related topics of rumination, letting it go, guilt and shame, forgiveness and wellness, and unforgiveness will also be discussed. Biblical foundations for the topics will also be discussed.

Gaps in existing research will be addressed. The research will indicate that it has not been known if self-esteem and self-condemnation mediate the relationship between self-compassion and self-forgiveness in individuals. Also, the differential effect of self-esteem and self-condemnation on self-forgiveness, moderated by gender has not before been known.

Description of Search Strategy

The search strategy for the literature review involved the use of the PsycInfo platform. Research was filtered for peer-reviewed journal articles only from 2018 to present. Search terms included the following: self-forgiveness AND self-condemnation; self-forgiveness AND self-esteem or self-concept or self-worth; self-judgement OR self-judgment AND self-forgiveness; and, self-forgiveness. Regarding gender, terms of gender differences AND self-esteem or self-worth AND guilt or shame or self-blame were used. Of note, there were no search results found for the terms: self-forgiveness AND self-acceptance and self-worth, or for negative self-evaluation AND self-forgiveness. Biblical word study search terms included self-forgiveness, self-worth, self-condemnation, and self-judgment.

Review of Literature

Self-Forgiveness

Self-forgiveness begins with the understanding that one is deserving instead of thinking one is not worthy of forgiveness, unrelated to their ability to forgive others (Mastrocola, 2023). This understanding can bring self-compassion and grace from guilt (Mastrocola, 2023). Broadening one's perspective to include the positives about oneself can help one from identifying with an error (Mastrocola, 2023). Imagining one's self forgiving one can bring self-love from self-blame (Mastrocola, 2023). And social support can help facilitate self-forgiveness by having a trusted person listen to and understand one's situation, as well as confirm when self-forgiveness is appropriate (Mastrocola, 2023).

Self-forgiveness also leads to a perception of greater control (da Silva et al., 2017). Forgiving oneself can help one be intentional to have a plan in place to avoid making the error again in the future (Mastrocola, 2023). Ongoing commitment to self-forgiveness is important since guilt, as a memory function, comes to mind without one's control (Mastrocola, 2023).

Self-forgiveness is also related to past or future orientation (Pierro et al., 2021; Rabon et al., 2019). In a study by Pierro et al. (2021) concerning regulatory-mode orientation in a sample of 471 participants, it was found that self-forgiveness was inhibited by assessment, which focuses on the past, and was facilitated by locomotion, which focuses on the future. The study was controlled for Big 5 personality traits and strategies of self-exoneration (Pierro et al., 2021). It was proposed that self-forgiveness is strictly associated with the propensity toward motion, thus addressing past errors and

moving ahead and further inhibited by tendencies for evaluation and comparison (Pierro et al., 2021).

In addition to future orientation, personality traits also have a relationship with the tendency to self-forgive. Trait self-forgiveness was studied by Cowden et al. (2020). It was found that the subgroup of self-forgiveness had higher levels of trait self-forgiveness and grandiose narcissism than the subgroup of self-punishment (Cowden et al., 2020). The subgroup of self-forgiveness also had lower levels of self-forgiveness and higher levels of shame-proneness than the subgroup of self-exoneration (Cowden et al., 2020). The subgroup of self-punishment had higher levels of shame-proneness than the other two groups (Cowden et al., 2020).

Reorientation is another important aspect of self-forgiveness. Self-forgiveness requires a high amount of positive values reorientation such as acknowledging responsibility and trying to reconcile and change, as well as a high amount of personal esteem restoration such as emotionally self-affirming rather than self-condemning (Cowden et al., 2020). Those individuals who self-punished were found to have had a high amount of value reorientation; however, they had a low amount of self-esteem restoration (Cowden et al., 2020). Those who self-exonerated had a low amount of value reorientation; however, with a high amount of self-esteem orientation (Cowden et al., 2020).

Rumination

Rumination can also have an impact upon an individual's self-forgiveness and self-condemnation. Rumination affects the mental functioning of individuals and is defined as "obsessional thinking involving excessive, repetitive thoughts or themes that

interfere with other forms of mental activity” (American Psychological Association, 2022). Rumination and anger have been found to be negatively associated with forgiveness and self-compassion (Wu et al., 2019).

Rumination can lead to negative mental states (Kolubinski et al., 2021). For those individuals with self-critical rumination, distress is higher and self-esteem is lower (Kolubinski et al., 2021). Rumination can also lead individuals to experience thoughts and negative emotions associated with the re-experiencing of the original event (Wu et al., 2019). However, self-compassion mediates depressive symptoms associated with an individual’s rumination (Hodgetts et al., 2021). In addition, metacognitive beliefs have been found to be related both with rumination and with depression (Cano-López et al., 2022).

Rumination also affects individuals’ behaviors. Adolescent themes about rumination and dysregulated behavior were found to include triggers, rumination, precipitants, and distractions (Sloan et al., 2021). Also, rumination and acceptance were discriminating factors found between differing trajectories for students (Bossenbroek et al., 2022). In addition, risk factors for distress were found to lead to rumination (Shaw et al., 2019).

Rumination can originate from a variety of experiences. Rumination can occur when a wrongdoing is a hindrance to achieving one’s desired goals (Siedlecka et al., 2015). In this way, rumination may cause one to continue to process information which is associated with their goals (Siedlecka et al., 2015). In addition, the replaying of the incident in one’s thoughts may cause the individual to remain stagnant in thoughts and feelings which are negative (Siedlecka et al., 2015). Also, when an individual ruminates,

the subject situation can seem more recent in time than it may have truly been, which causes increased intensity in emotion (Siedlecka et al., 2015). When experiencing rumination, forgiving oneself reduces guilt and other negative feelings (da Silva et al., 2017).

Letting It Go

As a counter to rumination, “Letting it go” is used in coping with various situations of remembering negative experiences. “Letting it go” is defined as the ability to not ruminate on an experience which is negative or out of one’s control. A paradox of forgiveness, according to Enright, (2001) is the restoration of freedom of the forgiver when letting go and moving ahead. This can also apply to one granting forgiveness to themselves.

Letting it go has many different applications. When looking into what coping skills teens dealing with parents’ divorce utilized, it was found that forgiveness, acceptance, and letting it go and moving on proved useful in processing these challenging experiences. (Sumari et al., 2020). And in a study of graduate students’ behavior, it was found that, concerning their supervisor’s feedback, students utilized methods of letting it go and moving on in their courses (Zheng et al., 2020). In addition, metaphors concerning their children’s experiences with disease included parents grasping and letting go, to make it through their child’s illness (Olsman et al., 2019).

Unforgiveness

In addition to forgiveness, rumination, and letting it go, unforgiveness also affects individuals’ mental states. Self-unforgiveness and rumination were found to be indirectly affected by both perceived unforgiveness by others and by perceived unforgiveness by

God (Ingersoll-Dayton et al., 2010). In addition, depression has been shown to be directly impacted by an individual's perceived unforgiveness by others (Ingersoll-Dayton et al., 2010).

Unforgiveness has also been found to be associated with guilt and shame (da Silva et al., 2017). When an individual repents, but they do not perceive to have been forgiven, this results in the same level of guilt feelings as are present during rumination concerning the experience (da Silva et al., 2017).

Forgiveness and Wellness

Forgiveness and self-esteem have a positive effect on wellness outcomes for individuals. Factors of forgiving self, forgiving others, and forgiving God are associated with better health; those reporting greater forgiveness report greater health (Rasmussen et al., 2019; Upenieks, 2021). And trait-based forgiveness and state-based forgiveness are similar predictors of wellness for individuals (Rasmussen et al., 2019).

A greater sense of wellness is directly related to self-forgiveness and to forgiveness of others (Toussaint et al., 2020). In addition, forgiveness mediates the relationship of gratitude and rumination in individuals (Çolak & Güngör, 2021). Further, self-forgiveness and forgiveness of others mediates the relationship between rumination and forgiveness of others (Çolak & Güngör, 2021). However, in a study examining self-forgiveness and its relationship with death-thought accessibility and morality salience, no significance was found (McConnell, 2018).

Forgiveness also has been found to have a positive relationship to wellness and mental health. An example of this is that forgiveness leads to decreases in anxiety and depression (Wu et al., 2019). And those who forgive have a higher tendency to

experience empathy and show kindness to others (Wu et al., 2019). In addition, relationships are better maintained and more satisfying, and conflict is better managed by those who forgive (Wu et al., 2019).

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem also impacts self-forgiveness. Individuals with higher self-esteem have been found to be more likely to forgive themselves (Krause, 2017). Self-forgiveness has also been found to be affected by attendance of faith services (Krause, 2017). Evangelicals were found to be more likely to attend faith services, where the social support received provided spiritual support, and then led to a greater sense of forgiveness by God and also greater self-esteem (Krause, 2017). Additionally, overidentifying with errors leads to lower self-esteem (Neff, 2023). However, obtaining an understanding of humanity leads to the understanding that everyone makes errors in life (Neff, 2023).

Self-esteem and forgiveness have also been studied with links to anger and hope. Kim et al. (2022b) studied anger and hope as mediators in forgiveness and psychological health outcomes. The participants consisted of 202 students from a not-for-profit university, both female and male, and Christians. Measures utilized in the study included the Enright Forgiveness Scale, Patient-Reported Outcomes Measurement Information System (PROMIS) for state anger, anxiety, and depression; Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale; and the Adult Hope Scale. It was found that anger and hope, both separately and together, mediated the outcome of forgiveness concerning anxiety, depression, and self-esteem (Kim et al., 2022b). The conclusion was that forgiveness plays a part in lessening anger and revitalizing hope, which then, in turn, leads to improving health (Kim et al., 2022b).

Self-esteem and self-forgiveness as a moral virtue have been studied. Kim et al. (2022c) studied validity of the Self-Forgiveness scale in four studies. The participants were university students and Amazon MTurk. It was found that existing scales measured trait forgiveness rather than the moral virtue. It was also found that anger, hope, depression, anxiety, self-esteem are impacted toward the positive with self-forgiveness (Kim et al., 2022c). The conclusion was that self-forgiveness, as a moral virtue, includes not only thoughts and emotions, but individuals' behaviors as well, in a holistic fashion (Kim et al., 2022c).

Gender and Self-Esteem

Gender also has an impact on self-esteem. Differences exist in how genders process experiences (Weisberg et al., 2011). Neuroticism, which is the propensity to have a negative feeling and processing when encountering a perceived punishment or threat, has been found at higher levels in women than men (Weisberg et al., 2011). Women also report greater stress and anxiety than do men, and they have a greater tendency to look for counseling than men do (Miles & Naumann, 2023).

Differences also exist in perception of gender roles of both men and women, and these gender role differences impact individuals' self-esteem (Yarnell et al., 2019). Some of these gender roles result in a tendency for the individual to be more self-sacrificing or to be more self-serving (Yarnell et al., 2019). Women's gender roles primarily have to do with self-sacrifice, which is in opposition to the self-care of tending to needs of self (Yarnell et al., 2019). In addition, females have been found to report lower levels of social self-concept (Miles & Naumann, 2023). However, men's gender roles are associated with entitlement, which then facilitates the meeting the needs of the self

(Yarnell et al., 2019). This difference in gender role can result in men holding themselves in higher esteem than do women.

Self-esteem has been found to be at lower levels in women than in men (Weisberg et al., 2011). Self-esteem has also been found to be higher in adolescent males than in adolescent females (Gauthier-Duchesne et al., 2022). In a study considering gender as a moderator with adolescents in the association with sexual abuse as children, self-esteem, and transgressing actions, adolescent males who were not victims were found to have higher levels of self-esteem than did females who were not victims (Gauthier-Duchesne et al., 2022).

Women's lower self-esteem has been found to impact their self-evaluations prior to a suicide attempt in women veterans (Denneson et al., 2020). The female veterans expressed evaluating themselves negatively and used words referring to themselves such as 'worthless' and 'shameful' (Denneson et al., 2020). Male veterans, on the other hand, expressed that they were feeling overwhelmed and that they were done (Denneson et al., 2020). The male veterans used terms which reflected their own needs rather than using terms reflecting on their character as being flawed in some way as the women veterans did (Denneson et al., 2020).

Gender differences have also been found in the conventional self-esteem model (Magee & Upenieks, 2019). This model reflects the thought that females align more often with negatively phrased statements about the self, while men align more often with positively phrased statements about the self (Magee & Upenieks, 2019). Magee and Upenieks (2019) concluded that females are dispositioned to experience unconscious self-derogation.

Self-Condensation

Self-condensation is a factor which impacts self-forgiveness. When an individual commits a wrong, it affects their desire for moral-social identity. This need is associated with the need for one to belong to a group and to bring positive contributions to the group (Worthington & Wade, 2020). Another need affected is the need for agency, which is associated with an individual's need to be in control of self and to be regulated (Woodyatt et al., 2017). The need for meaning in life is also affected by wrongdoing because individuals need to believe there is purpose, meaning, and value in their lives (Worthington & Wade, 2020). Self-condensation may result when any of these needs are unresolved and at risk (Worthington & Wade, 2020). Thoughts, feelings, and consequences of actions can lead to a pattern of self-condensation (Worthington & Wade, 2020).

The negative emotions felt when thinking about a wrongdoing can be made even more intense by ruminating (Worthington & Wade, 2020). These intense negative emotions are seen by individuals who find self-forgiveness difficult as more reason that they are not able to move past the event, that they should not, and that they are worthy of suffering (Worthington & Wade, 2020). Shame based appraisals of self, which result from these intense emotions are related to continuing intrusive experiences (Worthington & Wade, 2020).

Positive outcomes after self-unforgiveness can be facilitated through the use of Emotion-focused therapy. In a qualitative study, Cornish and Hanks (2020) studied a female who experienced self-unforgiveness after infidelity in marriage incorporating an emotion-focused therapy individual program incorporating positive psychology, which

uses a 4-point model of self-forgiveness including responsibility, remorse, restoration, and renewal (Cornish & Hanks, 2020). It was found that the emotion-focused interventions facilitated resolution of self-critical emotions and resolution of emotions through the therapy's four points (Cornish & Hanks, 2020). The conclusion was positive outcomes can be realized after infidelity by the use of a process that facilitates the exploring of challenging emotions and repair of the relationship (Cornish & Hanks, 2020).

Trait self-forgiveness and its connection to defensiveness and humility has also been studied. Onody et al. (2020) studied participants who were 302 and 194 US adults. Measures used included The TRIO (self-condemnation, defensiveness, self-forgiveness). It was found that trait humility was related to greater levels of trait self-forgiveness through lower levels of defensiveness (Onody et al., 2020). Trait and state humility were related to greater levels of self-forgiveness through lower levels of defensiveness (Onody et al., 2020). In addition, humility was also related to reconciliation willingness (Onody et al., 2020).

Personality traits also have been associated with self-condemnation and self-forgiveness tendencies. Cornish et al. (2018) studied interpersonal offense responses. The participants were 313 university students. Measures included State Self-Forgiveness Scales, perceived responsibility items, self-condemnation items, Self-Compassion Scale-Short Form, Heartland Forgiveness of Self subscale, CORE. It found three response patterns: 'self-forgiving' (high self-forgiveness and responsibility, and low self-condemnation); 'self-condemning' (high self-condemnation and responsibility, and low self-forgiveness); and, 'self-exonerating' (high self-forgiveness and low self-

condemnation and responsibility) (Cornish et al., 2018). Patterns were unique to personality traits concerning interpersonal relationships (Cornish et al., 2018). Those self-forgiving had less vulnerable narcissism than the others (Cornish et al., 2018). Those self-exonerating had less empathetic concern than those self-condemning (Cornish et al., 2018). The conclusion was that self-forgiveness is different than self-exoneration or absence of self-condemnation (Cornish et al., 2018).

Guilt and Shame

Rumination is also related to guilt and shame. Rumination has been associated with higher levels of guilt when compared with self-forgiveness (da Silva et al., 2017). Moral (worthy of blame), non-moral (not worthy of blame) guilt, and shame have been found to create threats to both identity and the self, and therefore become hindrances to self-forgiveness (Bem et al., 2021). However, suffering can be lessened, and self-image repair can be facilitated by psychological flexibility which removes barriers to self-forgiveness (Bem et al., 2021).

The regions of the brain activated when the emotional event is remembered reflect the original regions affected, and therefore encode again the emotional memory, which causes it to become more intense (Wenzlaff & Wegner, 2000). Some of these intense emotions are guilt and shame (Wenzlaff & Wegner, 2000). These emotions can seem beyond repair for some individuals, which then creates the tendency for these emotions to be avoided (Wenzlaff & Wegner, 2000). Avoiding and suppressing of thoughts concerning distressing emotions actually makes the re-experience of the related emotional event stronger (Wenzlaff & Wegner, 2000).

Carpenter et al. (2019) studied mediation of guilt- and shame-proneness on self-forgiveness prediction. The participants were 400 adults, 655 from public datasets. Measures included Heartland, Test of Self-Conscious Affect-3. It was found that, according to sex, guilt and shame offset each other and mediated 71% of variance by age concerning self-forgiveness (Carpenter et al., 2019). The conclusion was males and females have different processes in reacting to transgressions (Carpenter et al., 2019). Older persons have less shame-proneness and more guilt-proneness (offset) and are positively affected by self-forgiveness, which is related to longevity (Carpenter et al., 2019). Positive outcomes may be achieved by moving from shame to reparative guilt and self-forgiveness (Carpenter et al., 2019).

Gender and Self-Condensation

Gender differences also impact self-condensation and self-compassion. And gender role socialization may cause the development of feelings of shame to develop differently in women than in men (Gilchrist et al., 2020). Women have been found to have slightly lower self-compassion levels as compared to men (Neff, 2023; Yarnell et al., 2019).

Women respond to emotional events differently than men. When exposed to a negative emotional event, women reported the events as of greater intensity and stimulating when recalled from memory (Staugaard & Berntsen, 2021). Women also experienced more anxiety after remembering (Staugaard & Berntsen, 2021). Women did not remember the events any more often than did the men, but their memories had a greater emotional reaction (Staugaard & Berntsen, 2021). In addition, women reported greater rumination levels than did males (Ando' et al., 2020). Rumination is defined as an

individual's propensity to think again and again about failures, negative feelings, and their consequences (Ando' et al., 2020). Rumination can lead to greater levels of self-condemnation.

Gender differences also come into play with experiences of guilt and shame, which can lead to self-condemnation. There is a significant difference in the amount of guilt and shame white women report compared to white men (Else-Quest et al., 2012). Gilchrist et al. (2020) explored whether or not gender moderated the relationship between physical self-concept and guilt and shame anticipation. It was found that gender did moderate the association between physical self-concept and shame anticipation (Gilchrist et al., 2020). However, gender did not moderate the association between physical self-concept and guilt anticipation (Gilchrist et al., 2020). Also, while none was found with men, for women there was found a negative relationship between physical self-concept and shame (Gilchrist et al., 2020).

Females have to make more of an effort to find self-forgiveness (Carpenter et al., 2019). Females have been found to have elevated levels of shame and elevated guilt-proneness, which offsets shame (Carpenter et al., 2019). Females also have been found to have more repair-oriented guilt (Carpenter et al., 2019). Conversely, men have been found to have less shame and less repair-oriented guilt compared to women (Carpenter et al., 2019).

Self-Compassion

Self-compassion has been found to be related with well-being (Neff et al., 2018). Self-compassion concerns being kind to oneself rather than judging oneself (Neff at al., 2018). Thus, self-compassion thus brings about a form of self-acceptance which results in

greater feelings of worth (Neff et al., 2018; Phillips & Hine, 2021). Higher levels of self-compassion have been found to be related with less psychological states such as anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation and stress (Ferrari et al., 2019; Hughes et al., 2021; Marsh et al., 2018; Suh & Jeong, 2021). Self-compassion leads to coping which is functional (Ewert et al., 2021). Further, self-compassion is related to more stable state self-esteem (Neff & Vonk, 2009).

Self-compassion facilitates positive outcomes. Individuals who have compassion on themselves have a higher tendency to forgive offenders and to experience less rumination and anger (Wu et al., 2019). In addition, self-compassionate individuals have been found to not participate in self-condemnation (Vazeou-Nieuwenhuis & Schumann, 2018).

Therapy involving compassion has provided positive results. Maynard et al. (2022) studied Compassion-focused therapy results. The participants were 31 CFT group therapy attendees. Measures included thematic analysis of experiences during group compassion-focused therapy. It was found that themes emerged of ‘becoming self-compassionate and self-forgiving’ with subthemes of ‘reduced inhibitions to self-compassion and self-forgiveness’ (resulted from an increased understanding of self-compassion value), ‘becoming self-compassionate and self-forgiving’ (increased positive beliefs about self-compassion value and lower inhibitions to showing kindness to self), and ‘reduced self-condemnation’ (understanding of the negative effects of self-condemnation and positive effects of self-compassion, as well as normalization of these experiences) and ‘the CFT group was beneficial’ with subthemes of ‘the CFT group had facilitated personal change’ (group helped in relating experiences and learning skills

which could be used during relapse), ‘CFT skills facilitated personal change’ (understanding of emotional responses and perspective), and ‘positive personal outcomes’ (renewal concerning suffering of self and others and greater emotional regulation due to being emotionally aware and grateful) (Maynard et al., 2022). Insight was gained regarding barriers to self-forgiveness and self-compassion, abilities for self-condemnation, and responsibility for thoughts and actions (Maynard et al., 2022). Owing one’s experiences with compassionate thoughts and emotions instead of condemnation is productive (Maynard et al., 2022).

Trait self-compassion also brings about positive outcomes. Miyagawa et al. (2020) studied self-compassion and failure beliefs, controlled for self-esteem. The participants were 252 and 124 Japanese university students. It was found that, controlling for self-esteem, trait self-compassion is associated with the thought of failures as opportunities to learn that come with a normal life (Miyagawa et al., 2020). Self-compassion manipulation resulted in greater positive responses to self, while self-reflection manipulation resulted in a larger negative response to self (Miyagawa et al., 2020).

Daily cognitions of individuals are also impacted by self-compassion. Muris et al. (2019) studied self-compassion and positive and negative cognitions daily in individuals. The participants were 117 adolescents aged 14-19. Measures used included the Self-Compassion Scale, Adol Reactions to Adversity. It was found that self-compassion is related to more positive cognitions and less negative cognitions on a daily basis (Muris et al., 2019).

Self-compassion and self-forgiveness also have been found to be related to less harmful behavior to self. Cleare et al. (2019) reviewed self-compassion or self-forgiveness and self-harm or suicidal ideation. It was found that significant relationships existed between greater self-forgiveness or self-compassion and less self-harm and suicidal ideation (Cleare et al., 2019). Self-forgiveness or self-compassion may reduce the association between self-harm and life events which are negative in nature (Cleare et al., 2019).

Compassionate and other-focused love and forgiveness toward others have also been studied (Jiahe et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2022a). Kim et al. (2022a) studied compassionate love and dispositional forgiveness. The participants of the study were 100 online, male and female. Measures included Enright Forgiveness Inventory, Compassionate Love for Humanity Scale, PROMIS scales for anger, anxiety, depression; Satisfaction with Life Scale for wellness, Dispositional Positive Emotions Scale (joy subscale); and two questions concerning commitment to and value of forgiveness. It was found that dispositional forgiveness is related positively to a commitment of forgiving (Kim et al., 2022a). Compassionate love predicted dispositional forgiveness, even when anger played a role (Kim et al., 2022a). The conclusion was higher levels of other-focused love may exist in individuals who forgive in a dispositional manner (Kim et al., 2022a).

Biblical Foundations of the Study

Self-Forgiveness

Forgiving oneself does not mean one is forgiving one's own sins. God is the forgiver of sins, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins

and purify us from all unrighteousness.” (*New International Bible*, 1978/2011, 1 John 1:9). In order to determine a wrong has been done, there must be a judgement that takes place. Although individuals make judgement determinations daily, when it comes to forgiving sins, God is the only judge. “There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?” (James 4:12). All who believe in God receive forgiveness through his authority. “He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.” (Acts 10:42-43). God forgives sins.

God also commands believers to grant forgiveness to others. “Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” (*New International Bible*, 1978/2011, Colossians 3:13). Those who are forgiven by God are blessed. “Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord will never count against them.” (Romans 4:7,8).

Believers are not to withhold forgiveness of those who have done wrong, and they are not to judge. Jesus said, “Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.” (*New International Bible*, 1978/2011, Luke 6:37). Through forgiveness, individuals can extend God’s grace, mercy, and love to others and to themselves. Virtue Theory also supports that one can be kind, caring, just, and forgiving to oneself. “Be kind and compassionate to one another,

forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” (Ephesians 4:32). Forgiving oneself can facilitate the putting off of the old self.

Regeneration-Putting off the Old Self

Concerning the theological connection to the concept of self-forgiveness, themes of renewal emerge in the Apostle Paul’s teachings. Ephesians 4:22, 23 states “You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds,” (*New International Bible*, 1978/2011). Paul continues in verse 24, “and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

The Apostle Paul teaches believers using language such as putting off or discarding the old self as it is replaced by the regenerated and new self or the new nature. Paul is speaking of renewal by reason of the new birth they have received by faith in Christ. He speaks of putting away the old self, which is the old nature prior to regeneration. The old self, or old nature, is to be discarded because the old nature is dead.

New Self

Paul references that with their new life they have been taught according to the truth that is in Christ Jesus. The old self was being corrupted by its evil deceitful desires and is put to death by the new birth experience. The Holy Spirit then renews the thoughts and attitudes of the mind. This new self brings a new attitude or state of mind that is in accordance with the image of God, pure and untarnished. The new state of mind and attitude which Paul references is further unpacked throughout the subsequent verses 25-28 (*New International Bible*, 1978/2011, Ephesians 4). Paul instructs believers to reject

all falsehoods, rumors, evil talk that is not edifying, along with defrauding, anger, and bitterness; and, to speak the truth.

Unforgiveness

Unforgiveness against others or oneself appears to be a form of defrauding. Webster's dictionary (Merriam-Webster, n.d.) defines defrauding as "deprive of something by deception." When one harbors unforgiveness against oneself, one is depriving oneself of the forgiveness God offers when one repents. A lie of the enemy, Satan, is that one has sinned a sin so great that God will not or cannot forgive. There is only one exception, which is the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit (*New International Bible*, 1978/2011, Matthew 12:31-32). The scriptures are clear regarding confession of sins and repentance, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness," (I John 1:9).

Christians are to not believe the lies of "the accuser of our brothers and sisters" (*New International Bible*, 1978/2011, Revelations 12:10). Believers are to trust the Lord. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight," (Proverbs 3:5-6). It follows that, if believers trust in the Lord, they will believe that they are forgiven; therefore, they will not believe the accusations of the enemy that they are not forgiven.

God grants forgiveness freely to all who repent and confess their sins to him. He is faithful and just to forgive. When believers receive the new nature through salvation and regeneration, they should follow God's example of forgiveness. This forgiveness is to be extended to oneself as well since it has been freely granted to those who seek his forgiveness by God according to his nature.

This forgiveness by must be received by the individual. Perceptions of unworthiness and low self-esteem can be obstacles to individuals receiving and applying forgiveness to themselves (*New International Bible*, 1978/2011, Acts 13:46). Christ redeemed the lives of all humankind, but that redemption at times remains unclaimed and rejected.

Self-Condensation

Concerning self-condensation, the Apostle Paul, in his writings to the believers in Rome, stated in Romans 8:1 “Therefore there is now no condensation [no guilty verdict, no punishment] for those who are in Christ Jesus [who believe in Him as personal Lord and Savior],” (*Amplified Bible*, 1987/2015). One definition rendered for the word judgment from Webster’s dictionary is “a divine sentence or decision” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Paul writes unequivocally to the believers in Rome that there is no condensation, no guilty verdict nor punishment. In other words, no divine sentence imposed by God upon those who put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ or their salvation, who live according to the Holy Spirit and not the sinful flesh.

Paul further explains in Romans 8:2 that the law of the spirit of life, which is in Christ Jesus, the law of the new nature which believers have received, sets them free from the law of sin and death (*New International Bible*, 1978/2011). The new nature, given to all those who are in Christ Jesus, is free from any divine sentence, decision, or judgment against them. Therefore, if one who is in Christ Jesus has been set free by God, it seems apparent that one should gladly receive that stay of execution and live in the freedom granted by God.

Matthew Henry, in his commentary on Romans 8, sheds light on the reality of truth about what God has fully afforded believers when they are found in Christ (Christianity.com, 2023). Henry points out the truth that there is no condemnation. Paul does not infer that accusation does not exist against believers, nor that there is not a thing worthy of condemnation in the life of believers; instead, that the accusation has been silenced, the charges have been dropped, and the judgment against the accused has been canceled.

Believers can then abundantly rejoice in the word declared in Revelation 12:10 “Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: ‘Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down,’” (*New International Bible*, 1978/2011).

Furthermore, throughout the remainder of Romans chapter eight, the Apostle Paul expounds upon the truth that the regenerated believer now walks according to the Holy Spirit and not the old self (the flesh). In doing so, the believer walks according to the will and nature of the Holy Spirit which leads the believer in complete victory and the fulfillment of everlasting life.

The Apostle Paul writes in his first letter to his son in the gospel, Timothy, in I Timothy 1:15b “... Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”—and I am the worst of them all.” Paul further states that even though he was the most chief of sinners, “... God had mercy on me so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of his great patience with even the worst sinners. Then others will realize that they, too, can believe in him and receive eternal life,” (*New Living Translation*, 1996/2015, I Timothy 1:16).

Paul indicates that he was the worst of all sinners and yet the work of Christ, by God's mercy and patience, was accomplished in his own personal life by saving him from his sins. By this example, anyone can follow suit, put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and receive eternal life.

Paul, who had been a hater and murderer of Christians prior to his conversion, could have considered himself unworthy of forgiveness, salvation, and the eternal life offered by Jesus Christ. The solution to this predicament is for individuals to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, put their faith and trust in him for salvation, and receive the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. If salvation, redemption, and regeneration could be granted by Christ to Paul, Christ can and will do the same for anyone who believes in him.

Believers are not to judge others (*New International Bible*, 1978/2011, Matthew 1-3). Therefore, believers also are not to judge themselves unjustly. Believers must apply the scriptures of forgiveness not only to others, but to themselves, and "forgive as the Lord forgave you," (Colossians 3:13). It is important for believers to put into motion their belief that "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness," (1 John 1:9). Believers must not judge even themselves. "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven," (Luke 6:37).

Self-Compassion

Unworthiness

It seems many feel as if they are worthless based on the lack of earthly possessions, along with shortcomings, or troubled lives. Webster's Dictionary defines

self-worth as “a sense of one’s value as a human being” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). The concepts the Apostle Paul shared with believers in the books of Romans and Ephesians regarding being made free from the former self which was being corrupted by sinful lusts and deceits, and which was now replaced with the new nature which lives according to the image of Christ.

The old nature lived according to the desires of the flesh. The focus of the old nature would be to find one’s worth or value in things that pertain primarily to the natural world. Jesus taught this in Matthew 6:31-32, “So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them,” (*New International Bible*, 1978/2011). Jesus said, “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well,” (Matthew 6:33). Jesus taught his followers that the pagans seek after things that pertain primarily to the flesh or natural world: clothing, food, shelter, and other physical sustenance. Jesus instructed people to now seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and God would see to it that their physical needs also would also be met.

Matthew Henry, in his commentary on these verses, brings out the reality that pagans trust and seek after these things because they really do not know any other way to live (Christianity.com, 2023). They only know the things that pertain to the flesh. The pagans place their energies in pursuing temporal items, because they do not know the care and concern the heavenly father provides for his own. Those who have been made new in Christ now live according to the spirit which frees them to pursue the purposes of God and his righteous will. This then is not only a new way of living, but this living

comes with promises. This new life comes free of worry and anxiousness about the things of this temporal life. It frees the Christ follower and empowers them to not interpret their worth based on the abundance or lack of earthly commodities alone, but more importantly on the worth God sees in them.

In John 8:31 and 32, it is written, “Jesus said to the people who believed in him, “You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free,” (*New Living Translation*, 1996/2015). Truth alone sets no one free, but knowing or having the truth revealed to one will set one free. There is a freedom that comes to those who hearken and obey the words of God. One truth is that human beings were created originally in the likeness and image of God. The scriptures record in Genesis 1:27 “So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” From the very beginning, it is recorded that humankind was created in the likeness and image of God. That is a powerful truth which reveals the value God placed on human life by fashioning it after himself.

It seems clear, according to scripture, that when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, sin entered the human race, and death came as the result of that sin (*New International Bible*, 1978/2011, Romans 5:12). The remedy for sin entering the world was God sending his son, Jesus Christ, into the world to save and redeem from their sins all those who would believe in him for salvation (John 3:16; Matthew 1:21). Thus, the truth of God’s mercy, patience, and redemption is made manifest in all who believe in him.

The new attitude brought about through salvation and regeneration then allows believers to live according to the original image and likeness of God. The Apostle Paul further solidifies these truths throughout his writings to the Corinthian believers in II Corinthians 3:14-18 (*New International Bible*, 1978/2011). Paul writes to them that many under the old covenant were living under a veil, but only through Jesus Christ is the veil removed and allows believers to see clearly. II Corinthians 3:16 reads, “But whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away,” (*New Living Translation*, 1996/2015).

Paul further goes on to explain to believers, in II Corinthians 3:18, “So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.” Hence, the worth of the believer is not found in the believer alone, but more importantly, the believer can see themselves being shaped into the glorious image of the Son of God.

It seems clear that an individual, who does not know Christ as savior, has no way of knowing the reality of their true self-worth. Only those individuals who have turned to Christ and put their faith in him are able to discover true self-worth. The veil has been removed and the believer can now see that they are being fashioned into the image of Christ.

Gender

The equal worth of a woman and a man is also illustrated in scripture. From the beginning of humankind, God created male and female in his image and likeness. God blessed them, and then gave them dominion over the entire earth and everything in it. Genesis 1:26 gives the account of God purposing to create all of humankind in his image

(*New Living Translation*, 1996/2015). “Then God said, “Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. ...,” (Genesis 1:26a). Then God followed through in his stated purpose in Genesis 1:27, “So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”

In Genesis 1:28, God then blessed them and directed them to be fruitful, multiply, and to rule over the entire earth. “Then God blessed them and said, ‘Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground,’” (*New Living Translation*, 1996/2015). From the beginning, it seems that there is an equality, partnership, and shared responsibility of male and female before God.

All of this in Genesis 1 precedes the actual physical formation of the woman (*New Living Translation*, 1996/2015). The makings of the woman (Eve) were inside of the man (Adam) from when God formed Adam from the dust of the earth. In Genesis 2, God creates woman from the rib of the man whom God formed from the dust of the earth. Essentially, one could decipher that the creator had the woman in mind from the beginning when he formed the man.

Summary

The literature shows the importance of self-compassion and self-forgiveness upon an individual’s well-being. The literature supports that self-compassion and self-forgiveness are related to well-being (Neff et al., 2018; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Toussaint et al., 2020). The literature also supports that self-compassion is related to self-acceptance which results in greater feelings of worth (Neff et al., 2018; Phillips & Hine, 2021). Further, self-compassion is related to less self-condemnation (Vazeou-Nieuwenhuis & Schumann, 2018). Literature has also shown that self-esteem has been

related with greater self-forgiveness, and greater self-condemnation is related to lower self-esteem (Kim et al., 2022; Kolubinski et al., 2021; Krause, 2017). In addition, literature has shown that self-condemnation and self-forgiveness are associated via guilt and shame (da Silva et al., 2017).

The current research shows that women tend to have a lower level of self-esteem and a greater level of self-condemnation than men do. Self-esteem has been found to be at lower levels in women than in men (Weisberg et al., 2011). Women align more often with negatively phrased statements about the self, while men align more often with positively phrased statements about the self (Magee & Upenieks, 2019). Women have been found to have slightly lower self-compassion levels as compared to men (Neff, 2023; Yarnell et al., 2019). There is a significant difference in the amount of guilt and shame white women report compared to white men (Else-Quest et al., 2012). And females have to make more of an effort to find self-forgiveness (Carpenter et al., 2019). Males and females have different processes in reacting to transgressions (Carpenter et al., 2019).

Scriptural evidence exists to support the casting off the old and the accepting of the new self (*New International Bible*, 1978/2011, Ephesians 4:22-24). Individuals are worthy of forgiveness and should accept forgiveness for themselves and show themselves compassion (John 3:16; Matthew 1:21). In addition, individuals of different genders have equal worth in God's view (*New Living Translation*, 1996/2015, Genesis 1:26).

The literature supports that there are relationships between self-forgiveness and self-compassion. However, there has been a literature gap concerning whether self-condemnation and self-esteem mediate this relationship. Therefore, the need for

examining these mediations was justified. Also, literature also supports that there is a gender difference on the level of self-esteem and self-condemnation; therefore, the need for examining the differential effect of self-esteem and self-condemnation on self-forgiveness, moderated by gender was justified. Chapter 3 will discuss the methodology for the current research.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHOD

Overview

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine how self-compassion predicts self-forgiveness in adults; how self-esteem and self-condemnation mediate the relationship between self-compassion and self-forgiveness; and how gender moderates this mediation. This chapter will discuss the research design, along with information regarding participants, procedures, measures, variables, and data analysis details. Limitations will also be discussed.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Questions

RQ 1: Is the relationship between self-compassion and self-forgiveness mediated by self-esteem?

RQ 2: Is the relationship between self-compassion and self-forgiveness mediated by self-condemnation?

RQ 3: Is the mediation of self-esteem and self-condemnation between self-compassion and self-forgiveness moderated by gender?

Hypotheses

H₀1: Self-compassion has no indirect effect on self-forgiveness via greater self-esteem.

H_a1: Self-compassion has an indirect effect on self-forgiveness via greater self-esteem.

H₀2: Self-compassion has no indirect effect on self-forgiveness via lower self-condemnation.

H_{a2} Self-compassion has an indirect effect on self-forgiveness via lower self-condemnation.

H₀₃: There is no gender moderation of the mediation of self-esteem and self-condemnation on the path between self-compassion and self-forgiveness.

H_{a3}: Gender moderates the mediation of self-esteem and self-condemnation on the path between self-compassion and self-forgiveness, with females showing a stronger positive correlation between self-esteem and self-forgiveness and a stronger negative correlation between self-condemnation and self-forgiveness compared to males.

Research Design

Methodology of the quantitative correlational studies included the use of online Qualtrics surveys, and established measurement tools were used to collect data. Correlations, predictors, mediators, and moderators were identified by data analysis including bivariate correlations, mediation analysis, and moderated mediation analysis. Self-forgiveness was chosen as the dependent variable because it is measured in the context of the individual's wrongdoing. The other variables of self-compassion, self-esteem, and self-esteem are of a more enduring status such as self-attitude or personality. Self-esteem and self-condemnations involve self-attitudes which had the potential of accounting for some or all of the process between self-compassion and self-forgiveness. Gender was chosen as moderator because it was a static variable which could change the strength or direction of a relationship.

This design fulfilled the purposes of the studies because it allowed for the analyses of relationships between the variables and for predictive qualities. It also allowed for analyses of mediation and moderated mediation among the variables.

Although the design allowed for predictors to be identified, the design did not allow for causal relationships to be identified.

Participants

Participants of the studies were adults residing in the United States. A sample size of 94 was recruited for the original MTurk study, and a sample size of 114 for the social media replication study. The participants included a variety of demographics, including gender, educational level, ethnicity, and religious status. To be eligible for the studies, participants were 18 years or older, residents of the United States who were able to read and respond to online Qualtrics surveys. To be able to respond to the Enright Self-Forgiveness Inventory, participants were also required to indicate that they were able to recall a time they felt resentment or hatred toward themselves because of their own thoughts, desires, or actions. If participants answered “no,” they were taken to the end of the survey.

Convenience samples of participants were obtained online through Amazon MTurk and, in the replication study, through social media platforms of Facebook and Instagram. Individuals scoring 20 or higher on the Enright Self-Forgiveness Inventory pseudo self-forgiveness scale were excluded from analysis (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015).

G*Power Analysis was conducted using a linear multiple regression f-test, with a medium effect size of 0.15, alpha error probability of .05, power of .80, and three predictors. The analysis calculated a total sample size of 77. This sample size was the minimum needed in order to achieve the desired power for the studies.

An f-test was chosen to determine the relationships in the one-directional hypotheses. A medium effect size of Cohen's $f^2 = 0.15$ was chosen for the studies, and a power of .80 was determined to be appropriate for the studies. This would enable the correct rejection of a false null hypothesis. A $p < .05$ was also chosen to be used in the analysis. The G*Power Analysis findings of 77 was used to set a sample size of 100. These participants were recruited online through Amazon MTurk to participate in the original study and on social media in the replication study. This sized sample provided adequate power for the studies and allowed for data which may not be usable in the analysis. In addition, this provided the desired sample size for the studies.

Study Procedures

MTurk Study

The recruitment method was submitting a Human Intelligence Task (HIT) for Amazon MTurk which consisted of the consent, instructions, and Qualtrics survey which contained the elements from the measurement tools. Individuals willing to participate through Amazon MTurk were paid a nominal fee for completing the HIT. Amazon was also paid a fee for the service. Recruitment materials and permissions were approved (see Appendix A; Appendix C; Appendix J).

Data collection procedures for the study followed specified procedures. Study participants first received written instructions and informed consent forms. Upon providing consent, participants answered an inclusion question indicating they were able to recall a self-offense. Participants then provided demographic information including gender, age, religion, and educational level (see Appendix E) and provided answers for the online Qualtrics surveys (see Appendices F, G, H, and I). A couple attention checkers

requiring text answers were included to make sure participants were paying attention to the items in the survey. Three of the instruments were administered in random order, with the ESFI last, in order to reduce framing assessments.

The study was conducted in participants' homes or environments of choice. A nominal compensation of \$1.00 was provided to the participants for volunteering for the study. Amazon also received a fee. Participants were identified by a randomly assigned number. Responses to the questionnaires were compiled into a spreadsheet with the numerical identifiers. The spreadsheet was used for input into SPSS for data analysis.

Social Media Study

The recruitment method was publishing a social media post inviting individuals to participate in the study. Social media platforms used were Facebook and Instagram. Recruitment materials and permissions were approved (see Appendix B; Appendix D; Appendix J).

Data collection procedures for the study followed specified processes. Study participants first received written instructions and the informed consent sheet. Upon reading consent, participants answered an inclusion question indicating they were able to recall a self-offense. Participants then provided demographic information including gender, age, religion, and educational level (see Appendix E) and provided answers for the online Qualtrics surveys (see Appendices F, G, H, and I). A couple attention checkers requiring text answers were included to make sure participants were paying attention to the items in the survey. Three of the instruments were administered in random order, with the ESFI last, in order to reduce framing assessments.

The study was conducted in participants' homes or environments of choice. No remuneration was provided. Participants were identified by a randomly assigned number. Responses to the questionnaires were compiled into a spreadsheet with the numerical identifiers. The spreadsheet was used for input into SPSS for data analysis.

Instrumentation and Measurement

Demographic Information

To obtain demographic information, questions were asked, including regarding United States residency, gender, age, race, educational level, and religion (see Appendix E).

Self-Compassion Measurement

To measure self-compassion, the Self-Compassion Scale (see Appendix F) was used (Neff, 2003). This is a self-report 26-item scale which measures the self-compassion of an individual. Subscales include self-kindness, self-judgment, common humanity, isolation, mindfulness, and over-identification (Neff, 2003). The self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification items are scored reversely (Neff, 2003).

To calculate the score of one's total self-compassion, the self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification scores are reversed (Neff, 2003). Each subscale's average is then calculated (Neff, 2003). These six averages are then averaged to calculate the total score (Neff, 2003).

Reliability and validity of the Self-Compassion Scale are good. Internal reliability has been found to be reflected by a Cronbach's alpha of .92, and test-retest reliability was reflected by a Cronbach's alpha of .93, $r = .05$, $p = .34$ (Neff, 2003). In addition,

construct validity as compared to the DEQ Self-Criticism subscale resulted in $r = -.65$; $p < .01$ showing good negative relationship (Neff, 2003).

Self-Condensation Measurement

To measure self-condensation, the Depressive Experiences Questionnaire—Self-Criticism 6 (see Appendix G) was used (Blatt et al., 1976; Rudich et al., 2008). This is a self-report six item inventory which measures an individual's agreement with negatively self-critical statements (Blatt et al., 1976; Rudich et al., 2008). This subscale is a seven-point Likert Scale of six items (Blatt et al., 1976; Rudich et al., 2008).

To score, the Likert Scale ratings are scored from 7 for "Strongly Agree" down to 1 for "Strongly Disagree" (Blatt et al., 1976; Rudich et al., 2008). The scores are then totaled for the self-criticism score (Blatt et al., 1976; Rudich et al., 2008). Higher scores reflect greater agreement with negative statements critical of the self (Blatt et al., 1976; Rudich et al., 2008).

The Depressive Experiences Questionnaire—Self-Criticism 6 has been found to have high reliability both internally and with test-retest (Blatt et al., 1982). Cronbach's alpha was .81 for Dependency, .80 for Self-Criticism, and .72 for Efficacy (Blatt et al., 1982). Test-retest was found to be at .89 and .81 correlations for Dependency, .83 and .75 correlations for Self-Criticism, and .75 and .72 correlations for Efficacy (Blatt et al., 1982).

Self-Esteem Measurement

To measure self-esteem, the 10-item Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (see Appendix H) was used (Rosenberg, 1965). Items will be rated on a four-point Likert Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale is a self-report inventory which

measures global self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965). Other concepts measured through subscales include self-competence and self-liking (Rosenberg, 1965).

The items are scored by first reversing the scores of the negative items 2, 5, 6, 8, and 9 (Rosenberg, 1965). Four points are assigned to “Strongly Agree”; three points are assigned to “Agree”; two points are assigned to “Disagree”; and one point is assigned to “Strongly Disagree” (Rosenberg, 1965). The points are then totaled for all items (Rosenberg, 1965). Scores remain on a continuous scale and are not averaged (Rosenberg, 1965).

Higher self-esteem is reflected by higher scores (Rosenberg, 1965). The total of the first five items reflects self-competence (Rosenberg, 1965). The total of the second five items reflects self-liking (Rosenberg, 1965). A fourth score is self-competence minus self-liking (Rosenberg, 1965).

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale has been found to have good construct validity and reliability (Crandall, 1973). Internal consistency has been found to be reflected by Cronbach’s alpha of .81 (Rosenberg, 1965).

Self-Forgiveness Measurement

To measure self-forgiveness, the Enright Self-Forgiveness Inventory (see Appendix I) was used (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015). It is a self-report 35 item scale measuring an individual’s forgiveness of self (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015). The measure contains subscales consisting of both positive and negative attributes of feelings in relation to self, cognitions in relation to self, and actions in relation to self (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015). Pseudo self-forgiveness is also measured (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015).

Scores are calculated by first reversing the items of negative feelings, cognitions, and actions against self (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015). The scores for all items are then totaled, with a possible range of 30-180 (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015). The remaining five items measure pseudo self-forgiveness and are scored by totaling the ratings, which can range from five to 30 (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015). It is recommended that individuals scoring 20 or higher on the pseudo self-forgiveness scale be excluded from analysis (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015).

The Enright Self-Forgiveness Inventory has been found to be reliable and valid with internal consistency adequate value of Cronbach's alpha (Kim et al., 2022). Subscale results include: Feelings toward self total Cronbach's alpha of .969; Cognitions toward self total Cronbach's alpha of .944; and actions toward self total Cronbach's alpha of .847 (Kim et al., 2022). Good validity was found with a strong relationship across four studies with $r = .565$, $r = .639$, $r = .483$, and $r = .556$ (Kim et al., 2022).

Operationalization of Variables

Self-Compassion – Self-compassion is a ratio variable and will be measured by total score on the Self-Compassion Scale (Neff, 2003).

Self-Condernation – Self-condernation is a ratio variable and will be measured by total score on the Self-Criticism subscale of Depressive Experiences Questionnaire (Blatt et al., 1976).

Self-Esteem – Self-esteem is a ratio variable and will be measured by total score on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965).

Self-Forgiveness – Self-forgiveness is a ratio variable and will be measured by total score on the Enright Self-Forgiveness Inventory (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015).

Individuals scoring 20 or higher on the pseudo self-forgiveness scale will be excluded from analysis (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015).

Data Analysis

The data analysis plan for both studies was to conduct bivariate correlations and regression analysis to analyze the relationship between self-forgiveness and measured variables. For mediation analysis, Hayes PROCESS macro was used. Mediation of self-condemnation and self-esteem was analyzed, and moderation analysis of the mediation were conducted. SPSS was used for all data analysis. This analysis provided information regarding the associations between the variables and the predictive qualities of the variables.

Delimitations, Assumptions, and Limitations

Delimitations included adults in the United States with access to and who participate in Amazon MTurk or social media. This allowed a representative sample of the desired population. Individuals scoring 20 or higher on the pseudo self-forgiveness scale were excluded from analysis (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015). This allowed for the most accurate measurement of self-forgiveness by screening out individuals who are likely to be operating in pseudo-forgiveness rather than genuine forgiveness.

In addition, there were assumptions of the studies. These assumptions included the participants' honesty, understanding of questions, following of instructions, and accuracy of self-reporting. It was assumed that participants would give an efficient effort into honestly answering the questions in the surveys.

Limitations of the studies included limited generalizability of the results as the participants were limited to those operating in Amazon MTurk or using social media. The

self-reporting, anonymous, and online nature of the studies may have resulted in disingenuous or misguided answers which would result in unreliable data. In addition, the correlational nature of the studies did not indicate causality.

Other limitations included the use of an online platform, with which participants may or may not have taken the questionnaires seriously. The studies also used self-report measures which was a limitation because they relied on the participants' chosen answers which may or may not have reflected reality. Also, the reading level and comprehension of participants may have affected their responses. The use of quantitative studies also was a limitation in that the questionnaires were not in depth, but rather used categories of concepts to measure and quantify participants' responses.

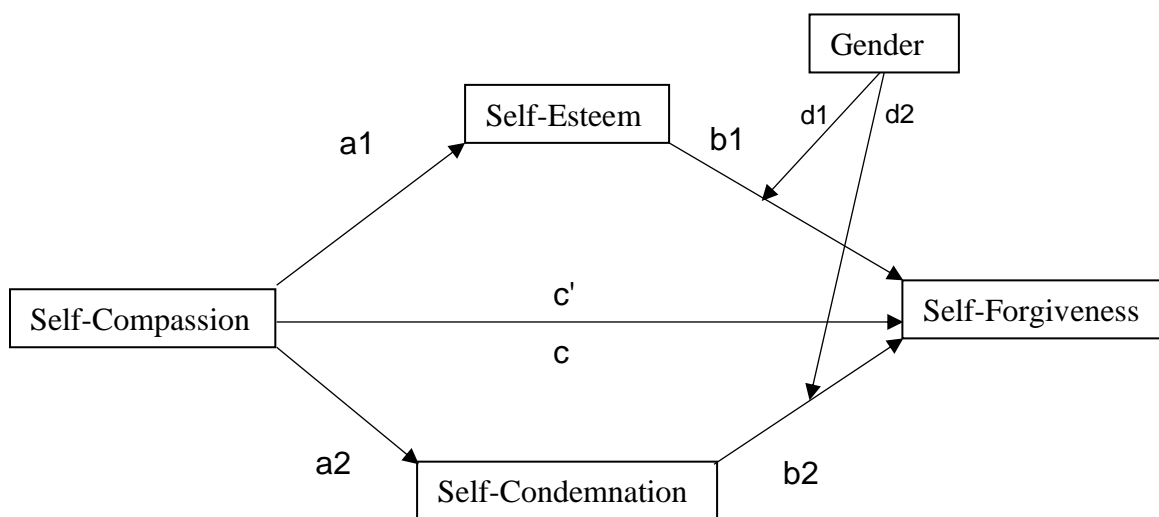
Summary

In this chapter, the purpose of these quantitative studies was discussed as examining how self-compassion predicts self-forgiveness in adults; and how self-esteem and self-condemnation mediate the relationship between self-compassion and self-forgiveness. Moderation of gender was also discussed. The quantitative correlational research design was discussed. Study procedures were discussed, along with information regarding participants, measures, variables, and data analysis details, and limitations. In the next chapter, results of the studies will be discussed.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Overview

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to examine how self-compassion predicted self-forgiveness in adults; how self-compassion and self-condemnation mediated the relationship on parallel paths between self-compassion and self-forgiveness; and, how gender moderated the relationship between self-compassion and self-forgiveness, and how gender moderated the mediation paths between self-esteem and self-forgiveness and between self-condemnation and forgiveness (see Figure 2).

Figure 2*Research Model***Data Collection***MTurk Study*

Participants were recruited through a Human Intelligence Task (HIT) for Amazon MTurk which consisted of the consent, instructions, and Qualtrics survey which contained the elements from the measurement tools. Nominal fees were paid to

participants and to Amazon. Participants first received written instructions and informed consent forms. Upon providing consent, participants provided demographic information including gender, age, religion, race, and educational level (see Appendix E), whether or not they could recall a self-offense, and answers for the online Qualtrics surveys (see Appendices F, G, H, and I). All instruments were administered in random order, with the ESFI last, to reduce framing assessments. The study was conducted in participants' environments. Participants were identified by a randomly assigned number, and responses were compiled into a spreadsheet used for input into SPSS for data analysis.

Social Media Study

Participants were recruited through social media posts on Facebook and Instagram (see Appendix B). The post contained a link which consisted of the information sheet, instructions, and Qualtrics survey which contained the elements from the measurement tools. No compensation was paid. Participants first received written instructions and information sheet (see Appendix D). Upon reading information sheet, participants provided demographic information including gender, age, religion, race, and educational level (see Appendix E), whether or not they could recall a self-offense, and answers for the online Qualtrics surveys (see Appendices F, G, H, and I). All instruments were administered in random order, with the ESFI last, to reduce framing assessments. The study was conducted in participants' environments of choice. Participants were identified by a randomly assigned number, and responses were compiled into a spreadsheet used for input into SPSS for data analysis.

Research Questions

RQ 1: Is the relationship between self-compassion and self-forgiveness mediated by self-esteem?

RQ 2: Is the relationship between self-compassion and self-forgiveness mediated by self-condemnation?

RQ 3: Is the mediation of self-esteem and self-condemnation between self-compassion and self-forgiveness moderated by gender?

Descriptive Results

Procedure and Demographics

MTurk Study

Participants aged 18 or older, who were residents of the United States and Amazon Mechanical Turk workers were invited to take an anonymous online survey that included self-report measures on self-compassion, self-forgiveness, self-esteem, and self-condemnation. The first page of the survey was the consent form followed by screening questions and a demographic questionnaire. The sample was cleaned of incomplete responses, those identified as bots, and for those answering ‘nothing’ or ‘n/a’ for offenses ($n = 79$). After screening for pseudo self-forgiveness ($n = 112$), 94 MTurk workers (*male* = 62; *female* = 32) whose ages ranged from 22 to 68 ($M = 37.28$; $SD = 8.36$) provided the final data for the current study.

Participants identified their religion as Christianity/Catholicism = 60% ($n = 56$), Buddhism = 2%, Other = 3%, None = 31%, and prefer not to say = 4%). Participants identified as White/Caucasian = 81% ($n = 76$), Black/African American = 7%, Asian/Pacific Islander = 5%, Native American/American Indian = 3%, Hispanic/Latino =

2%, and Other = 1%. Education levels completed were identified as high school = 18%, associate's degree = 16%, bachelor's degree = 56%, master's degree or higher = 9%, and prefer not to say = 1%.

Social Media Study

Participants aged 18 or older, who were residents of the United States and social media users were invited to take an anonymous online survey that included self-report measures on self-compassion, self-forgiveness, self-esteem, and self-condemnation. The first page of the survey was the consent form followed by screening questions and a demographic questionnaire. The sample was cleaned of incomplete responses and for those answering 'nothing' or 'n/a' for offenses ($n = 85$). After screening for pseudo self-forgiveness ($n = 11$), 114 social media users ($male = 13$; $female = 101$), using the platforms of Facebook (96%, $n = 110$) and Instagram (4%, $n = 4$), whose ages ranged from 18 to 78 ($M = 47.34$; $SD = 14.80$) provided the final data for the current study.

Participants identified their religion as Christianity/Catholicism = 82% ($n = 93$), Other = 9%, None = 9%, and prefer not to say = 1%). Participants identified as White/Caucasian = 86% ($n = 98$), Black/African American = 1%, Hispanic/Latino = 7%, Native American/American Indian = 3%, Other = 3%, and prefer not to say = 1%. Education levels completed were identified as some high school = 2%, high school = 24%, associate's degree = 25%, bachelor's degree = 20%, master's degree or higher = 18%, trade school = 9%, and prefer not to say = 3%).

Study Findings

Bivariate Associations

MTurk Study

Pearson correlations, 2-tailed, were utilized to examine bivariate associations in the study. Correlation assumptions were examined. The variables tested were ratio variables. Data was analyzed to determine presence of normal distribution of variables and linear relationships, and absence of outliers. Results included the following.

Self-compassion had a strong positive relationship with self-esteem ($r = .75, p < .001$) and with self-forgiveness ($r = .60, p < .001$), and a strong negative relationship with self-condemnation ($r = -.65, p < .001$).

Self-forgiveness had a strong positive relationship with self-compassion ($r = .60, p < .001$) and with self-esteem ($r = .70, p < .001$), and a moderate negative relationship with self-condemnation ($r = -.46, p < .001$).

Self-esteem had a strong positive relationship with self-compassion ($r = .75, p < .001$) and with self-forgiveness ($r = .70, p < .001$), and a strong negative relationship with self-condemnation ($r = -.66, p < .001$).

Self-condemnation had a strong negative relationship with self-compassion ($r = -.65, p < .001$) and with self-esteem ($r = -.66, p < .001$), and a moderate negative relationship with self-forgiveness ($r = -.45, p < .001$). See Table 1 for correlation coefficients for all study variables.

Table 1*Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for MTurk Study Variables*

Variable	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4
1. Self-Compassion	94	2.99	0.69	—			
2. Self-Forgiveness	94	125.37	29.51	.60***	—		
3. Self-Esteem	94	28.10	6.77	.75***	.70***	—	
4. Self-Condensation	94	26.44	8.01	-.65***	-.46***	-.66***	—

*** $p < .001$.

Social Media Study

Pearson correlations, 2-tailed, were utilized to examine bivariate associations in the study. Correlation assumptions were examined. The variables tested were ratio variables. Data was analyzed to determine presence of normal distribution of variables and linear relationships, and absence of outliers. Results included the following.

Self-compassion had a strong positive relationship with self-esteem ($r = .59, p < .001$) and with self-forgiveness ($r = .52, p < .001$), and a strong negative relationship with self-condemnation ($r = -.69, p < .001$).

Self-forgiveness had a strong positive relationship with self-compassion ($r = .52, p < .001$) and with self-esteem ($r = .75, p < .001$), and a moderate negative relationship with self-condemnation ($r = -.49, p < .001$).

Self-esteem had a strong positive relationship with self-compassion ($r = .59, p < .001$) and with self-forgiveness ($r = .75, p < .001$), and a strong negative relationship with self-condemnation ($r = -.56, p < .001$).

Self-condemnation had a strong negative relationship with self-compassion ($r = -.69, p < .001$), and with self-esteem ($r = -.56, p < .001$), and a moderate negative

relationship with self-forgiveness ($r = -.49, p < .001$). See Table 2 for correlation coefficients for all study variables.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Social Media Study Variables

Variable	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4
1. Self-Compassion	114	2.76	0.69	—			
2. Self-Forgiveness	114	132.42	23.72	.52**	—		
3. Self-Esteem	114	28.22	4.96	.59**	.75**	—	
4. Self-Condensation	114	27.54	6.48	-.69**	-.49**	-.56**	—

** $p < .001$.

Parallel Mediation

MTurk Study

A parallel mediation analysis was conducted using regression analysis (performed by the PROCESS SPSS macro model 4, Hayes, 2018), with covariates gender and age. Multiple regression assumptions were examined including that the variables were ratio variables. Data was analyzed regarding linear relationship between outcome variables, normality, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity. Results included the following.

The parallel mediation of self-esteem and self-condemnation was supported ($a_1 * b_1 + a_2 * b_2 = 15.53$, 95% bootstrap CI [5.17, 26.68]), suggesting that self-esteem and self-condemnation do parallelly mediate the association between self-compassion and self-forgiveness.

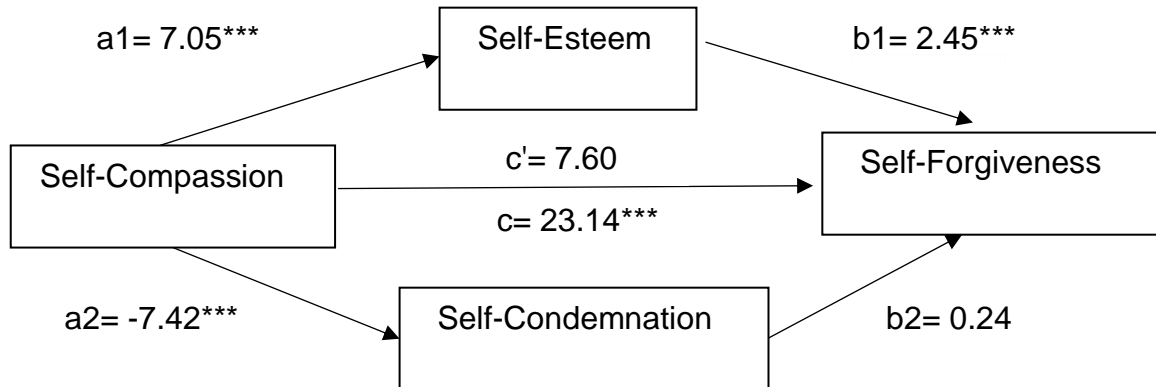
Findings supported the total effect of self-compassion on self-forgiveness ($c = 23.136, p < .001$), but not the direct effect of self-compassion on self-forgiveness ($c' = 7.60, p = .13$). Findings suggested that gender also significantly predicted self-forgiveness, in which females had a lower level of self-forgiveness, $b = -10.05, p = .04$.

Females scored lower on self-forgiveness ($M = 110.63$, $SD = 30.82$) than did males ($M = 132.98$, $SD = 25.91$). See Figure 3 for the parallel mediation model with path coefficients.

For path coefficients for outcome variables, see Table 3.

Figure 3

MTurk parallel mediation model with path coefficients



*** $p < .001$

Table 3

MTurk model path coefficients for self-esteem, self-condemnation, and self-forgiveness as the psychological outcomes

Self-Esteem				
	Coefficients	SE	t	p
a1	7.05	0.69	10.23	***
Self-Condensation				
	Coefficients	SE	t	p
a2	-7.42	0.96	-7.76	***
Self-Forgiveness				
	Coefficients	SE	t	p
b1	2.45	0.53	4.66	***
b2	0.24	0.38	0.63	<i>ns</i>
c'	7.60	4.95	1.54	<i>ns</i>
c	23.14	3.57	6.49	***

*** $p < .001$

Social Media Study

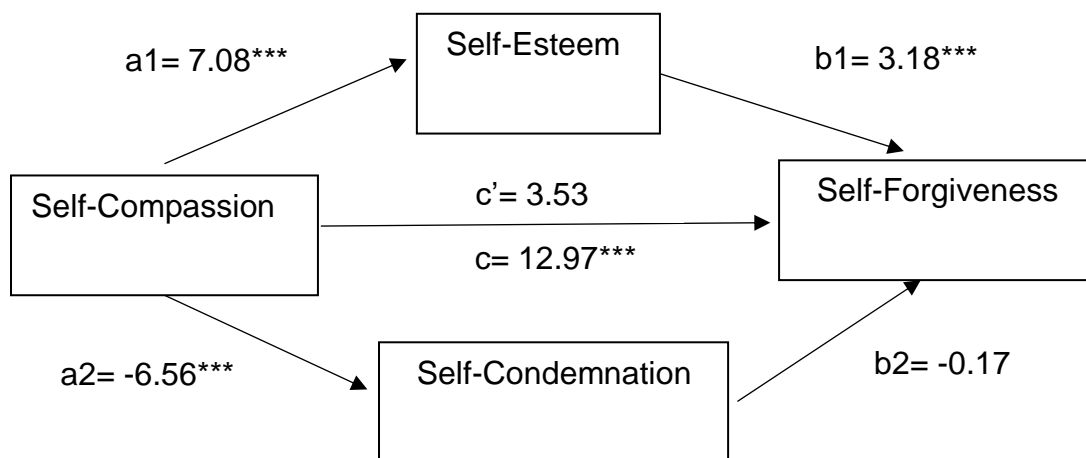
A parallel mediation analysis was conducted using regression analysis (performed by the PROCESS SPSS macro model 4, Hayes, 2018), with covariates gender and age. Multiple regression assumptions were examined including that the variables were ratio variables. Data was analyzed regarding linear relationship between outcome variables, normality, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity. Results included the following.

The parallel mediation of self-esteem and self-condemnation was supported ($a_1*b_1+a_2*b_2=14.07$, 95% bootstrap CI [8.09, 20.94]), suggesting that self-esteem and self-condemnation do mediate in parallel the association between self-compassion and self-forgiveness.

Findings supported the total effect of self-compassion on self-forgiveness ($c=17.60$, $p < .001$), but not the direct effect of self-compassion on self-forgiveness ($c'=3.53$, $p = .28$). See Figure 4 for the parallel mediation model with path coefficients. For path coefficients for outcome variables, see Table 4.

Figure 4

Social Media parallel mediation model with path coefficients



*** $p < .001$

Table 4

Social Media model path coefficients for self-esteem, self-condemnation, and self-forgiveness as the psychological outcomes

Self-Esteem				
	Coefficients	SE	t	p
a1	7.08	0.58	7.04	***
Self-Condemnation				
	Coefficients	SE	t	p
a2	-6.56	0.68	-9.69	***
Self-Forgiveness				
	Coefficients	SE	t	p
b1	3.18	0.38	8.32	***
b2	-0.17	0.33	-0.51	<i>ns</i>
c'	3.53	3.22	1.10	<i>ns</i>
c	17.60	2.91	6.05	***

*** $p < .001$

RQ 1 Analysis: Is the relationship between self-compassion and self-forgiveness mediated by self-esteem?

MTurk Study

From a parallel mediation analysis conducted using regression analysis (performed by the PROCESS SPSS macro model 4, Hayes, 2018), with covariates gender and age, support was found for the hypothesis that self-esteem significantly mediated the relationship between self-compassion and self-forgiveness. As shown in Figure 3 and Table 3, self-compassion was positively associated with self-esteem ($a1 = 7.05, p < .001$), and self-esteem was positively associated with self-forgiveness ($b1 = 2.45, p < .001$). Findings supported the specific indirect effects of self-compassion on self-forgiveness via self-esteem ($a1*b1 = 17.29, 95\%$ bootstrap CI [9.59, 27.27]), suggesting that self-esteem mediates the association between self-compassion and self-forgiveness.

Social Media Study

From a parallel mediation analysis conducted using regression analysis (performed by the PROCESS SPSS macro model 4, Hayes, 2018), with covariates gender and age, support was found for the hypothesis that self-esteem significantly mediated the relationship between self-compassion and self-forgiveness. As shown in Figure 4 and Table 4, self-compassion was positively associated with self-esteem ($a_1 = 4.08, p < .001$), and self-esteem was positively associated with self-forgiveness ($b_1 = 3.18, p < .001$). Findings supported the specific indirect effects of self-compassion on self-forgiveness via self-esteem ($a_1*b_1 = 12.97, 95\%$ bootstrap CI [7.75, 19.14]), suggesting that self-esteem mediates the association between self-compassion and self-forgiveness.

RQ 2 Analysis: Is the relationship between self-compassion and self-forgiveness mediated by self-condemnation?

MTurk Study

From a parallel mediation analysis conducted using regression analysis (performed by the PROCESS SPSS macro model 4, Hayes, 2018), with covariates gender and age, support was not found for the hypothesis that self-condemnation significantly mediated the relationship between self-compassion and self-forgiveness. As shown in Figure 3 and Table 3, self-compassion was negatively associated with self-condemnation ($a_2 = -7.42, p < .001$), and self-condemnation was positively associated with self-forgiveness ($b_2 = .24, p = .53$). Findings did not support the specific indirect effects of self-compassion on self-forgiveness via self-condemnation ($a_2*b_2 = -1.76, 95\%$ bootstrap CI [-8.62, 4.01]), suggesting that self-condemnation does not mediate the association between self-compassion and self-forgiveness.

Social Media Study

From a parallel mediation analysis conducted using regression analysis (performed by the PROCESS SPSS macro model 4, Hayes, 2022), with covariates gender and age, support was not found for the hypothesis that self-condemnation significantly mediated the relationship between self-compassion and self-forgiveness. As shown in Figure 4 and Table 4, self-compassion was negatively associated with self-condemnation ($a_2 = -6.56, p < .001$), and self-condemnation was negatively associated with self-forgiveness ($b_2 = -0.17, p = .61$). Findings did not support the specific indirect effects of self-compassion on self-forgiveness via self-condemnation ($a_2*b_2 = 1.10$, 95% bootstrap CI $[(-3.39, 5.69)]$), suggesting that self-condemnation does not mediate the association between self-compassion and self-forgiveness.

RQ 3 Analysis: Is the mediation of self-esteem and self-condemnation between self-compassion and self-forgiveness moderated by gender?

MTurk Study

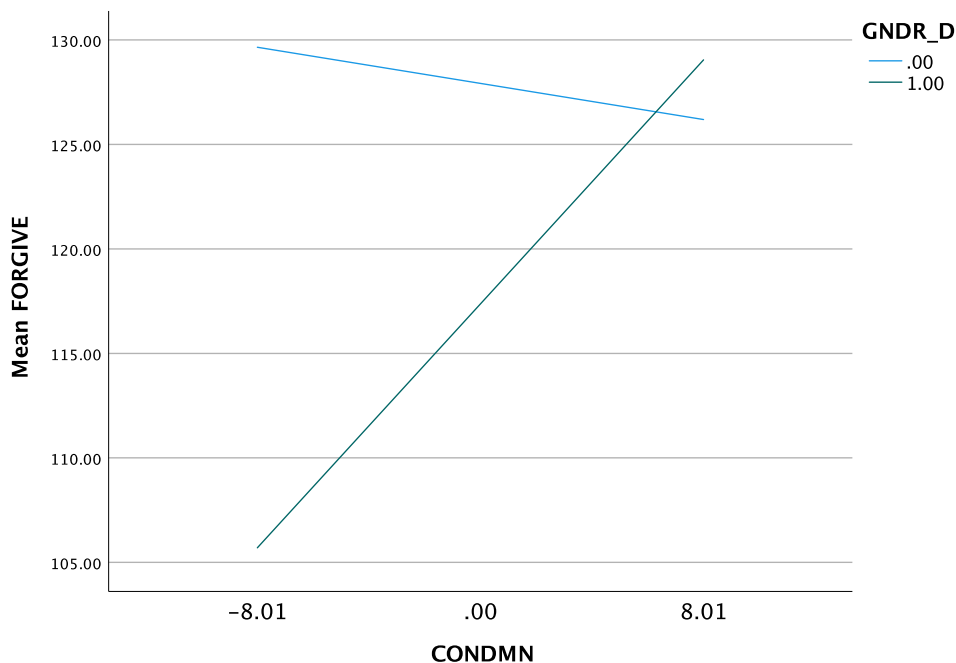
The sample was separated by gender (*male* = 62; *female* = 32) and study variables were compared. For self-compassion, females ($M = 2.75, SD = .79$) scored lower than males ($M = 3.12, SD = .61$). For self-forgiveness, females ($M = 110.63, SD = 30.82$) also scored lower than males ($M = 132.98, SD = 25.91$). In addition, for self-esteem, females ($M = 25.28, SD = 7.91$) scored lower than males ($M = 29.55, SD = 5.64$). Further, for self-condemnation, females ($M = 28.41, SD = 8.35$) scored higher than males ($M = 25.43, SD = 7.70$).

From a parallel moderated mediation analysis conducted using regression analysis (performed by the PROCESS SPSS macro model 15, Hayes, 2018), with covariate age,

the data showed a significant positive a1-path from self-compassion to self-esteem, $b = 7.33, p < .001$. However, there was no significant interaction between self-esteem and gender for the b1-path, $b = 0.59, p = 0.59, \Delta R^2 = 0.58$. The data showed a significant negative a2-path from self-compassion to self-condemnation, $b = -7.48, p < .001$. In addition, as shown in Figure 5, there was a significant interaction between self-condemnation and gender for the b2-path, $b = 1.67, p < .05, \Delta R^2 = 0.58$. However, path-c' from self-compassion to self-forgiveness was not moderated by gender, $b = -5.99, p = 0.57, \Delta R^2 = 0.58$.

Figure 5

Gender Moderation on Self-Condemnation to Self-Forgiveness Path b2



Note. Figure reflects dummy coding of 1 = *female* and 0 = *male*

The index of moderated mediation through self-esteem was not significant, $b = 4.35, 95\% \text{ CI } [-15.47, 32.84]$. Thus, no evidence was found for a moderated mediation. Further, the index of moderated mediation through self-condemnation was not

significant, $b = -12.52$, 95% percentile CI [-27.20, 4.06]. Therefore, no evidence was found for either moderated mediation.

Social Media Study

Parallel moderated mediation analysis was not conducted on the Social Media sample. There was not an adequate sample size of each gender (*male* = 13; *female* = 101).

Summary

Key results of the MTurk study included that significant positive associations were found between self-compassion, self-esteem, and self-forgiveness, while self-condemnation was found to have significant negative associations with self-compassion, self-esteem, and self-forgiveness. In addition, using regression analysis, significant relationships were found on paths between self-compassion and self-esteem, self-esteem and self-forgiveness, and self-compassion and self-condemnation. Results supported the mediation of self-esteem between self-compassion and self-forgiveness. They also supported the overall parallel mediation model. Results from the Social Media study replicated these key findings.

The MTurk study regression analysis of gender modification on the paths between self-esteem and self-forgiveness and between self-condemnation and self-forgiveness did not support gender as a moderator. However, a significant interaction was found with gender on the path from self-condemnation to self-forgiveness. Chapter 5 will present a discussion of the results of both studies.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Overview

The purpose of these quantitative correlational studies was to examine how self-compassion predicted self-forgiveness in adults; how self-compassion and self-condemnation mediated the relationship on parallel paths between self-compassion and self-forgiveness; and, how gender moderated the relationship between self-compassion and self-forgiveness, and how gender moderated the mediation paths between self-esteem and self-forgiveness and between self-condemnation and forgiveness.

This chapter will present a summary of findings of both the MTurk and Social Media studies. Results will be discussed within the context of previous research and biblical foundations. Implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research will be discussed. A final summary will be provided with knowledge gained from the studies.

Summary of Findings

MTurk Study

RQ 1 Results: Is the relationship between self-compassion and self-forgiveness mediated by self-esteem?

Findings supported the overall parallel mediation model. In addition, significant positive associations were found between self-compassion, self-esteem, and self-forgiveness. After controlling for age and gender, a significant total effect of self-compassion on self-forgiveness was found, and no direct effect was found. In addition, a gender interaction was found on the path from self-compassion to self-forgiveness.

Controlling for age and gender, significant relationships were found on the path between self-compassion and self-esteem, and self-esteem and self-forgiveness. A

significant indirect effect of self-compassion on self-forgiveness via self-esteem was found.

RQ 2 Results: Is the relationship between self-compassion and self-forgiveness mediated by self-condemnation?

Self-condemnation was found to have significant negative associations with self-compassion, self-esteem, and self-forgiveness. Controlling for age and gender, a significant relationship was found on the path between self-compassion and self-condemnation. However, there was no significant indirect effect found of self-compassion on self-forgiveness via self-condemnation.

RQ 3 Results: Is the mediation of self-esteem and self-condemnation between self-compassion and self-forgiveness moderated by gender?

Using dummy coding for gender, and controlling for age, the MTurk study regression analysis of gender modification on the paths between self-esteem and self-forgiveness and between self-condemnation and self-forgiveness did not show significant indirect effects of gender. No conditional direct effect of self-compassion on self-forgiveness was found. However, a significant interaction was found with gender on the path from self-condemnation to self-forgiveness. In addition, results of the parallel mediation analysis showed a gender difference.

Social Media Study

RQ 1 Results: Is the relationship between self-compassion and self-forgiveness mediated by self-esteem?

Findings supported the overall parallel mediation model. In addition, significant positive associations were found between self-compassion, self-esteem, and self-

forgiveness. After controlling for age and gender, a significant total effect of self-compassion on self-forgiveness was found, and no direct effect was found.

Controlling for age and gender, significant relationships were found on the path between self-compassion and self-esteem, and self-esteem and self-forgiveness. A significant indirect effect of self-compassion on self-forgiveness via self-esteem was found. These results replicated the MTurk findings.

RQ 2 Results: Is the relationship between self-compassion and self-forgiveness mediated by self-condemnation?

Self-condemnation was found to have significant negative associations with self-compassion, self-esteem, and self-forgiveness. Controlling for age and gender, a significant relationship was found on the path between self-compassion and self-condemnation. However, there was no significant indirect effect found of self-compassion on self-forgiveness via self-condemnation. These results replicated the MTurk findings.

RQ 3 Results: Is the mediation of self-esteem and self-condemnation between self-compassion and self-forgiveness moderated by gender?

Analysis of gender effect for the Social Media study was not able to be tested due to the sample composition. However, considering the demographics of each sample being composed similarly with greatest percentages being Caucasian, Christian, and educated, it is possible that similar results would have been found with the Social Media study females.

Discussion of Findings

RQ 1 Discussion: Is the relationship between self-compassion and self-forgiveness mediated by self-esteem?

The null hypothesis H_01 was rejected, and the alternate hypothesis H_{a1} was accepted. Self-esteem as a mediator in the relationship between self-compassion and self-forgiveness was supported by the MTurk study findings, which were replicated in the Social Media study. Controlling for age and gender, a significant indirect effect of self-compassion on self-forgiveness via self-esteem was found. In addition, significant relationships were found on the path between self-compassion and self-esteem, and on the path between self-esteem and self-forgiveness. These relationships do not reflect causality, but rather a predictive relationship.

In addition, findings supported the overall parallel mediation model, indicating some of the path between self-compassion and self-forgiveness passes through self-esteem and self-condemnation. The significant total effect of self-compassion on self-forgiveness found supports an effect independent of self-esteem and self-condemnation. No direct effect was found, however, which indicates no significant effect of self-compassion on self-forgiveness after controlling for self-esteem and self-condemnation. Therefore, the effect of self-compassion on self-forgiveness was shown to be weakened when self-esteem and self-condemnation were mediating. This supports total mediation with no significant effect remaining between self-compassion and self-forgiveness on the c' -path. In addition, in the MTurk study, a gender interaction was found on the path from self-compassion to self-forgiveness. In addition, significant positive associations were

found between self-compassion, self-esteem, and self-forgiveness. This indicates greater levels of these variables are associated with greater levels of the others of these variables.

Findings were similar to existing research. Showing oneself kindness and self-compassion was found to predict self-forgiveness. Existing knowledge includes that those who forgive have a higher tendency to experience empathy and show kindness to others (Wu et al., 2019). Self-compassion leads to adaptive coping (Ewert et al., 2021).

Controlling for self-esteem, trait self-compassion is associated with the thought of failures as opportunities to learn that come with a normal life (Miyagawa et al., 2020).

Self-compassion and self-forgiveness are related to well-being (Neff et al., 2018; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Toussaint et al., 2020).

Self-esteem as a mediator between self-compassion and self-forgiveness, and self-esteem and self-condemnation correlations, were similar to existing knowledge.

Individuals with higher self-esteem have been found to be more likely to forgive themselves (Krause, 2017). Self-compassion is related to more stable state self-esteem (Neff & Vonk, 2009). Self-compassion is related to self-acceptance which results in greater feelings of worth (Neff et al., 2018; Phillips & Hine, 2021). Self-esteem has been related with greater self-forgiveness, and greater self-condemnation is related to lower self-esteem (Kim et al., 2022; Kolubinski et al., 2021; Krause, 2017).

RQ 2 Discussion: Is the relationship between self-compassion and self-forgiveness mediated by self-condemnation?

The null hypothesis H₀₂ was accepted. Self-condemnation as a mediator in the relationship between self-compassion and self-forgiveness was not supported by the MTurk study findings, which were replicated in the Social Media study. Controlling for

age and gender, a significant relationship was found on the path between self-compassion and self-condemnation. However, there was no significant indirect effect found of self-compassion on self-forgiveness via self-condemnation. This indicates that self-condemnation does not mediate this relationship. Findings of the studies show that, although greater self-compassion predicted lower self-condemnation, self-condemnation did not predict self-forgiveness.

In addition, self-condemnation was found to have significant negative associations with self-compassion, self-esteem, and self-forgiveness. This indicates that a greater level of self-condemnation is related to lesser levels of self-compassion, self-esteem, and self-forgiveness in individuals.

Some findings were similar to existing research. Self-compassion is related to less self-condemnation (Vazeou-Nieuwenhuis & Schumann, 2018). Self-forgiveness is different than the absence of self-condemnation (Cornish et al., 2018). Self-condemnation and self-forgiveness are associated via guilt and shame (da Silva et al., 2017). Self-compassionate individuals have been found to not participate in self-condemnation (Vazeou-Nieuwenhuis & Schumann, 2018). Rumination may be one reason individuals may not move on from self-condemnation to self-forgiveness (Siedlecka et al., 2015).

Some findings were contrary to existing research that high self-condemnation and low self-forgiveness are related (Cornish et al., 2018). It is possible that self-esteem and self-condemnation are similar to personality traits. If so, they could operate as predictors of state self-forgiveness when self-compassion also occurs. This would be a different process than following a temporal order with precedents. The current findings do not support a mediation of self-condemnation in the process.

In the current studies' correlational results, self-condemnation was found to have a significant negative relationship with self-forgiveness. However, this correlation contradicted the regression analysis results of a positive relationship between self-condemnation and self-forgiveness for females, which will be discussed in the following section.

RQ 3 Discussion: Is the mediation of self-esteem and self-condemnation between self-compassion and self-forgiveness moderated by gender?

The null hypothesis H_03 was accepted. Gender as a moderator in the mediation process of self-esteem and self-condemnation between self-compassion and self-forgiveness was not supported by the MTurk study findings, which was the only study tested. In the analysis, which was controlled for age, dummy coding was used for gender, with *males* = 0 and *females* = 1. The results reflected females versus the reference group of males. The regression analysis of gender modification on the path between self-esteem and self-forgiveness and on the path between self-condemnation and self-forgiveness did not show significant indirect effects of gender; therefore, gender was not supported as a moderator in the mediation. Also, no conditional direct effect of self-compassion on self-forgiveness was found. Although indirect effects of two mediators were found, they were not conditional upon gender. There was no evidence that gender made a difference in the mediation; therefore, no moderated mediation was supported in the findings.

There were several other interesting findings. Results of the parallel mediation analysis showed a gender difference, which would seem to indicate that gender predicts self-forgiveness differently in this group of people struggling with low self-esteem and

high self-condemnation. In addition, a significant interaction was found with gender on the path from self-condemnation to self-forgiveness.

A surprising result is that, with females, greater self-condemnation was found to be a predictor for greater self-forgiveness. This reflects a positive relationship as opposed to the negative relationship which would be expected. The effect of self-condemnation on self-forgiveness was found to be different for males and females. For males, self-condemnation does not seem to show the same relationship with self-forgiveness. Further analysis is needed to interpret these unexpected findings, including the effect of covariates on the relationships.

Findings in gender differences are similar to existing research. Males and females have different processes in reacting to transgressions (Carpenter et al., 2019). Women tend to have a lower level of self-esteem and a greater level of self-condemnation than men do. Self-esteem has been found to be at lower levels in women than in men (Weisberg et al., 2011). Study correlations show that women with lower self-esteem would have higher self-condemnation. Women align more often with negatively phrased statements about the self, while men align more often with positively phrased statements about the self (Magee & Upenieks, 2019). Women have been found to have slightly lower self-compassion levels as compared to men (Neff, 2023; Yarnell et al., 2019). Feelings of shame may develop differently in women than in men due to gender role socialization (Gilchrist et al., 2020). And, gender differences come into play with experiences of guilt and shame, which can lead to self-condemnation. There is a significant difference in the amount of guilt and shame white women report compared to

white men (Else-Quest et al., 2012). And, females have to make more of an effort to find self-forgiveness (Carpenter et al., 2019).

Women are more prone to ruminate. When exposed to a negative emotional event, women reported the events as of greater intensity and stimulating when recalled from memory, ruminate more, and experience more anxiety after remembering (Ando' et al., 2020, Staugaard & Berntsen, 2021). Rumination can lead to greater levels of self-condemnation. Women may be more likely to access social support for encouragement to move on. Social support can help facilitate self-forgiveness by having a trusted person listen to and understand one's situation, as well as confirm when self-forgiveness is appropriate (Mastrocola, 2023). Women also have a greater tendency to look for counseling than men do (Miles & Naumann, 2023). Further, males may be more prone to desire control of their situation. Self-forgiveness also leads to a perception of greater control (da Silva et al., 2017). However, the positive relationship between self-condemnation and self-forgiveness found for women is not supported by existing research.

Contribution to Research Theory

Findings also contribute understanding to research theory. Considering the foundational Virtue Theory, in which forgiveness is viewed as a moral virtue (Kim et al., 2021), several themes are addressed. The finding of the effect of self-compassion upon self-forgiveness supports the theme that forgiveness has to do with the good of humankind, since self-compassion has to do with relating to oneself with kindness and goodness. The finding of self-esteem mediation supports the theme that forgiveness is a choice and incorporates shifts in cognition, emotion, and action. Findings of gender

differences in self-forgiveness support the theme that forgiveness may be expressed and processed in different ways. The replication through separate studies supports the validity of the findings.

Other theoretical contributions were made. The comparison aspect of self-esteem supports the social comparison theory in which individuals learn about their own validity by comparison with others (Jhangiani et al., 2022). Findings also support the stress-and-coping model of forgiveness in that wrongdoings cause a stress reaction and that a coping technique to deal with the stress is through forgiveness (Worthington & Wade, 2020). In addition, the conventional self-esteem model is supported in that results showed females had lower self-esteem and greater self-condemnation, thereby aligning more with negatively phrased statements about the self, while men aligned more often with positively phrased statements about the self (Magee & Upenieks, 2019).

Biblical Foundation

Findings align with the scriptural foundations of casting off the old and the accepting of the new self. The attitude of believers' minds affects this process. "You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds," (*New International Bible*, 1978/2011, Ephesians 4:22-23). Self-compassion and self-esteem are attitudes which promote self-forgiveness and the casting off the old and accepting the new. Self-compassion is also reflected in the instruction, "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." (Ephesians 4:32). Believers must apply the scriptures of forgiveness not only to others, but to themselves, and "forgive as the Lord forgave you," (Colossians 3:13).

Addressing self-condemnation through the new state of mind and attitude can be seen in the instruction to believers to reject all falsehoods, rumors, evil talk that is not edifying, along with defrauding, anger, and bitterness; and, to speak the truth (*New International Bible*, 1978/2011, Ephesians 4:25-28). Believers are taught, “Therefore there is now no condemnation [no guilty verdict, no punishment] for those who are in Christ Jesus [who believe in Him as personal Lord and Savior],” (*Amplified Bible*, 1987/2015, Romans 8:1). Perhaps believers believe this in a broader scope and do not apply it to individual transgressions in the self-forgiveness process.

Individuals are worthy of forgiveness and should accept forgiveness for themselves and show themselves compassion (*New International Bible*, 1978/2011, John 3:16; Matthew 1:21). Self-compassion can be utilized when one confesses a transgression. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness,” (I John 1:9). Kindness to oneself can lead to accepting Christ’s forgiveness and thus being able to forgive oneself. If one accepts Christ’s forgiveness, but does not forgive themselves, they are, in effect, exalting themselves above God and his judgement (1 Corinthians 1:26-29). Perceptions of unworthiness and low self-esteem can be obstacles to individuals receiving, accepting, and applying forgiveness to themselves (Acts 13:46). Christ redeemed the lives of all humankind, but that redemption at times remains unclaimed and rejected.

In God’s view, individuals of different genders have equal worth (*New Living Translation*, 1996/2015, Genesis 1:26; Galatians 3:28). Results of the studies fit this view in that both genders were able to achieve self-forgiveness. They experienced self-forgiveness, even if they experienced a different process in the self-forgiveness journey.

Perhaps, for individuals, self-forgiveness involves a process of complete acknowledgement of the weight of sin, surrender to Christ, and gratitude for forgiveness. This type of process is illustrated in the book of Luke when a woman washed the feet of Jesus. Jesus told a parable of forgiveness of debt to those who were present and judging the woman. “Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?’ Simon replied, ‘I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven.’ ‘You have judged correctly,’ Jesus said.” (*New International Bible*, 1978/2011, Luke 7:42-43). Jesus also said, “Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.” (Luke 7:47).

Implications

There are implications of the findings for research, practice, and the church. It is possible some individuals may be more sensitive to self-condemnation and its role in self-forgiveness. New interventions for individuals might include addressing self-condemnation as a path to self-forgiveness. Rumination can also be addressed in practice to manage self-condemnation. Also, in intervention and theory, self-condemnation can be evaluated as situation based or trait based. The different basis would inform the intervention path which may be helpful to the individual.

Self-forgiveness interventions, including self-compassion and self-esteem aspects may be productive with both males and females. Cognitive behavioral theory and therapy may also be useful in that cognitions may be changed to lead to a different outcome of self-forgiveness. In addition, narrative theory and therapy may also be beneficial in framing the self-compassion and self-condemnation experiences when working with an individual.

Implications of the findings for the church include addressing self-compassion through expressing love, respect, and kindness for oneself. It is also important to approach self-condemnation in a process that is both scriptural and of meaningful context for the individual. Awareness is vital that there may be different ways through which individuals process repentance, accepting Christ's forgiveness, acknowledging the weight of one's sin, and surrendering not only to his forgiveness, but to one's own self-forgiveness. Successful navigation of this process can lead to increased freedom in an individual's life.

Limitations

There were several limitations of the studies. There was no longitudinal examination. The study used cross-sectional data, and causality is assumed in the models tested.

Other limitations of the studies included limited generalizability of the results as the participants were limited to those operating in Amazon MTurk or on social media. Demographics were primarily White, Christian, and educated. Sampling other demographics may produce different results. The studies also used self-report measures. This was a limitation because they relied on the participants' chosen answers which may or may not have reflected reality. In addition, context-specific measures were used, which may have affected responses due to recall bias.

The self-reporting, anonymous, and online nature of the study may have resulted in disingenuous or misguided answers which would have resulted in unreliable data. In addition, assumptions of the study included the participants' honesty, understanding of questions, following of instructions, and accuracy of self-reporting. It was assumed that participants would give sufficient effort into honestly answering the questions in the

surveys. Also, the reading level and comprehension of participants may have affected their responses. In addition, the use of a quantitative study was a limitation in that the questionnaires were not in depth, but rather used categories of concepts to measure and quantify participants' responses.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research areas are of importance. A replication study which would examine this study's research question 3 regarding gender moderation is needed. In addition, the unanticipated results of the positive relationship between self-condemnation and self-forgiveness for females should be examined. Replication studies with more diverse demographics and longitudinal results are needed. Theory development regarding gender influences upon self-forgiveness would also prove beneficial.

The creation of a self-worthiness scale would be helpful in analyzing how self-worth affects self-forgiveness, including mediation of self-worthiness between self-compassion and self-forgiveness and moderation between self-condemnation and self-forgiveness. This would answer the research questions, "Does self-worth mediate the path between self-compassion and self-forgiveness?" and "Does self-worth moderate the path between self-condemnation and self-forgiveness?"

Rumination and guilt and shame can be researched as other potential moderators between self-compassion and self-forgiveness. This would examine the research questions, "Does rumination mediate the path between self-compassion and self-forgiveness?" and "Do guilt and shame mediate the path between self-compassion and self-forgiveness?"

Summary

The quantitative study found support for the overall parallel mediation model. Controlling for age and gender, self-esteem was found to mediate the path between self-compassion and self-forgiveness. However, self-condemnation was not supported as a mediator between self-compassion and forgiveness. Gender did not make a difference in the path between self-esteem and self-forgiveness or on the path between self-condemnation and self-forgiveness, so was not supported as a mediation moderator in the model. However, a gender interaction was found on the self-condemnation to self-forgiveness path, revealing an unexpected outcome for females experiencing greater self-forgiveness with greater self-condemnation.

Implications included that theory and interventions may be informed to address situation or trait based self-condemnation and gender related differences. Cognitions, framing, and rumination must be addressed, and concepts of self-compassion and self-forgiveness can be taught to help individuals along the path to self-forgiveness. For the church, teaching self-compassion for oneself, and approaching self-condemnation and self-forgiveness in a process that is both scriptural and meaningful for the individual is important. Successful navigation of this process can lead to increased freedom in individuals' lives. Men and women process the self-forgiveness journey possibly in different ways. The better these different processes are understood, the more revelation individuals will experience.

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APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT LETTER (MTURK)

Dear Potential Participant,

As a doctoral candidate in the Psychology Department at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Ph.D. degree. The purpose of my research is to examine self-forgiveness and the impacts of self-compassion, self-condemnation, and self-esteem, and I am writing to invite you to join my study.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older and live in United States. Participants will be asked to take an anonymous, online survey. It should take approximately 15 minutes to complete the procedure listed. Participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

To participate, please complete the Amazon MTurk Human Intelligence Task, which contains the study survey. A consent document is provided as the first page of the survey. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Because participation is anonymous, you do not need to sign and return the consent document unless you would prefer to do so. After you have read the consent form, please proceed to the survey. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the study. Participants will receive \$1.00 through Amazon MTurk.

Sincerely,

Jill Marin
Doctoral Candidate
Email: [REDACTED]

APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT LETTER (SOCIAL MEDIA)

FACEBOOK:

HI THERE FACEBOOK FRIENDS: I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Ph.D. degree at Liberty University. The purpose of my research is to examine self-forgiveness and the impacts of self-compassion, self-condemnation, and self-esteem. To participate, you must be 18 years of age or older, a U.S. resident, and able recall a time you felt resentment or hatred toward yourself because of your own thoughts, desires, or actions. Participants will be asked to complete an anonymous online survey, which should take about 15 minutes to complete. If you would like to participate and meet the study criteria, please click the link provided at the end of this post. An information sheet will be provided as the first page of the survey. Please review this page before proceeding into the survey.

To take the survey, click here: [LINK].

INSTAGRAM:

HI THERE INSTAGRAM FRIENDS: I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Ph.D. degree at Liberty University. The purpose of my research is to examine self-forgiveness and the impacts of self-compassion, self-condemnation, and self-esteem. To participate, you must be 18 years of age or older, a U.S. resident, and able recall a time you felt resentment or hatred toward yourself because of your own thoughts, desires, or actions. Participants will be asked to complete an anonymous online survey, which should take about 15 minutes to complete. If you would like to participate and meet the study criteria, please click the link provided at the end of this post. An information sheet will be provided as the first page of the survey. Please review this page before proceeding into the survey.

To take the survey, click here: [LINK].

NOTE: Question is included in demographic section regarding which social media platform is being used.

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT (p.1)

Consent

Title of the Project: Self-Forgiveness and Self-Compassion as Mediated by Self-Condensation and Self-Esteem

Principal Investigator: Jill Marin, Doctoral Candidate, Psychology Department, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be 18 years of age or older and live in the United States. Taking part in this research project is voluntary. Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to examine self-forgiveness and the impacts of self-compassion, self-condemnation, and self-esteem.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

1. Participate in an online anonymous survey that will take no more than 15 minutes.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. Benefits to society include knowledge which will be used to increase wellness.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be anonymous.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT (MTURK) (p.2)

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. At the conclusion of the survey, participants will receive payment through Amazon MTurk.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time prior to submitting the survey without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please exit the survey and close your internet browser. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Jill Marin. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. J.J. Kim, at [REDACTED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT (MTURK) (p.3)

Your Consent

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

APPENDIX D: INFORMATION SHEET (SOCIAL MEDIA) (p.1)

Information Sheet

Title of the Project: Self-Forgiveness (Social Media Sample)

Principal Investigator: Jill Marin, Doctoral Candidate, Psychology Department,
Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be 18 years of age or older and live in the United States. Taking part in this research project is voluntary. Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study is to examine how self-compassion predicts self-forgiveness in adults; how self-compassion and self-condemnation mediate the relationship between self-compassion and self-forgiveness; and, how gender moderates these mediations.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

2. Participate in an online anonymous survey that will take less than 15 minutes.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. Benefits to society include knowledge which will be used to increase wellness.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be anonymous.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.

APPENDIX D: INFORMATION SHEET (SOCIAL MEDIA) (p.2)

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time prior to submitting the survey without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please exit the survey and close your internet browser. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Jill Marin. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. J.J. Kim, at [REDACTED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is irb@liberty.edu.

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APPENDIX E: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

1. Do you live in the United States?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

2. What is your gender?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. Prefer not to say

3. What is your age? _____

4. What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed?
 - a. Some High School
 - b. High School
 - c. Bachelor's Degree
 - d. Master's Degree or higher
 - e. Trade School
 - f. Prefer not to say

5. What is your ethnicity?
 - a. Asian/ Pacific Islander
 - b. Black/ African American
 - c. Hispanic/ Latino
 - d. Native American/ American Indian
 - e. White/ Caucasian
 - f. Other
 - g. Prefer not to say

6. What is your religion?
 - a. Buddhism
 - b. Christianity/ Catholicism
 - c. Hinduism
 - d. Islam
 - e. Judaism
 - f. Other
 - g. None
 - h. Prefer not to say

APPENDIX F: SELF-COMPASSION SCALE (p.1)

Self-Compassion Scale (SCS)

HOW I TYPICALLY ACT TOWARDS MYSELF IN DIFFICULT TIMES

Please read each statement carefully before answering. For each item, indicate how often you behave in the stated manner, using the following 1-5 scale. Please answer according to what really reflects your experience rather than what you think your experience should be.

Almost never					Almost always
1	2	3	4		5

1. I'm disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies.
2. When I'm feeling down I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that's wrong.
3. When things are going badly for me, I see the difficulties as part of life that everyone goes through.
4. When I think about my inadequacies, it tends to make me feel more separate and cut off from the rest of the world.
5. I try to be loving towards myself when I'm feeling emotional pain.
6. When I fail at something important to me I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy.
7. When I'm down, I remind myself that there are lots of other people in the world feeling like I am.
8. When times are really difficult, I tend to be tough on myself.
9. When something upsets me I try to keep my emotions in balance.
10. When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people.
11. I'm intolerant and impatient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like.
12. When I'm going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need.
13. When I'm feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am.
14. When something painful happens I try to take a balanced view of the situation.
15. I try to see my failings as part of the human condition.
16. When I see aspects of myself that I don't like, I get down on myself.
17. When I fail at something important to me I try to keep things in perspective.
18. When I'm really struggling, I tend to feel like other people must be having an easier time of it.
19. I'm kind to myself when I'm experiencing suffering.

APPENDIX F: SELF-COMPASSION SCALE (p.2)

20. When something upsets me I get carried away with my feelings.
21. I can be a bit cold-hearted towards myself when I'm experiencing suffering.
22. When I'm feeling down I try to approach my feelings with curiosity and openness.
23. I'm tolerant of my own flaws and inadequacies.
24. When something painful happens I tend to blow the incident out of proportion.
25. When I fail at something that's important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure.
26. I try to be understanding and patient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like.

(Neff, 2003).

Permissions:

Dr. Neff has given permission to use the Self-Compassion Scale to anyone conducting research: <https://self-compassion.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/SCS-information.pdf>.

(Neff, 2023b).

APPENDIX G: DEPRESSIVE EXPERIENCES QUESTIONNAIRE--SC6

Depressive Experiences Questionnaire – Self-Criticism 6

DEQ-SC6

Rate yourself on the following statements using the scale:

- 1- Strongly Disagree
- 2- Disagree
- 3- Somewhat Disagree
- 4- Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- 5- Somewhat Agree
- 6- Agree
- 7- Strongly Agree

	Rating
1. Often I find that I do not live according to my standards or ideals.	
2. There is a significant gap between who I am today and who I would like to be.	
3. I tend not to be content with what I have.	
4. I find it hard to accept my weaknesses.	
5. I have a tendency to be very self-critical.	
6. I compare myself often to standards or goals.	

(Blatt et al., 1976; Rudich et al., 2008).

Permissions:

Text content may be reproduced and used for non-commercial research and educational purposes without seeking written permission (Blatt et al., 1976; Rudich et al., 2008).

APPENDIX H: ROSENBERG SELF-ESTEEM SCALE

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE)

Please record the appropriate answer for each item, depending on whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with it.

- 1 = Strongly agree
- 2 = Agree
- 3 = Disagree
- 4 = Strongly disagree

- _____ 1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
- _____ 2. At times I think I am no good at all.
- _____ 3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
- _____ 4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
- _____ 5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
- _____ 6. I certainly feel useless at times.
- _____ 7. I feel that I'm a person of worth.
- _____ 8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
- _____ 9. All in all, I am inclined to think that I am a failure.
- _____ 10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

(Rosenberg, 1965).

Permissions:

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale is in the public domain.

APPENDIX I: ENRIGHT SELF-FORGIVENESS INVENTORY (p.1)

ENRIGHT SELF-FORGIVENESS INVENTORY**Attitude Toward Self Scale**

Name: _____ Date: _____

We sometimes violate our own sense of justice and subsequently develop resentment or hatred toward ourselves. We will call that violation of one's own sense of justice "self-offense." We ask you now to think of the most recent experience of self-offense that made you feel regretful and disappointed in yourself. For a few moments, visualize in your mind that specific self-offense. Try to remember what you did and experience what happened.

1. How serious was that self-offense that you committed? (circle one)

Not serious at all A little serious. Somewhat serious. Very serious Gravely serious

2. Did the self-offense involve another person?

Yes No

If you answered "Yes" go to item 3; if you answered "No" skip to item 5.**3. Please specify that person without giving his/her name.**

_____ (e.g., spouse, parent, employer, friend, God, colleague, etc.)

4. Is the person living?

Yes. No

5. How long ago was the self-offense? (Please write in the number of days, weeks, etc.)

_____ days ago

_____ weeks ago

_____ months ago

_____ years ago

APPENDIX I: ENRIGHT SELF-FORGIVENESS INVENTORY (p.2)

6. Please briefly describe what you did when you offended yourself.

Now, please answer a series of questions about your personal attitudes toward yourself. We do not want your rating of past attitudes, but your ratings of attitudes right now. All responses are confidential so please answer honestly. *Thank you.*

This set of items deals with your current **feelings** or **emotions** right now toward yourself. Try to assess your actual **feeling** on each item. For each item, please check the appropriate number matching your level of agreement that **best** describes your current feeling. Please do not skip any item. *Thank you.*

I feel _____ toward myself.

(Place each word in the blank when answering each item.)

I feel...	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1 warm	1	2	3	4	5	6
2 kindness	1	2	3	4	5	6
3 happy	1	2	3	4	5	6
4 positive	1	2	3	4	5	6
5 unloving	1	2	3	4	5	6
6 repulsed	1	2	3	4	5	6
7 resentment	1	2	3	4	5	6
8 dislike	1	2	3	4	5	6
9 caring	1	2	3	4	5	6
10 bitter	1	2	3	4	5	6

This next set of items deals with your current **behavior** toward yourself. Consider how you **do act** or **would act** toward yourself in answering the questions. For each item, please check the appropriate number matching your level of agreement that **best** describes your current behavior or probably behavior. Please do not skip any items. *Thank you.*

APPENDIX I: ENRIGHT SELF-FORGIVENESS INVENTORY (p.3)

Regarding my own behavior toward myself, **I do or would** _____.

(Place each word in the blank when answering each item.)

I do or would...	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
11 keep good hygiene	1	2	3	4	5	6
12 avoid health risks	1	2	3	4	5	6
13 eat irresponsibly	1	2	3	4	5	6
14 try to stay physically fit	1	2	3	4	5	6
15 ignore personal needs	1	2	3	4	5	6
16 pay attention to stress symptoms	1	2	3	4	5	6
17 treat poorly	1	2	3	4	5	6
18 care for own well-being	1	2	3	4	5	6
19 punish	1	2	3	4	5	6
20 hurt	1	2	3	4	5	6

This set of items deals with how you currently **think** about yourself. Think about the kinds of thoughts that occupy your **mind** right **now** regarding who you are. For each item please check the appropriate number matching your level of agreement that **best** describes your current thinking. Please do not skip any item. Thank you.

I think I am _____.

(Place each word or phrase in the blank when answering each item).

I think I am...	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
21 wretched	1	2	3	4	5	6
22 evil	1	2	3	4	5	6
23 horrible	1	2	3	4	5	6
24 of good quality	1	2	3	4	5	6
25 worthy of respect	1	2	3	4	5	6
26 dreadful	1	2	3	4	5	6
27 loving	1	2	3	4	5	6
28 worthless	1	2	3	4	5	6
29 nice	1	2	3	4	5	6
30 a good person	1	2	3	4	5	6

APPENDIX I: ENRIGHT SELF-FORGIVENESS INVENTORY (p.4)

Finally, in thinking through your attitudes toward yourself and self-offense, please consider the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
31 There really was no problem now that I think about it.	1	2	3	4	5	6
32 I was never bothered by what I did.	1	2	3	4	5	6
33 I do not feel responsible for what I did.	1	2	3	4	5	6
34 I did not feel any remorse.	1	2	3	4	5	6
35 What I did was fair, and no justice was violated	1	2	3	4	5	6

(Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015; Kim et al., 2021; Subkoviak et al., 1995).

Permissions:

Permission was obtained prior to use of the scale and data collection from one of the committee members who was an author of the scale.

APPENDIX J: IRB APPROVALS (p.1)

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

July 11, 2023

Jill Marin
Jichan Kim

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY22-23-1692 Self-Forgiveness and Self-Compassion as Mediated by Self-Condensation and Self-Esteem

Dear Jill Marin, Jichan Kim,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(i). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects;

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, PhD, CIP
Administrative Chair
Research Ethics Office

APPENDIX J: IRB APPROVALS (p. 2)

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

August 24, 2023

Jill Marin
Jichan Kim

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY23-24-152 Self-Forgiveness (Social Media Sample)

Dear Jill Marin, Jichan Kim,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(i). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects;

For a PDF of your exemption letter, click on your study number in the My Studies card on your Cayuse dashboard. Next, click the Submissions bar beside the Study Details bar on the Study details page. Finally, click Initial under Submission Type and choose the Letters tab toward the bottom of the Submission Details page. Your information sheet and final versions of your study documents can also be found on the same page under the Attachments tab.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, PhD, CIP

Administrative Chair

Research Ethics Office