# The Art of Forgiveness

A Q-methodological study of people's subjective experience of forgiveness and how
it could initiate personal development

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*An eye for an eye will only end up making the whole world blind*
*Mahatma Gandhi*

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Forgiving is not forgetting. It is letting go of the hurt.

*Mary Mcleod Bethume*

## Sammendrag

Studien har som mål å bidra til ei større forståelse av begrepet og fenomenet tilgivelse, og hvordan dette kan bidra til å igangsette en indre utviklingsprosess. En Q-metodisk undersøkelse har bidratt til å undersøke subjektive syn, erfaringer og holdninger knyttet til det å tilgi, sett i ulike kontekster. 22 forskningsdeltakere tok del i undersøkelsen, hvor de sorterte 48 utsagn med utgangspunkt fra egen opplevelse. Disse omhandlet tre hovedområder. Det første området legger vekt på en eventuell relasjonell påvirkning, det andre omhandler opplevelsen av tidligere erfaring, og den siste legger vekt på grad av spirituell intelligens.

Gjennom faktoranalysen av datamaterialet viste fire faktorer seg. Alle fire faktorer har et felles syn på tilgivelse som meningsfullt og viktig. Det som imidlertid skiller faktorene er bruken av, og årsaken til, tilgivelse. Disse ulike synene er drøftet avslutningsvis i oppgaven, opp mot tidligere teori som oppgaven har basert seg på, samtidig som enkelte punkter henviser til ny teori. Studien konkluderer med at tilgivelse er noe som er relevant for alle mennesker, og at å lære seg å initiere en tilgivelsesprosess vil kunne igangsette indre personlig vekst og utvikling og slik forhindre stagnasjon.

## Acknowledgements

A journey has come to an end. Little did I know, this first day meeting my fellow students, new teachers and professors, that these two years I had in front of me would be so rewarding. It has been an exiting travel where I have discovered interesting theory, true friendship and previously unknown aspects of myself. I have become more aware of being aware, an inner sense I will continue to feed throughout my life.

Writing this master thesis has not been easy. I have more than often felt that I have been stumbling around in the dark, not knowing where to go. I have missed my motivators, my inspiratory support group, my study family. Katja, Synne, Marit and Brit, thank you so much for being you.

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To my mother, father and brothers, thank you for your support throughout my six years of studies. Your emotional (and economical) encouragement has made this process so much easier. And my grandparents, who have always believed in me, thank you. I'm coming home soon.

Last, but not least, I'll have to thank Per Christian, who has wiped my frustrated tears, made me numerous coffees, and been my one and only personal fan. I can't wait to cross the finish line and explore what's yet to come!

*Iselin, May 2013*

# Content

**Figure and table overview:**

# 1. Introduction

During my time as a student, employee and person in general, conflicts have been an uncomfortable, but natural, part of my life. As human beings are social creatures, we are living our lives in relation to others and ourselves – an obvious and basic need not without problems. It is not usual to agree or to accept every part of every relation, as we are living side by side, all individuals different from each other: our personalities, our understandings and our actions. This often leads to conflicts. I have – unfortunately – hurt other people, and I have felt betrayed by people close to me.

Through the experiential learning at the counseling program, I have gained insight into how such episodes of betrayal from the past can affect us years after. Forgiveness came to mind as a possible theme of choice for this master project after experiencing how often I interpreted that the term was a implicit subject in conversations with my fellow students. The *word* forgiveness rarely was mentioned, but statements such as "I have not gotten over it" or "what he did I will never forget" made me curious about whether forgiveness was relevant. I also wondered if these persons had forgiven, would these statements never have been said. This is when I started to search for theory. Would they have felt otherwise if forgiveness had taken place? Would it in that case mean that personal growth had happened?

Theory shows that people cause each other pain, no matter how much love its shared between them (Karen, 2001). Francis Voltaire stated that "we all consist of weaknesses and errors" which indicates that the acknowledgment of our misery justifies the necessity of forgiveness (Baasland, 2009, p.86, my translation).

## 1.1 Intention of the study and the research question

In this thesis the subjective experiences of forgiveness will be investigated. This will be seen in relation to further personal development, with focus on the link between the experience and the future growth or development within individuals. Having been exposed to hurt or betrayal and the associated feelings, one is left with wanting to get rid of the associated feelings. How this is experienced is something this thesis seeks to investigate.

The theme's relevance is two-sided. First, the introduction shows that hurt and betrayal is a natural side of being human. There are often two parts involved, and we are often talking about the offender and the victim. But when a conflict is present, several others are left standing with or in between the conflicting parts. This *third* part, standing by the victim or the offender's side, also has to deal with the emotional consequences and sometimes with a feeling of being directly affected by the harm done (Baasland, 2009). This illustrates how complex and involved conflicts are as in many situations they affect more than the two conflicting parts. Secondly, forgiveness has its relevance in relation to my direction of study as it is stated that forgiveness is the most fundamental element in therapy where terms such as "let go" and "accept" are often used (among psychotherapists) (Harris, 2007). In addition, not much research has been done on the subject, until recently, and there is a need for more empirical evidence to support to which degree forgiveness is an important component in healing (Richard & Bergin, 1997, as in Harris, 2007).

However, stories about forgiveness have been written as a way to overcome the hurt and anger from violations and betrayals (Karen, 2001), specifically in religious writings (Wetzler & Cole, 1999). This study seeks to contribute to a larger understanding of the importance of, and further knowledge about how human beings experience forgiveness in every day life taken out of the religious context. Kølpin (2010) states that forgiveness is a spiritual feeling, while Karen, (2001) claims that forgiveness rather is a decision. However, the theme *forgiveness* is only relevant if one has been hurt, involving (negative) emotions, which makes it important to include the emotional aspect. Which feelings lead up to the decision of forgiving, and how is forgiveness experienced? The main question which captures the essence, and also nuances of these questions, is the one that has brought this study forward: *What kind of subjective experiences of forgiveness exists in people in relation to personal development?*

## 1.2 Structure

This thesis is divided into six main chapters. The first chapter, *introduction*, presents the choice of theme and positions the study's relevance and context. It introduces the research question and the intention of the study. As forgiveness is a huge theme, it

also points out what is included and what is the main focus. Chapter 2 presents the theory, which the design of the study is based on, as well as other theories relevant to the theme. Chapter 3 is the methodological part, introducing Q-methodology in general and this study's use of the research technique. An introduction of the method and key concepts is first presented, followed by the design and effects of this study. The last section of chapter 3 presents concepts and definitions related to the process of conducting the study, followed by quality of the study in chapter 4. Chapters 5 and 6 are closely related, presenting and discussing the findings of the study, and adding suggestions to further research after having a critical look at this one.

## 1.3 Theoretical framework

Some of the theories regarding forgiveness in general are obtained from writers with a religious and/or philosophical view. However, they are used with the intention to relate to the secular world, together with the other theories derived from psychology and counseling perspectives. The specific perspective on humans and counseling comes from the humanistic-existentialistic direction, and is based on Carl Rogers' theories regarding acceptance as a foundation for positive personal development (Ivey, Ivey & D'Andrea, 2012). It is with this in mind that the research question has a future oriented angle, inspired by the well-known sentence: forgive and move on. The methodological framework has its roots in phenomenology, focusing on the subjective experience within human beings (Postholm, 2010). These assumptions are also the foundation for the interpretations of the results of the study, along with theory explained in the following sections.

## 1.3.1 Gestalt Theory

Gestalt theory has relevance in this study when linked to forgiveness. Gestalt theory states that with human's innate tendency to want to finish or complete our experience, for example, when left with hurt and bitterness as a consequence of betrayal, we seek to address these thoughts and emotions (Harris, 2007). We are as human beings incomplete, there are always situations and elements we have not finished, and we are in a perpetual quest for balance (Perls, 1957). It is also appropriate to in terms of the methodology used in this research having focus on the holistic. This includes the method of data collection and interpretations, as well as the overall wish to

understand subjectivity as a whole, rather than separating the objective to a part of a hypothetical deductive hypothesis (Kvalsund & Allgood, 2010). This is applicable in understanding the different items in the Q-sample, how each statement will contain different meanings and values, depending on the background and the relational understanding of each participant. This contributes to the holistic approach of the methodological system Stephenson wanted to achieve (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

## 1.3.2 Positive Psychology

Positive psychology illustrates the importance of changing bitterness to positivity by gaining self-insight, and by changing your thoughts and patterns towards something better. Positive Psychology is a paradigm included in the theoretical framework, as it emphasizes the need to understand the positive side of human experience and what makes life worth living – without excluding the "negative" (Joseph & Linley, 2006). The aim of positive psychology is to promote a more holistic approach to psychology, integrating the positive and the negative experiences. This leads to the need for showing how positive psychological approaches can speak not only to fulfillment and happiness, but also to suffering (Joseph & Linley, 2006). This is appropriate for this thesis whereas being hurt and betrayed is a part of being human. The orientation has three pillars: the study of positive emotion, the study of the positive traits and the study of the positive institutions (such as democracy, strong families, free inquiry) (Seligman, 2002). Some of these pillars are relevant in the theoretical design of this study, broadened in the sections of chapter 2.

## 1.4 Inclusions and limitations

As a master project in counseling this study has its limitations. Forgiveness is a huge theme, and it is not possible to capture it all. This study focuses on forgiveness from the victims' points of view, not the offenders'. This is both due to limitations of the study and choice of methodology, to not have too many variables to measure (Wolf, 2010). Terms such as victim, the offended, the betrayed, perpetrator, and the offender are words used throughout the paper. In real case scenarios these terms are determined by each case, as the description of either part in a conflict will depend on the degree of harm, but in this paper they are used with interchangeably to make the language linguistically varied and because the thesis is not based on specific episode.

An important aspect of my project is that the focus of the forgiving process takes place on the inside of the individual, leading to an «inner» forgiveness, an honest and genuine act (Baasland, 2009). It is the emotional action towards forgiving that is the principal method, not necessarily the physical "I am sorry", as in some cases the offender is practically physical unavailable (Harris, 2007).

In my research question, the reason the word «development» is used is because the term, development, is viewed as an act towards something *better* in life - not only an act towards a *change*. It refers to growth, becoming more advanced, or a stage that is likely to affect what happens in a continuing situation (Hornby, 2000). The change I am seeking is the *acceptance* of the situation (Kølpin, 2010), which is linked to the counseling part in this project – how forgiving can successfully be used in therapy and guidance towards accept and a positive personal development (Ivey et al., 2012). Even though acceptance is what I assume is needed for personal development, this thesis will not deepen this aspect. It will only investigate if forgiveness may lead to feelings of acceptance, so the possibility of "letting go" is easier accessible in contrast to the negative emotions when hurt.

## 2. Theory

In this chapter the theoretical foundation chosen for my research will be outlined. The research question is the basis for using these theories, which have also made the foundation for creating and developing some of the effects of the research design. The intention of this theory chapter is to give a presentation of forgiveness as a term, thereafter explain the structure of the design. I have included three effects examining people's experience of forgiveness as a possible door opener towards change. These effects are intention, experience and spiritual intelligence, presented from section 2.2 to section 2.4.2.

## 2.1 What is forgiveness? From religious writings to the secular world

Forgiveness as a term is primarily used in a context of religion, discussed by religious writers, and is one of the foundations in Christianity (Arendt, 1998; Wetzler & Cole, 1999). Despite of this, it is suggested that this is not a reason to ignore the concept of forgiveness in the secular world (Arendt, 1998). It is important to notice that there is an almost non-existent relationship between therapists' religious beliefs and use of forgiveness in a therapeutic intervention (Harris, 2007) as it is stated that forgiveness is the most fundamental element in therapy, where terms such as "let go" and "accept" are often used among psychotherapists (Harris, 2007). This underlines the importance of forgiving, and illustrates how forgiveness needs to have a place in the lives of all human beings, not limited by religion. Because of the religious link, the term has been alien to those not belonging in a religious group, and many have struggled with understanding and integrating the term "forgiving" (Baasland, 2009; Karen, 2001).

The term forgiveness is hard to define as it depends upon who makes the definition as well as the understanding of what forgiveness consists of. Is there necessarily a specific process or attitude? As with love, one can't put forgiveness in a formula, but everyone knows what it is (Baasland, 2009). It is, however, useful to define the term in this thesis, as there exists many misconceptions associated with forgiveness, for example, that by forgiving one accepts what was done. Forgiving does not mean forgetting, nor does forgiving necessarily mean reconciliation, as one can forgive and no longer maintain a relationship with someone (n.n. 2013). Neither does it mean to

feel good toward the offender, or forgetting what happened (Harris, 2007). Rather, it is viewing the happening in a different light (Arvola, 2012).

The Bible presents three Hebraic word translated to forgiveness: *to cover, to take away* and *to pardon*. There exist a variety of definitions trying to cover the term. However, the definition suited for my research project is based on some of the previous statements and inspired by the words of Robert Karen (2001) saying that forgiving makes one no longer wanting to hurt the offender. In this paper forgiveness is defined as giving up resentment*,* and getting rid of the burden of hate and anger (Seligman, 2002; Joseph & Linley, 2006).

## 2.2 The intention of forgiving

Faithfulness is the ground we, human beings, stand on. It exists between couples, parents and children and between friends. It is so fundamental, that it is not easy to forgive betrayal and deceit (Baasland, 2009). When someone has done another harm, it is unnatural to not want to repeat the action towards the other person. Our basic primal thought is "an eye for an eye", making us to feel that the person has paid his price (Harris, 2007). When someone hurts us, we can do one of three things: seek revenge and/or retribution, do nothing, or work toward letting go of the hurt (Harris, 2007). What motivates us to do the one or the other is a mystery (Baasland, 2009).

These questions led up to the first effect: *purpose*. Purpose has an intention to identify the source(s) of influence. Humans live with and around others, and we are in varying degrees affected by those surrounding us. Is it the individual him/herself who chooses to forgive, or does forgiveness take place only to maintain the relationship – on behalf of the other? All the levels are closely related, and they are hard to separate. I will still try to see if there are some possibilities to distinguish between the self, the religious and/or spiritual beliefs, and the influence from other close relations.

### 2.2.1 Personal

This level represents a self-dependent individual, not easily affected by other's opinion. It is the *ideal self* (Ivey et al., 2012) that tells the person to forgive (no matter the gap between the ideal and real self), not any other person or belief. This person

makes choices based on his/her own thoughts and feelings, and contains a drive to either correct things – or choose not to. This individual may sense a strong inner drive to forgive (Karen, 2002), coming from no one other than him/herself. Baasland (2009) states that forgiving has to be voluntarily, well exemplified by the choices grounded in the individual him/herself which are represented by this level.

### 2.2.2 Impersonal.

This level represents a person with spiritual or religious beliefs asserting that forgiving is either a correct, or an unnecessary path to walk. He or she might be following a religious or spiritual group, following the rules of the group.It is also possible that this person has a high moral sense, with the belief that forgiving "is the right thing to do". Or, this individual has a perception that an eye for an eye is the most justified action to take when hurt. However, it seems that reflection, generosity and faith affect the choice of forgiving (Baasland, 2007)

### 2.2.3 Relational:

This level represents an individual with a high sense of family orientation. It is the collective way of thinking that describes this individual, in which many choices are based on what is the best for his or her relations. A person with a strong and close family lets members of this family highly affect his/her everyday life, as described in one of the three pillars in positive psychology (Joseph & Linley, year).

### 2.3 Influences from the past

How one feels about one's past – contentment and pride versus bitterness or shame – depends on one's memories, as there is no other source. Politicians, who invoke reminders of slavery at every opportunity, are creating the same vengeful mind-set in their followers. This shows that frequent and intense negative thoughts about the past blocking the emotions of contentment and making peace possible are just as true of nations as of individuals (Seligman, 2002).

However, several studies measuring the consequences of forgiveness have documented results as less stress, less anger, more optimism and better reported health, and an increased chance to continue forgiving (Seligman, 2002). So why do so

few people choose to forgive? This question led to the second effect "experience". This effect's intention is to identify whether past experiences and feelings affect the choice to forgive. According to Seligman (2002), it is the memories of the past that decide whether the past experiences are good or bad. Does this apply to the experience of forgiveness as well? This effect seeks to discover if there is a pattern between people having good experiences from forgiving and their ability to continue forgive in the future. Linked up to Gestalt Theory earlier presented, it also illustrates an understanding of forgiveness being a key to closing the Gestalt.

## 2.3.1 Bad experience with forgiveness: bitterness

The human brain has evolved to ensure that negative emotions will trump the building and abiding but more fragile, positive emotions. The only way to get out of this emotional wilderness is to change the thought pattern by rewriting the past – by forgiving (Seligman, 2002). Suggested processes on how to forgive have been described (such as the REACH method (Seligman, 2002; n.n. 2013)). When failing to do this, or not even have the desire to try, one cannot get rid of the pain (Wetzler & Cole, 1999). Do previously bad experiences or failed attempts prevent one from forgiving?

Victims of physical or emotional abuse hold lots of hurt and anger, and are stuck in unfinished business that begs to be addressed (Harris, 2007). Gestalt theory says that humans have a fundamental need to fulfill our experience, the Gestalt. Gestalt is something one perceives as a whole, even though it consists of several parts or units, constructing one's own experience (Egidius, 2006). The feeling of injustice makes the Gestalt not whole; there is something left to fix – either revenge or forgiveness – to make it complete. It occurs when closure happens, the preoccupation with the old incompletion resolves and makes it possible to move on to current possibilities (Harris, 2007).

For Sigmund Freud and his psychoanalysis, every psychological event in human life is determined by forces of the past, and people will spend the rest of their lives attempting to resolve these conflicts (Ivey et al., 2012). According to Seligman (2002), without changing one's memories about the past – or completing the Gestalt –

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one will be left with a feeling of bitterness. One blocks the emotions of contentment and satisfaction, which makes serenity and peace impossible. Or is the missing gestalt just replaced with bitterness, accepting that this is the missing part?

## 2.3.2 Good experience with forgiveness: acceptance

This level represents the opposite of the bad experience. Several books contain chapters dedicated to steps explaining "how to forgive" (Chapman & Thomas, 2007; Karen, 2001; Seligman, 2002; Wetzler & Cole, 1999), illustrating that this is not necessarily well known among us humans (Baasland, 2009). Forgiveness has many similarities to a process of grief, accepting a form for loss; someone has betrayed or hurt us. Forgiveness leads to positive changes and a better mental health, which may be a reason why it's so commonly used in therapy. It opens up for closure of the Gestalt, letting go of long held pain (Harris, 2007), and leads to acceptance (Kølpin, 2010). The intention of this level is to investigate whether having forgiven earlier on helps to make the same step easier the next time the situation calls for attention, as one has former experience with the outcome. If by forgiving in the past has helped one to "move on" and brought acceptance of the present, will one continue to forgive in the future?

## 2.4 Intelligences and possibilities

No matter the results of earlier studies showing increased health and release of energy as a result of having forgiven, many still do not forgive (Seligman, 2002). They claim it is easier to ignore the past events. The result is highly likely that the negative energy will influence one's life more than one is aware of (Kølpin 2010). Unfortunately, there are good reasons to hold onto bitterness. Two of the most frequent answers are 1) forgiving is unjust. It undermines the motivation to catch and punish the perpetrator, and it saps the righteous anger that might be transmuted into helping other victims as well. 2) Forgiving blocks revenge, and revenge is right and natural (Seligman, 2002). These are logical answers to the questions of why not forgiving – and maybe easy answers for those not being able to reflect upon, or take actions towards, the alternative. This can be especially true if one scores low on Spiritual Intelligence. IQ became the big issue in the early part of the 20th century, described as human's intellectual or rational intelligence. A high IQ refers to a high

intelligence. Emotional Intelligence – EQ – followed in the mid 1990s, measuring one's awareness of one's own and other people's feelings. EQ gives us empathy, motivation and compassion, and is a basic requirement for the effective use of IQ. Thus, there is an indication that there is a third "Q" creating the whole picture (Zohar & Marshall, 2001)

The "Spiritual Intelligence", called SQ, inspires the third effect of this thesis. The SQ is what one uses addressing and solving his or her problems with meaning and value, and helps one place one's own actions and lives in a wider and meaning-giving context (Zohar & Marshall, 2001). To capture the essence of this chapter, the reason this effect is included is to study whether having high or low SQ affects one's choice to forgive or not forgive. The effect is divided into degrees of high and low SQ, and in this study it is assumed that they are direct opposites. Are there bigger chances for a person high on SQ to use abilities such as transcending pain to forgive when being hurt or betrayed? Is this person more mature and reflected in his or her perception of the world?

## 2.4.1: High Spiritual Intelligence

High SQ gives one the opportunity to change the rules, to alter situations, and it gives a moral sense. Containing this intelligence makes individuals ask fundamental questions, related to meaning and the path towards where they can aspire. It contains a transformative power, and helps raising oneself from the mud (Zohar & Marshall, 2001). A person holding a high SQ has the capacity to face and use suffering, to face and transcend pain, a reluctance to cause unnecessary pain and to seek fundamental questions (Zohar & Marshall, 2001).

This level has in addition some relation to one of the pillars in positive psychology – one's positive traits – meaning one's strength, virtues and abilities (Seligman, 2002). In such, when having the understanding of the benefits of forgiveness more accessible, it testifies to a more complex experience of the world, giving a more mature attitude that seeks to repair relationships with others or oneself (Wetzler & Cole, 1999).

## 2.4.2. Low Spiritual Intelligence

People are living in a spiritually dumb society, where the collective SQ is low. This is characterized by lack of meaning and reflection, of honesty and self-awareness. We, humans, don't reach beyond ourselves much, and are viewing pain, suffering or hardship as threatening – not as challenges or opportunities (Zohar & Marshall, 2001) such as those holding a high SQ. In this study it is assumed that an individual having a low SQ is more likely to have a basic primal thought in his/her mind when having been offended or hurt, and is not able to hold the capacity to transcend pain. Presumably, he/she will less likely have his/her abilities, strengths and virtues easily accessible (Seligman, 2002), as he/she lacks some self-awareness having low SQ (Zohar & Marshall, 2001).

## 3.0 Methodology

Q-methodology is a method providing a foundation for systematic study of subjectivity (van Exel & Graaf, 2005). This is well fitted my wishes for my research project as the intention of this study is to discover and get a hold on the subjective experiences and thoughts related to forgiveness. This is one of the reasons for choosing this method, as it is well suited to investigate the experience of a phenomenon. This chapter is structured in chronological order, starting with describing the method in general and outlining the key concepts. Thereafter it describes how this method was utilized in this research.

## 3.1 Q-Methodology: history and background

The last century debate between quantitative and qualitative research paradigms has led to the point where researchers from these respective traditions often view each other as competitors. Such polarization of methods has resulted in the fact that researchers often choose either one, as there exist several ideas that quantitative and qualitative research paradigms neither can nor should be mixed (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). William Stephenson (1902-1989) did not agree in such a distinction, and founded Q-methodology in 1935 on this basis (Watts & Stenner, 2012; Thorsen & Allgood, 2010). The method combines the components within the quantitative field by using factor analysis, and the qualitative field by examining and identifying subjective behavior in a thoroughly and naturalistic manner (Brown, 1999). The name "Q" comes from the form of factor analysis that is used to analyze the data, and differs from the factor analysis that involves finding associations and differences between variables across a sample of subjects. Q, on the other hand, looks for correlations between subjects across a sample of variables, conducting a holistic comparison of the respondent's Q-sorts (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Q- methodology is a research technique that collects data, as well as an analysis method as a basis for scientific investigation of subjectivity (Thorsen & Allgood, 2010). It represents in such an alternative and different factor analysis, which is concerned with the operationalization of subjectivity (Brown, n.d.). It rejects the validation of a set hypothesis (deduction) and "observational research" that seek to describe and generalize (induction). *Abduction*, on the other hand, involves studying a phenomenon in an attempt to explain and find new insights, and is central to the method (Kvalsund,

1998). The hypotheses does not need to be developed from existing theory, as abduction rather is a logic designed for discovery and theory generation, not for verification of existing theory (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Stephenson fought for a holistic and people-centered orientation to measure and evaluate the subjective; experiences, thoughts and behaviors. In Q-methodology it is the *people* who measure, not people being measured. This means that the participant is the one ranking from his or her point of view, and exploring the possibility of connections which other unaided perception may overlook (Brown, 1993).

## 3.2. Structure and Key Concepts

Q-methodology has a conceptual framework contributing to maintain structure in the process (Thorsen & Allgood, 2010), described in the following sections. They are presenting both the different parts of the method and the process of implementing such research. Where appropriate terms and theory have been exemplified by direct links to this study to illustrate the process of the method and to make certain concepts more understandable.

### 3.2.1 "Concourse"

After having found the research theme the researcher's next step is to assess the communication around the topic. This is called the "concourse" and exists of values, attitudes, opinions and beliefs on the topic, easily recognizable for everyone in the context (Thorsen & Allgood, 2010). The goal is to get a hold of the basic structure of the concourse (Brown, 1993), to measure how participants experience the world. The most ideal is that the concourse contains all relevant aspects of all the discourse (van Exel & Graaf, 2005). The concourse makes the base for developing the effects (themes) and levels (sub-themes), based on what the researcher assumes is representing and operating around the selected theme. Several methods of approach exist, but based on time and structural considerations the researcher often chooses to use an experimental design to find the Q-sample. The Q-sample is discussed more thoroughly in the next chapter.

In this study the concourse had a natural limitation. Firstly, I had an interest in investigating the *victims'* point of view by becoming curious as a result of

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conversations with fellow students still holding on to hurt from the past. This experience gave me some input into the concourse's content. Secondly, my years as a both being a student and a human being in general has given me theoretical and social input into potential theories for developing the concourse. However, forgiveness is a huge theme meaning the chance for missing important aspects is relatively certain. During the process of producing statements it was difficult to know how much I affected the content of the statements. I have been aware that my own subjectivity as a researcher affects the study throughout the process, which according to Thorsen and Allgood (2010), is an important aspect to keep in mind. I was also worried about whether the essence and meaning in some of the statements were hard to capture, due to the use of academic language, as I was going to have a very varied P-set. I therefore arranged a pilot sorting to have a chance to catch the most advanced formulations and to evaluate whether they could be edited to be more understandable. This will be further discussed in chapter 3.2.4.

## 3.2.2 Q-sample

The design is the basis for developing a Q-sample. The Q-sample is defined as a selection of statements from the concourse (Brown, 1993; Thorsen & Allgood, 2010; van Exel & Graaf, 2005), and consists of items representing the concourse one wants to study. Items include for example pictures, statements or music (Thorsen & Allgood, 2010). The size of the Q-sample is dependent upon how many statements it takes to represent the theme (Kvalsund, 1998). It is important that the researcher –to the extent possible – does not color the Q–sample with his/her own views or expectations, as it may have implications for the process and the results (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Also it is essential to have a balanced sample to embrace different directions, opinions and meanings. The Fisherian balanced block design was developed to make it possible to compose such sample (Kvalsund & Allgood, 2010; Kvalsund, 1998), described in section 3.2.4.

## 3.2.3: P-set

The selection of participants, called the P-set, is essential in Q-methodology. The participants contribute to the collection of data, and are therefore the most important research tool in the method. It is the participant's point of view that is of importance,

and each participant is a variable. This selection has to be representative for the culture of the concourse (Thorsen & Allgood, 2010). The number of participants should be sufficient for the researcher to be able to say something on the subject, and to be able to establish a factor (Watts & Stenner, 2012). The size of the P-set is dependent on the Q-samples (Thorsen & Allgood, 2010), and for statistical reasons it may be sensible to operate using a number of participants less than the number of items in the Q-sample (Watts & Stenner, 2012). The P-set of this study has a variety of dimensions represented, gender, age, education, religious beliefs and so on, to represent the diversity in today's society. It is a randomized snowball sample (Langdrigde, 2006) as I found that many participants who I didn't know well were skeptical to sharing their personal feelings and experiences related towards forgiveness with me. I therefore asked relatives and friends, and their relatives and/or friends. This was a door opener to get the P-set that I needed as they immediately had a more open and curious attitude when I presented the study to them. When informing possible participants about my project I emphasized the importance of having some experiences, feelings or thoughts linked to forgiveness. They also got to choose whether they wanted me to be present or not during the sorting process, and how much time they wanted to use on the sorting.

### 3.2.4 Design

"Fisher's balanced block design" is used in this study as in an earlier project I found the factor design as a helpful method for developing and structuring the Q-sample. Based on my own experiences, assumptions and theory, the design was developed containing three main effects, assumed to cover the concourse. These three effects are Intention, Experience and Spiritual Intelligence (SQ); all three are divided into levels or themes, described more thoroughly in chapter 2. The effects and levels can be seen in table 1 below with the effects vertically and levels horizontally.

**Table 1: Design**

| Effect | Level | | | Cells |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Purpose** | Personal | impersonal | Relational | 3 |
| **Experience** | (Self) acceptance | Bitterness | | 2 |
| **SQ** | High | Low | | 2 |

This design gives twelve different combinations of the cells (adf, aef, adg, aeg, bdf, bdg, bef, beg, cdf, cdg, cef, ceg). This makes the basis for finding and developing statements, to make up a Q-sample (appendix A). I first thought that three statements for each combination would be sufficient (36 statements in total) but changed my mind during the process. I ended up having four statements per combination, 48 statements in total. I varied between making sentences on the base of the design and sentences I would find suitable for what I wished to investigate. The statements were edited and given random numbers. All the statements were made in Norwegian because of the Norwegian P-set. Thereafter they were translated into English. Before conducting the Q-sorting process, I did two pilot sorts. I did this because I wanted to root out possible writing errors. I also wanted to make the formulations understandable, and not start the sorting with an unbalanced Q-sample. The pilot sorts enabled me to make some adjustments to the language used as well as evaluating whether I should change some of the statements. The first sorting gave an impression of a "negative" skew, but the second sorting gave the opposite result. Therefore I decided not to edit the balance of the Q-sample.

## 3.2.5 Condition of instruction

A condition of instruction was given prior to the sorting, pointing out the perspective and helping the respondent to view the statements in a setting taken from a past experience. This helps to focus the participants' attention in the direction of the research question (Thorsen & Allgood, 2010). The condition of instruction was as follows: "during the sort, think about a situation that affects your view on forgiveness. It can be a good or bad experience". On the same paper (appendix B) the Q-instructions presented suggested steps for the sorting process, and I emphasized how it may be easier to read through all the statements and thereafter divide the statements into three groups: most agree/like me, most disagree/unlike me, and neutral, before doing the fine sorting. The participants could make as many adjustments as they needed, but I encouraged all participants to be as accurate as they could. All the participants got written instructions on how to conduct the sorting, but only three participants used this actively, as I was present during the other sorting processes explaining the steps of the process.

The Q-sorting procedure follows certain steps. The main intention is to rank each item, in this case each statement, on a given matrix, depending on the level of agreement or disagreement. The matrix is a sorting pattern, with scores from most agree (+6) to most disagree (-6), and a neutral score in the middle (0), summed up to fit the 48 statements in the Q-sample (see table 2).

**Table 2: The Sorting Matrix**

| -6 | -5 | -4 | -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 | +4 | +5 | +6 |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|

The matrix is formed as a Gaussian curve, meaning that the sorting pattern forces the participants to make nuanced and systematic comparisons and evaluations of the placing of statements. The assumption is that there are certain sentences in the Q-sample given more importance by the sorter (+5 -5 +6 -6) making the remaining sentences increasingly less *psychologically significant* moving toward +1, 0, -1 (Kvalsund & Allgood, 2010). Psychological significance is a central concept in Q, and refers to the active process of the sorter's use of his/hers first-person perspective, when ranking or scoring items of a Q-set. An item ranked high, either positive or negative, on the matrix has a high psychological significance, and an item ranked low contains a correspondingly lower psychological significance. This contributes to a holistic and gestalt entity, as the items are being evaluated relative to one another (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

## 3.3 The Q-analysis

After the Q-sorts are collected, the correlation matrix of all Q sorts is calculated. It is possible to do the analysis by hand, but there are computer programs that are much

easier to use for the analysis. In this study I used PQMethod version 2.20 (Schmolck, 2012). This program does the statistical analysis, resulting in the correlation matrix, which is the basis for the factor analysis. In this research I did a centroid factor rotation (standardized seven factors) followed by a varimax rotation. The researcher decides the number of factors in the varimax rotation. By rotating the factors, the researcher investigates the field of opinions, and examines it from different angles. The rotation does not affect the consistency in sentiment throughout individual Q sorts or the relationships between Q sorts, but shifts the perspective from which they are observed (van Exel & Graaf, 2005). The most important output table from QMethod is the table of factor scores, in this study ranging from +6 to -6, which indicates the extent to which each of the 48 statements characterizes each of the four factors (Brown, 1996).

In this study I had to decide whether to use a three-or four-factor solution. I chose the four-factor solution. A factor loading is determined for each Q-sort, and expresses the extent to which each Q-sort is associated with each factor (van Exel & Graaf, 2005). This means that participants with similar views on the topic share the same factor. It also illustrates the point where each individual Q-sort separates from the average composition of the factor score contributing in further decisions of the analysis and interpretations. When choosing a factor solution, the aim is to have four participants defining each factor, but the number is of less importance than who they are (van Exel & Graaf, 2005), however, this ideal is not always met and factors with two sortings are acceptable.

## 3.3.1 Correlation

Correlation refers to the degree of accordance between two variables. The correlation can vary in between +-1, where +1 describes a high positive correlation, and -1 describes a high negative correlation. A correlation in the area close to 0 implies a weak or non-existent accordance (SNL, 2013). By correlating Q-sorts, the Q-factor analysis gives information about similarities and differences in viewpoint on a particular subject (van Exel & Graaf, 2005), in this case, forgiveness. The statistical principle in doing this analysis derived from the idea of promoting *simple structure,*

meaning finding as distinct factors as possible (Kvalsund & Allgood, 2010). Table 3 shows the correlation between the four factors in this research.

**Table 3: Correlation between factors**

|  | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 | Factor 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Factor 1 | *1.000* | 0.3113 | 0.5499 | 0.0829 |
| Factor 2 | 0.3113 | *1.000* | 0.4025 | 0.2631 |
| Factor 3 | 0.5499 | 0.4025 | *1.000* | 0.0510 |
| Factor 4 | 0.0829 | 0.2631 | 0.0510 | *1.000* |

The correlation between factors indicates the amount of similarities among the factors and in this study they had relatively low correlation coefficients. This is positive in relation to the principle of simple structure. The exception is between factor 1 and 3, which has the highest correlation (0.5499). This means that they have more than half the meaning in common, but there is still something that differentiates them. The explained variance tells how much of the reported subjectivity exists in the factor, and it is a goal to try to cover as much as possible. The explained variables are respectively 14 % for factor 1, 17 % for factor 2, 24 % for factor 3 and 9 % for factor 4, summed up to a total of 64 % (appendix H).

## 3.4 Factor Interpretation

In opposition to R-methodology, the interpretation of factors proceeds primarily in terms of factor scores rather than factor loadings (Brown, 1993). The same way as the Q-sort is a model or a pattern giving the sorter the opportunity to show his/her subjective self-referring perception, the factor picture represents the model constituting the average patterns of the Q-sorts defining the factor. A pure factor is not absolute, but an approximate expression of the view from the sorters correlating with the factor and with each other (Kvalsund & Allgood, 2010).

After having chosen a factor solution, the descriptions and interpretations of the factors take place. This is when to focus on the principle of abduction, to open up for discovering something new. To do that, the researcher is looking at patterns through

the average placement of the statements, called *factor scores,* which make up a composite or idealized Q-sort for each factor (van Exel & Graaf, 2005). The interpretation often starts with the outer ends of the matrix (statements ranked on the +-5, +-6), having the most psychological significance and works inward toward the +-1 and 0 areas. The *distinguishing* and *consensus* statements are also included in the interpretation process, as well as the area of less psychological significance (+-1, 0). Distinguishing statements are those with a statistically significant difference between the placing of statements in the various factors. A statement that lies in the same place statistically in all the identified factors is called a consensus statement (van Exel & Graaf, 2005).

With the principle of abduction in mind, the researcher is challenged to open up for new meanings and thus, new theory.

## 4. Quality of the study

In this chapter different aspects of quality of this study are presented. A presentation of the use of validity and reliability is described in sections 4.1 and 4.2, followed by the ethical considerations relevant in doing research. The last chapter, 4.4, describes my role as a researcher.

## 4.1. Validity

The idea of validity originated in quantitative research. Validity refers to the extent to which a study represents the phenomena to which it refers (Silverman, 2006; Watts & Stenner, 2012); that is, if one is measuring what one is supposed to measure. Validity in forms of the type 1 and 2 error that are relevant in quantitative methodology (Silverman, 2006) is not relevant in Q-methodology (Kvalsund, 1998). The reason for this is how the Q-sorting is measuring subjectivity, where every sorting is representing each participant's point of view. Issues of validity consequently fade since there is no external criterion by which to appraise a person's own perspective (Brown, 1993). The other aspect is the principle of abduction mentioned in section 3.1, where the point is not to confirm or reject a hypothesis, but to discover patterns of meanings in the chosen concourse. In this form, validity is rather about whether or not the participants answer genuinely, and follow the condition of instruction.

One of the strengths with qualitative research is its ability to access directly what happens in the world (Silverman, 2006). As mentioned in section 3.2.4 I did a pilot sorting to become aware of possible writing mistakes or skewedness in my Q-sample, and I also did post interviews with those with a high loading on each factor. This gave me the possibility to clarify and deepen the meaning of the results, strengthening the validity in the research. I did not get to do every interview with the participant loading highest on each factor, and it is discussable whether or not this had an impact on the understanding of the factor. I would like to underline that even though a participant loads higher than the other, he or she may not be as reflected or give better answers than those loading slightly lower.

I participated in this study myself. The reason for this was to have the opportunity to contribute with more understanding of the statements and factors, as I could bring my own subjective thoughts, feelings, experiences etc. to the interpretation of the results.

As I would either have the same or a different understanding, compared to other participants, I would have a chance to deepen or expand the meaning of statements or factors myself. This decision proved to be important when choosing between a three- or four-factor solution. I would have loaded on a factor I did not recognize with the three-factor solution, while the four-factor solution proved to fit my views.

## 4.2 Reliability

Reliability usually refers to the degree to which the findings of a study are independent of accidental circumstances of their production (Kirk and Miller, 1986, cited in Silverman, 2006). Reliability in R-methodology deals with replicability meaning whether or not it is possible to repeat the research project and come up with the same results (Silverman, 2006). It is unlikely that one will get exactly the same results in qualitative research, as it is not possible to measure results to the same extent as in quantitative research, nor is it a goal. In Q-methodology in particular, reliability refers to whether the Q-sorts, factors, factor loadings and factor scores are reliable; that is, if the results could be predicted if the sort were replicated (Kvalsund, 1998). Brown (1980, cited in Kvalsund, 1998) shows how an average estimate of a coefficient has been set to 0.80, meaning that there is an acceptable chance of a subject Q-sorting a second time (test-retest) achieving the same results. This illustrates how the Q-sorting captures fundamental values, opinions and beliefs, and that they are relatively constant over time.

The higher the reliability coefficient for a factor, the lower is the error estimation for the factor score. The size of the P-set and the correlation within factors will affect the reliability. The more participants who load on a factor and correlate with each other the higher the reliability will be. Also, by adding more items to the Q-sample, the reliability will increase as the P-set is given more concourse nuances to sort (Kvalsund, 1998). Based on the number of participants, this study gave the reliabilities shown in table 4. A follow-up interview will also increase the reliability by confirming one's interpretations, as in this study.

**Table 4: Reliabilitiy**

| Factor | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **No. of defining variables** | 4 | 6 | 8 | 2 |
| **Average Rel. Coef.** | 0.800 | 0.800 | 0.800 | 0.800 |
| **Composite Reliability** | 0.941 | 0.960 | 0.970 | 0.880 |

## 4.3 Ethical Consideration

Ethics is generally understood as a system of moral principles (Langdridge, 2006). Dependent on the field of research and choice of method, the ethical principles are contextual (Postholm, 2010). However, there are many general ethical aspects to be considered when doing research, and as a researcher one has responsibilities. Internally in the research community the responsibility points to being transparent, meaning describing the research process in a sufficiently open and detailed manner in the report. This includes "theoretical transparency"; making explicit the theoretical stance from which the interpretation takes place, how it includes and excludes particular interpretations (Silverman, 2002). As a researcher one also has the responsibility to follow the norms for citations and acknowledgement of the sources used, and not to cause any harm towards those involved in the study directly or indirectly (NESH, 2012) - and minimize negative effects (Langdrigde, 2006). In addition to the ethical principles mentioned, the researcher has to take juridical aspects into consideration, as in this study where confidentiality is important. Confidentiality and anonymity along with informed consent are the most important ethical issues in studies of social science (Langdridge, 2006; Silverman, 2006).

In this study the participants were told beforehand, and informed by the consent form, that their information would be kept confidential and that all the information publicized would be anonymous. This means that it is not possible to recognize respondents from the information presented in the results of the study. However, I had the opportunity to trace each responder back to their sorting, in case I needed a follow-up interview. Because of this, each participant had to provide his or her name on the sorting, but all were given a fictive name for the use of this study.
Before signing the consent form, the participants received information about the following: the intention of the study, the use of confidentiality and anonymity, and

their right to withdraw from the study without explanation (appendix C). Because my study was on people, I had to report the research to the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) who approved the application (appendix D). I have been aware of the personal matter of this study all along, and I came to understand the level of self-disclosure some of my respondent felt during the study. Therefore I met and talked with each of the participants before the Q-sorting as most of them had either practical questions or concerns regarding the personal aspects of the study such as anonymity and degree of personal disclosure.

## 4.4 Role of the researcher:

As a researcher it is important to be aware of how one affects one's study and thus the results. The German sociologist Max Weber pointed out that all research is influenced to some extent by the values of the researcher (Silverman, 2006). In Q-methodology, it is not only the sorters' subjectivity that is made visible in the factors based on the Q-sorts, it is also the researchers' subjectivity in the choosing of the statements in the Q-sample. That is why one may say that the subjectivity of the researcher lies in the background and the subjectivity of the sorter in the foreground (Kvalsund & Allgood, 2010).

I am the researcher who has chosen the theme, method, research question and theory, and I have made decisions about the design, P-set and Q-sample. It is I as the researcher who makes the factor interpretations, and it is easy to understand that true objectivity in the research does not exist. It is, however, important to be aware and open about the process of the role of the researcher. I will therefore give a description of my reflections regarding some of the choices I have made throughout this Master thesis project, and looking back, what I could have done differently.

## 4.4.1 My choice of theme

As I mentioned in the introduction (chapter 1), the term forgiveness was something I got interested in after the first therapeutic sessions I shared with my fellow students, the first semester in my Masters degree. After they revealed their stories of their past, I could not help but wonder if these conflicting situations would have been erased – or at least a bit weakened – from their daily thought patterns if they had had the

opportunity to go back and forgive. They had something going on that they had not yet finished, affecting their daily lives in forms of decision-making and their sense of self, some defining themselves by the conflicts of the past. It would be a false to not reveal that this is something I have experienced myself, as I have struggled just as much with not having the opportunity to remove incidents from the past. I have said, "I forgive you", and I *have* moved on. But some events have imprinted so deeply that they are subject for a different form for forgiveness. In my mind, I have not experienced the *true* forgiveness yet. It is the size, or the level of hurt, that has decided what type of forgiveness I am depending on.

What became special about this topic is that I did not realize the relevance it had for me until I started reading theories about the theme. I could relate to them so much. However, forgiveness has a broad content, and there are so many angles to inspect, that it would not have been possible to investigate all the questions and assumptions I have related to the topic. I got to do the "basic" research, trying to find different attitudes linked to the victims, and I was actually surprised that all my participants had so much to say about the theme. Before the data gathering I underestimated the general population, as I was afraid that they were not aware, or had not reflected enough regarding the theme so that they could provide me with a genuine answer. They proved me wrong. Thankfully.

## 4.4.2 The research process from a critical point of view

As my goal was to investigate the meaning, attitudes and views from the population, I did not have to limit or adjust my P-set into a certain frame. The participants were friends and/or acquaintances of my friends. What is can be criticized is that it could have led to certain preconceptions, and I could have lost my objectivity. However, my task was to get a hold of the subjectivity, and that put me in the mind of the Q-sorter (Stephenson, 1986a, cited in Wolf, 2010). This may be an argument for having insight easier accessible when one has some forms of knowledge about the sorter. I was also afraid that my P-set could be less motivated to participate in the study, assuming that this was more of a friendly service and not having the motivation to have their view investigated. What I have discovered throughout the implementation of this study, is how the P-set has affected the result. This was a small sample of people, and by

choosing to have more or other participants the results could have turned out different. This is also relevant in terms of the post interviews, as depending on the interviewee; the amount of information one is left with may vary.

The research process went slower than I first imagined. When reviewing the process I understand now that I should have started the process of collecting both participants and data earlier. A reason for the slow process may be that I offered to be present during the sorting process to all of the participants, except the two far-distance sorters who knew in advance that they would have to do it without me. About 15 of the sorters did the sorting with me present, and the rest did it alone. During the Q-sorts where I was present, I was presented with the sorters' reflections, attitudes and questions. This gave me feedback on the theoretical frames of the study and information about the Q-sorters' view.

During the factor interpretation and especially the post interview, I have been asking myself whether I have been biased or not. I wonder if I asked questions openly enough, without using leading questions to confirm my assumptions. I did get some new information I chose to use in the interpretation – but could I have discovered more? Taking part of the study myself made it easier for me to relate to one of the factors, and this could have affected the interpretation of this factor by me adding my own subjective meaning.

During the research process I have asked myself many questions and reflected upon my work. If starting all over today, I would have read more theory from the beginning. It might be that my research question would have looked differently, or maybe I would have discovered another aspect from the victims' point of view. I also believe that if I had made statements containing more "basic" assertions, I would have had a different starting point during the interpretation. For example, I missed the opportunity to identify what forgiveness means for each factor, a clearer view of forgiveness being more or less of "I am sorry". The explained variance of this study is 64 % in the chosen factor solution shows that there are more to the subjective experiences of forgiveness that this study fails to capture

## 5. Factor Presentation

The interpretation of each factor will be presented in the following chapters. I will try to find the most important elements of attitudes and patterns defined by the participants in the factors. The follow up interview is presented in the corresponding factor presentation. The consensus statements are presented after all of the factors. The statements of large psychological significance as are presented under their respective factor in each chapter. The distinguishing statements that emerge in the tables are written in *italics*, and completely presented in appendix E. The factor arrays for each factor are illustrated in appendix F. The statements were originally in Norwegian, as in appendix A, and thereafter translated to English as in appendix G.

Out of 22 participants, 20 participants had Q-sorts loading significantly on the respective factors (appendix H), and will be presented under each of their factor. The remaining two Q-sorts who did not define any of the factors have high loadings on more than one, are said to be confounded, and as a result they fall out of the analysis (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

## 5.1 Factor 1: Forgiveness is important, but dependent on my relations

Four of the participants load significantly high on this factor (appendix H): Berit (0.4798), Siw (0.6942), Sigurd (0.6054) and Roger (0.7706). Roger is the participant that best defines the factor, indicated by having the highest factor loading in the parenthesis behind his name (Kvalsund & Allgood, 2010). The explanatory variance of this factor is 14 %. I interviewed "Roger" first, but he did not get the chance to finish the interview. I therefore had to ask "Siw" the remaining questions.

It seems that not liking conflicts or arguments is something that stands out explicitly and defines factor 2. This is ranked high in the positive side (statement 4, table 5) and mirrored by the negative side statements 36, 15 and 43 (table 6). Statement 45 is ranked high, focusing on the positive existence of *the others*. Several of the other outer ends on the plus side also connect forgiveness to close relations (statements 16, 4, 45, 1 and 41), which gives a possibility to understand that the factor also as somewhat relational. Statement 1, saying that it was their close relations that made the participants realize the importance of forgiveness, has a higher rank in factor 1 than in

any other. This strengthens the assumption of the factors' relational content, leading the interpretation towards believing that some of the most important elements in factor 1 are to have a positive attitude towards forgiveness in general (statements 16, 6 and 45) but with a relational focus for implementing it. The post interview confirmed the relational aspect. "Siw" stated that she perceives herself as dependent upon her family and has had to put many of her personal meanings as well as her feelings aside to please members of her close network. She also explained how forgiveness is dependent upon one's commitment to the act. She has to forgive with her entire self to reach an inner peace and to leave the hurt behind. As such, statement 6 can be understood as how true forgiveness takes place when choosing to forgive for one self rather than for others.

**Table 5: Statements factor 1. Plus side.**

| No. | Statement | Score |
|---|---|---|
| 16 | *It is healing to leave things behind, both for oneself and others* | +6 |
| 4 | I am not fond of conflicts and arguments with those close to me, so an excuse comes fast | +6 |
| 6 | When choosing to forgive it is because I want to, and because I've experienced feeling more whole and gaining an inner peace | +5 |
| 45 | Forgiveness is a necessary and demanding action for accepting the act and oneself, and leads to a positive existence for those around me | +5 |
| 1 | *When my close relations wanted me to forgive, I started to understand why forgiveness might be good for both them and me* | +4 |
| 21 | I have an inner drive for making things right | +4 |
| 41 | I am dependent on them close to me and I therefore make things right to feel accepted. It makes our relation more mutual and whole | +4 |

The minus side of the factor (table 6) supports the positive and meaningful attitude towards forgiveness, and undermines the desire for revenge (statements 30, 47 and 15). However, one statement turns out to have a somewhat different view. Statement 36 calls attention to itself when placed on the outer minus side, illustrating that the participants are either disagreeing in forgiving being the right thing to do, or agreeing with the assumption that revenge is our normal response – or both. Both "Siw" and "Roger" claim that forgiveness is not necessarily the right thing to do, not everyone deserves to be forgiven. It depends on both the situation as well as the person who has done you wrong. However, they do agree in revenge being our natural response, and this is affected by the size of the betrayal. For "Siw" the betrayal is experienced more

hurtful if done by a family member or a close friend. This adds up to the importance of the relational aspect of the factor. She claims that if hurt by someone familiar, the need for forgiving the person increases. She explains this as a bigger wound to heal, and it gets even worse if in addition to the hurt the relationship is weakened or lost.

**Table 6: Statements factor 1. Minus side.**

| No. | Statement | Score |
|---|---|---|
| 30 | *Forgiveness does not mean anything in everyday life* | -6 |
| 36 | *Forgiving is the right thing to do. But It's normal that we humans get most satisfaction with revenge.* | -6 |
| 47 | To forgive myself or others are meaningless | -5 |
| 15 | I would rather hurt someone the same way they hurt me than forgive | -5 |
| 2 | I rarely ask myself questions such as "why did it happened" and whether I was responsible or not | -4 |
| 34 | I'm moving on when I have retaliated for the hurt I was caused | -4 |
| 43 | Some events have printed on me, meaning even though I get advice to forgive and let go, I'm tempted to seek revenge. | -4 |

It is worth noticing that this factor does not pay much attention to how one is supposed to forgive. The participants on this factor do not define forgiveness as something that is easy or hard to pull through, but acknowledge the importance of the term. There are also some indications that this factor has previous experience with forgiving others, stated explicitly in statement 6, and implicitly in statements 16, 45 and 4 (table 5), assuming that they know how to forgive. The previous experiences, outcomes and the importance of their relations create enough reasons to understand why the factor implements forgiveness in every day life. This assumption is supported by statement 21, where the inner drive is the basis for initiate forgiveness. This initiative seems to be split between making it better for either the victim or the victim's relations, as "Siw" admits that she has occasionally forgiven on behalf of others, only to maintain relationships.

The zero area consists of knowing how to forgive (statement 39), often-experiencing conflicts in close relations (statement 32) and how forgiveness supposedly makes everything better (statement 3). It seems as if these statements do not awake strong feelings within the participants, as they are given little psychological significance.

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This may also mean that the participants found the statements confusing or two-sided. Either way, they seem not to collide with the interpretation of the factor.

## 5.2 Factor 2: Forget the past - accept today as it is

Six participants define factor 2: Sabrina (0.8769), Mari (0.7352), Peter (0.5397), Rita (0.5179), Caroline (0.7012) and Katja (0.7013). Sabrina is the one best defining this factor with a score of 0.8769. The explained variance of this factor is 17 %. "Sabrina" did not have the opportunity to give me a follow-up interview, so "Mari" and "Katja" did it instead.

It seems that factor 2 holds an attitude towards not using time dwelling on the past or wasting time wondering whether something could have been done differently. It represents a view of wanting to maintain relationships and not to be seeking conflicts, shown by the placing of statements 4 and 19 (table 7), and on the negative – statements 42, 32 (table 8). The preference for focusing on the here-and-now is emphasized by statements 12 and 31. However, the factor holds an experience, or a view of normalcy, related to the feeling of shame when not being able to forgive, illustrated in the ranking of statement 13. "Mari" explains the shame as more of a bad memory of the event, something she thinks about if she has not gotten over it. She explains that forgiving is rather forgetting, as she rarely has intentions to forgive someone who has betrayed her. However, when I asked "Mari" if she still remembers the hurt then, she admits that it is still in her memory.

**Table 7: statements factor 2. Plus side.**

| No. | Statement | Score |
|-----|-----------|-------|
| 4 | I am not fond of conflicts and arguments with those close to me, so an excuse comes fast | +6 |
| 12 | *Even though you're regretting something, you can accept the situation. There is little point in making something extra of it* | +6 |
| 13 | Its only human to feel ashamed if one hasn't been able to forgive | +5 |
| 31 | *You're not supposed to ask questions such as "why" and "what if" related to happenings in the past* | +5 |
| 19 | *My relations are important to me. That's why it is easier to turn the other cheek when being in confrontations or disagreements.* | +4 |
| 36 | *Forgiving is the right thing to do. But it's normal that we humans get most satisfaction with revenge.* | +4 |
| 8 | To forgive is easier said than done | +4 |
| 27 | *I am still thinking about an event I have forgiven, but I cant seem to forget* | +3 |

The factor agrees about forgiving being the right thing to do, but it is not as easy as one might think. The only statement illustrating a righteous need for forgiveness is statement 21; the other statements (statements 4 and 19) have used other words than "forgive" or "forgiveness". The statements on the positive side containing high psychological significance do not include either of the terms. Neither on the negative side do the statements combine forgiveness with something that the participants of factor two *do.* They may *believe* in forgiveness, but whether they actually make use of it is, according to the sorts, doubtful.

The placing of statement 4 on +6 (table 7) makes it easy to believe that experiencing conflicts with close relations makes them forgive faster than when it comes to forgiving persons not significantly important. When asking "Mari" this, she stated that it was easier to forgive unknown people rather than forgive the people close to her. This is directly opposite to the assumptions of the placing of statements 4 and 19 (table 7) for this factor, and her placing of these statements on +5. It makes sense in relation to her own "definition" of forgiveness: that forgiving is rather a form for forgetting. It is easier to forget hurt done by someone you don't know because there is no relation to maintain. She wants to forgive those close to her in order to maintain the relationship so she excuses them. To confirm that this was a possible solution to the discrepancy of the ranking and "Mari's" answer, "Katja" got the same question. Her answer is in accordance with the scores, stating it is easier to forgive one's close relations in opposition to unknown people, because one would want to maintain the friendship or family bond. It can be that "Mari" says it is easier to forgive unknown people because they don't mean anything to her, and she is not risking anything. Or, if forgiveness is rather forgetting to her, it will be easier to forget strangers. However, the motivation for forgiving strangers or close relations can be either easier or harder depending upon how one is viewing it. Either way, for factor 2, relations make a difference when choosing to forgive, where the negative side contributes to supplementing and mirroring the positive illustrated by the last sentence in 42 and 32 mirrors 4 and 19 on the positive side.

**Table 8: Statements factor 2. Minus side.**

| No. | Statement | Score |
|-----|-----------|-------|
| 10 | *It feels bitter when an event doesn't seem to let go. I can't move further in the relationship before I have had my revenge.* | -6 |
| 47 | Forgiving others or myself is meaningless. I don't believe in it. | -6 |
| 2 | I rarely ask myself questions such as "why did it happened" and whether I was responsible or not | -5 |
| 28 | I find it easy to forgive others or myself | -5 |
| 23 | *To be able to function optimally in everyday life I owe it to my relations to try to forgive the hurt I experienced* | -4 |
| 30 | Forgiveness does not mean anything in everyday life | -4 |
| 42 | Close relations tells me the importance of forgiving, to be able to move on. But I don't see the point | -4 |

Statement 2, table 8, is given high negative psychological significance, colliding with the scores on the positive side (statements 12, 31 and 36). This illustrates how the normative, what one should do, is not easy to implement in daily life. The factor wants to not ask such questions, but it doesn't live up to the "ideal", and asks them anyway. Even though it does not seem as the factor is left with bitterness, feels the need for revenge or feels that they should forgive (statements 10, 23), they do not actively make use of forgiveness. It looks like forgiveness does mean *something,* but it seems like they do not implement it in their own lives; they do not own it. It becomes another normative aspect of the factor.

The area of less psychological significance, the zero area, represents statements such as acceptance of oneself and choosing to forgive regardless of others (statements 5 and 6), the effect of one's relations (statements 1 and 18) and how one is not able to turn negatives into positives (statement 22).

## 5.3 Factor 3: Integrated forgiveness in life

Eight participants define factor 3: Sander (0.7131), Andreas (0.6628), Cathrin (0.6505), Martin (0.7994), Jenny, (0.7497), Eric (0.6314), Siri (0.7827) and Kristin (0.6654). Martin is the one with the highest factor loading. The explained variance of this factor is 24 %.

It is clear that this factor represents an attitude where forgiving is highly valued. It is also a natural part of being human, illustrated in the ranking of statement 26 (table 9), and the participants have an inner drive, experience with and knowledge about, how to forgive (statements 21, 39, 6, 16 and 25). It seems like there's not only a shallow expression of wanting to make things right, but rather a principle the individuals are living by. The post interview confirmed this suspicion. "Martin" states that forgiveness is a necessity in life, as this is the tool to put hurtful events behind and makes one able to look forward. He has positive experience with forgiving others and being forgiven himself, and explains that is why he knows how to forgive (statement 39) as he has had practice (statement 6). Today, he feels comfortable when taking the initiative to forgive.

**Table 9: Statements factor 3. Plus side.**

| No. | Statement | Score |
|---|---|---|
| 26 | *Its human nature to experience hurt and betrayal. By forgiving you accept the wholeness and balance between good and bad* | +6 |
| 21 | *I have an inner drive for making things right* | +6 |
| 39 | *I know how to forgive* | +5 |
| 6 | When choosing to forgive it is because I want to, and because I've experienced feeling more whole and gaining an inner peace | +5 |
| 16 | It is healing to leave things behind, both for others and oneself | +4 |
| 25 | No matter how much or little I care about those betraying me I have to forgive to let go of the hurt and make peace | +4 |
| 41 | I am depending upon the people around me and I therefore make things right to feel accepted. It makes our relation more mutual and whole | +4 |

The highly negative ranking of the statements 47, 29, 15, 30 and 34 (table 10) illustrates the content of meaning provided by forgiveness, and also a disagreeing attitude towards revenge and payback. However, the ranking of statement 36 illustrates a certain understanding of payback as a normal response. The post interview confirmed this as "Martin" sympathizes with those who do not see the value of forgiving others, as he thinks the reason is that they have not had any positive experience in their past. On rare occasions he thinks about revenge, but he has never felt the genuine want to hurt someone back.

**Table 10: Statements factor 3. Minus side.**

| No. | Statement | Score |
|---|---|---|
| 32 | I often experience conflict in close relations. I've gotten used to it, it is no point changing it today | -6 |
| 47 | To forgive myself or others are meaningless | -6 |
| 29 | *I really want to be able to forgive, but I just cant do it* | -5 |
| 15 | I would rather hurt someone the same way they hurt me than forgive | -5 |
| 30 | *Forgiveness does not mean anything in everyday life* | -4 |
| 34 | I am moving on with my life when paying back for the harm done to me | -4 |
| 37 | I get to hear that without fixing what's hurtful I will not be able to move on. But that is just stupid theory. | -4 |

The participants of factor 3 do not agree about often experiencing conflicts in close relations (statement 32, table 10). When I asked "Martin" about conflicts he answered that he has never had to go through a conflict with his family that he would describe as crucial or life changing.

The zero area contains statements related to putting forgiveness into action (statement 8) and regarding whether one should ask questions related to the past (statement 31). It also includes relational aspects (statements 1 and 19). When finding it easy to forgive, these statements are not ranked as having much importance when seen in relation to the other statements, and correspond with the other results.

## 5.4 Factor 4: Wanting to forgive, but not knowing how

Factor 4 is the factor having the smallest correlation between any of the other factors. Only two participants load significantly high on this factor (appendix H), and nine participants have a negative loading. This means that there is a narrow but specific attitude shared among at least two of the participants, "Camilla" (0.8532) and "Iver" (0.4135), but it could mean the view is characteristic also for others. The explained variance of this factor is 9 %.

The important elements in this factor seem to be the righteous importance of forgiveness, and the difficulties in accomplishing it. Statements 36 and 40 illustrate that there is an underlying desire to be able to forgive and let go, as this is both a holistic and human nature (table 11). What is prominent about this factor is that this is

the factor best expressing the revenge-seeking attitude, that this is a natural response (statement 36) and that in not forgiving one's mind is on payback (statement 3 and 43). The ranking of statements 10 and 20 illustrates a clear view of being stuck in the bitterness or the revenge-seeking mindset, as a result of not having been able to forgive. This is, at the same time, seen as a step towards a more positive existence (statements 40 and 3), implying that the factor has an understanding of the benefits of forgiveness.

**Table 11: Statements factor 4. Plus side**

| No. | Statement | Score |
|---|---|---|
| 36 | *Forgiving is the right thing to do. But It's normal that we humans get most satisfaction with revenge.* | +6 |
| 8 | To forgive is easier said than done | +6 |
| 3 | Everyday wisdom states that by forgiving everything gets better. Then you wont feel the want for revenge. | +5 |
| 43 | Some events have printed on me, meaning even though I get advice to forgive and let go, I'm tempted to seek revenge. | +5 |
| 10 | *It feels bitter when an event doesn't seem to let go. I can't move further in the relationship before I have had my revenge.* | +4 |
| 40 | *If the humans more often say sorry to themselves and others it will lead to more opportunities and fulfillment in life* | +4 |
| 20 | *I often feel the bitterness remaining from the hurt, and I wish I was able to forgive and move on* | +4 |
| 38 | *I have an inner drive for forgiving, but even though I would like to own it, I cant seem to put it into action* | +3 |

"Camilla" confirmed these assumptions, and explains that she is left with a feeling of helplessness after an incident, which turned her life around and is now defining her future. Her problem is that she does not know the perpetrator, which means that she must find a different and inner form of forgiving. She agrees with statement 8, but states that this does not mean that forgiving is an unnecessary act; it is only hard to go through with. This is supplemented by statements 36 (+6) and 38 (+3) implying that the problem is not the attitude towards forgiving, which is rather positive, but the difficulty in putting theory into practice. This is further supported by the ranking of the statements in the outer negative ends (table 12), where the process of forgiving is neither experienced being easy nor understandable (statements 2 and 39).

**Table 12: Statements factor 4. Minus side**

| No. | Statement | Score |
|---|---|---|
| 28 | I find it easy to forgive others or myself | -6 |
| 32 | I often experience conflicts in close relations. I've gotten used to it, it is no point changing it today | -6 |
| 39 | *I know how to forgive* | -5 |
| 48 | There's no meaning in anything except what wee see | -5 |
| 18 | I can forgive my friends for something they've done, but mostly because *they* want to be forgiven. It doesn't matter for me. | -4 |
| 22 | Its rather rare that I get something hurtful to turn out to something good | -4 |
| 26 | *Its human nature to experience hurt and betrayal. By forgiving you accept the wholeness and balance between good and bad* | -4 |

The negative mirrors the positive placement of the statements, and indicates a personal desire for forgiveness. It is not something that is dependent on relations or even religion, as the relational statements have low psychological significance.

All the statements in the area with low psychological significance have double meaning; they are built up with either one or two sentences presenting conflicting views. This may be the reason for the ranking, as the factor agrees in one part of the statement and not the other, making it difficult to give them high or low meaning. There seems to be no obvious pattern between the placing of these statements. These are statements 34, 35, 17, 7 and 42.

## 5.5 Distinctions and similarities

Low correlations between the four factors means they represent relatively differing views. This results in few consensus statements where the placement of statements is not significantly different between factors. Four statements were listed as consensus statements, and Table 13 presents the statements and their placing in each factor.

**Table 13: Consensus statements**

| No | Statements | Factor1 | Factor2 | Factor3 | Factor4 |
|----|------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 2 | I rarely ask myself questions such as "why did it happened" and whether I was responsible or not | -4 | -5 | -3 | -3 |
| 9 | When having forgiven someone it rarely has turned out positive. | -3 | -2 | -2 | -1 |
| 17 | Forgiveness is not a word I see the use of, neither in theory or in practice | -3 | -1 | -1 | 0 |
| 40 | If the humans more often say sorry to themselves and others it will lead to more opportunities and fulfillment in life | 2 | 2 | 2 | 4 |

The placing of statement 9 and 17 implicates that none of the factors experience that forgiveness is a word or an act without meaning. Statement 17 has a low psychological significance, but illustrates some of the differing views between factor 1 and 4. According to the placing of statement 40, all the four factors are agreeing that the use of excuses will result in something positive, factor 4 slightly more convinced. They are also agreeing about being unlike statement 2, not having a preference for looking back on the past.

## 6. Discussion

This chapter will in the following sections discuss the content of the different factors. The sections are divided into themes seeming relevant for the interpretations, and are connected to either previously presented theory or suggestions of new theory.

## 6.1 Attitude towards forgiveness

Factor 1 and 3 share about half the meaning and attitudes according to the correlation matrix (table 3). It seems as they hold the same attitude related to forgiving others as important. Forgiving is characterized by factor 1 as a necessary act, both for oneself and for others. It is important to forgive close relations to maintain relationships and to continue to strengthen the bonds. However, forgiving is not always the right thing to do. The post interview confirmed that some things are not forgivable, and both the post interviewees linked this to situations that the victim could not relate to personally. In other words, things that are not as right to forgive apply to situations or persons unfamiliar or distanced to the victim. This means the initiative is limited by having a relational focus, which gives them a more narrow view in contrast to factor 3. Factor 3 forgives regardless of both the person(s) involved and the situation, as this is a non-discussable solution. Factor 3 has a more holistic approach to forgiveness, as this is an accepted basic element in being human as there is natural to experience hurt. This is a view factor 3 shares with the fourth factor. Factor 4 has a drive for forgiving, but it seems difficult to put into action, as they don't know how to forgive. Forgiveness is however, meaningful, and works as a tool allowing one to let go of the hurt and move on. But in contrast to factor 3, factor 4 needs help to initiate the process of forgiving, even though the participants of this factor are aware of both the situation and the solution. It seems, as they are lost without finding their way out of the stagnation.

Factor 2 does also disagree in finding forgiving to be easy. The factor thinks of forgiveness as important and necessary, but what's noticeable is that no statements ranked on the positive side containing the word "forgiving" (table 7). This may indicate certain unfamiliarity with the meaning content, or a distanced attitude towards forgiveness. What is also interesting in this factor is that it has a normative view of how things are supposed to be, but there are difficulties implementing the

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theory into practice. This leads factor 2 to finding forgiveness meaningful and important, but not put into action. The difficulties of implementing the process of forgiving is an experience factor 2 shares with factor 4, which has the same perception of forgiveness as the other factors. They hold a strong want to forgive, as this is a normal and an important aspect of being human, but they don't know how to do it. The following sections will deepen the reasons for each factor's attitude and experience of forgiveness.

## 6.1.1 Previous experience leads to continuously forgiveness

Factor 1 makes the choice to forgive as it is viewed as something contributing to developing and maintain relations. This statement is based on the previously experience of forgiving that has brought positive results. Factor 3 has similarities to factor 1, as the previous experience with forgiveness makes the factor continue to forgive, and the more they have forgiven the easier it is to initiate it next time. Referring to previous theory Seligman (2002) states that having positive experiences with forgiving others makes it easier to forgive the next time. This implies that participants loading on this factor will continue to forgive in the future. How they started to forgive and got experience to develop such a positive view on forgiveness may either be "inherited" from their family or learned in the later years of adolescence. If having grown up with parents who showed good will and took initiative to forgive others, it seems logical that this has a transferrable effect. It is also a possibility that having experienced a traumatic event forces the individual to forgive someone or something to be able to accept and continue to live on – where a positive result will function as an eye-opener for the benefits of forgiveness.

The presentation of factor 4 makes it is obvious that this factor wants to be able to forgive and move on. It has an understanding of forgiveness as something meaningful, and has previous experience with transforming negative to something positive. But in this situation it seems as there is something preventing the factor from forgiving, as it seems as the factor stagnates and does not know what to do. The factor is missing the experience, and thereby the tools, necessary to be able to forgive, not knowing how to start the process. Referring to Seligman (2002), lack of experience may be the reason that forgiveness is hard to initiate. The post interviewee defends

her bitterness by illustrating the crucial life change she had to go through, which has been inflicted on her by someone she has never met. How to start an unfamiliar process with forgiveness, seems difficult for those not having tried it earlier. It may also seem unfair to use time and energy on such process, being a victim for no obvious reason. The question is whether it is best to feel stuck in the bitterness with nowhere to address the problem, or spend time to accept the situation and move on.

### 6.1.2 Bitterness leads to stagnation

Factor 3 and 1 shares not only much of the same view of forgiveness, but also much of the same negative view on revenge. These two factors do not feel the necessity of revenge. But factor 1 and factor 4 have little in common according to the correlation matrix (table 3), well illustrated by statement number 36, ranked -6 in factor 1 and +6 in factor 4. The desire for revenge is far more prominent for factor 4 than any of the other factors. It has the clearest view of revenge being a natural response, and how failing to forgive prevents one from moving on. When the sense of injustice is violated the normal response is to become angry and feel unfairly treated. It is not possible to live as if the harm did not happen, and one screams for justice (Chapman & Thomas, 2007). This thought of revenge being a normal response is prominent for factor 4, and gives the best understanding of the feeling of bitterness - but also helplessness, as they *want* to be able to move on. Stagnated, is a word one can use to describe factor 4, as it is still stuck in the betrayal, not able to rewrite the past (Seligman, 2002). This rewriting may be seen a parallel to fulfilling the Gestalt. There is either rewriting left to do, or some parts left to fix to make the gestalt complete (Harris, 2007), but without having it done the bitterness stay intact. The bitterness may also be relevant in relation to factor 2. The factor does not seem to make use of forgiveness, as they do not feel the need for looking back. However, the post interview implies that the events are still in their memories; making it to seem logical that there are also negative emotions involved. It is however not as explicit expressed as in factor 4.

### 6.2 The importance of relations

The importance of relations is most prominent in the first factor. Even though every human has family, friends and other close persons in their life, balancing the

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relationship through experiences of good and bad is not easy. Joseph and Linley (2006) state that relations are important, and research supports that forgiving leads to facilitating the restoration of relationship closeness (APA, 2006). This may seem as a motivational factor for the participants of factor 1, whereas the reason for maintaining their close relationships lies in their own safety. Karen (2001) refers to research that shows how human beings are being defined as either secure or insecure. He adds that one is not one or the other – but capable to so much more. One can feel safe with our spouse, children or friends. Working from an area described as safe is making the ability to endure and to forgive accessible. When having this connection to the inner us, forgiveness are practicable, as there is a basic friendliness and generosity. This makes it easier to listen to and be more accessible for regrets or compassion, and may be an explanation to where the motivation lies for directing the forgiveness towards relations for factor 1.

Through looking at how factor 1 views forgiveness in the context of relationships, basing his/her choices on the collective benefit, makes it possible to link the factor up to earlier presented theory explaining their strong family orientation. Factor 1 feel dependent upon their close ones, and it is essential for them to maintain good and positive relations. It seems that relationships play a big role in choosing whether or not to forgive, and the post interviewee describes it as crucial to forgive those close to her. She stated that to maintain a good family bond, one has to put up with a lot, whereas forgiving is contributing to nurture the relations. This can be seen as an example of mutuality in relations in which there is symmetry and all parties acknowledge that the relation is wanted and necessary (Kvalsund, 2005). Factor 1 is dependent on their relations, and perceives themselves in relation to their close ones. This is a common perception. We know ourselves through our actions in the world in relation to others, where anxiety originates from lack of relations with others, the world, or ourselves or by not choose to act in our own life (Ivey et al., 2012). The risk is, however, if this symmetry becomes asymmetrical it leads to a negative balance of the relationship - and one feels pressured to forgive, afraid of being rejected or not accepted. A positive relation in contrary, illustrates a mutual recognition of the independence, given time and space to develop (Kvalsund, 2005). According to the interviewee in factor 1, risking relations by not forgiving leads to a bigger hurt than the initial one. There is something more at stake than the conflict alone when being in

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conflict with a close friend or member of the family. Maintaining relations seems to be the motivational aspect for this factor when it comes to turning the other cheek.

Factor 2 illustrates differing views, and it is possible to view it either as easier or harder to forgive those close to the participants, in contrast to those whom one is not familiar with. It can be easy to forgive one's closest because one loves them and wants to foster a good relation. The motivation to forgive those who are close is based on wanting to keep the relationship and not to threaten it by not forgiving, such as in factor 1. On the other hand, in the case of strangers, there is no threat to a non-existent relationship. Factor 2 does also present such view, stating it is easier to forgive those whom one doesn't know. It is possible to interpret the reason for this to be their non-forgivable attitude – according to the post interview they'd rather forget – and it is easier to forget people one do not associate with. However, factor 1 and 2 agrees on relations to play a role when choosing to forgive or not. But there is not a total agreement in factor 2 on what type of relations that has the bigger chance of being forgiven. In contrary, factor 3 and 4 does not give relations an important role when it comes to choosing to forgive. It is rather the individual itself that does the decision, not affected by other.

## 6.3 Positive Psychology: present and future orientation

Factor 2 has a prominent present and future orientation, not focusing on the past. This is highly relevant in the frames of positive psychology, earlier mentioned in this thesis, pointing to the importance of changing one's thoughts and patterns towards something better (Seligman, 2002; Kølpin, 2007). This means that the participants of factor 2 are occupied with not dwelling by the bad memories of the past. However, agreeing in focusing on the present and future, and at the same time agreeing in having experiences or a view related to the normalcy of feeling ashamed when one does not manage to forgive, gives an uncertainty about whether this is a method that works. Such a mixed attitude may have some practical implications that may indicate that the assumption of this being a consciously process, derived from positive psychology, is a false. It seems as the point of not looking back is a way of living for not to be reminded of the previous occurrence, which is consistent with the post interview. She stated that it is easier to forgive unknown people, but the term

forgiving is more a sense of forgetting. What she is saying implicitly is that she forgets them, but does not forgive. Kølpin (2007) puts this in the context of suppressing one's emotions. The hurt is still there, but the factor is trying to cover what happened. To live by the phrase that it is not necessary to forgive but rather easier to live on and not dwell by the negative memories – may result in doing more harm than one is aware of. Factor 2 distorts and suppresses threatening material, as its decision of not looking back but doing it anyway may indicate that it has not finished what happened in the past, and this is why it does not manage to free itself.

## 6.4 Ideal vs. real self:

On the positive side, factor 2 believes that one "should" (normative) not ask questions, but on the negative the factor acknowledges that it does it anyway, pointing to the difficulties in forgiving. Whether they do not want to ask such questions because it is unnecessary or hurtful, or this is something they have been taught one cannot know. Still, this illustrates the wishes of the ideal self versus the actions of the real self. Carl Rogers believed that humans have one basic motive, the tendency to self-actualize. With this he meant people want to fulfill their potential. For a person to achieve self-actualization he or she must be in a state of congruence, leaving self-actualization to occur when a person's "ideal self" (i.e. who they would like to be) is congruent with their actual behavior (McLeod, 2007). It has to be closeness between "real" and "ideal self", and it gives low self-esteem when one tries to be, or feel they "should", be different. One becomes paralyzed, unable to act, when not being agent of ones own life. It is the most fundamental concept for existentialism, to act on the world simultaneously as the world acts on us. If we can't act on the world, we feel alienated (Ivey et al., 2012). This is also relevant for factor 4. It does not know how to forgive, even though it holds a strong drive, making a gap between what they should and what they don't. In addition to the bitterness and anger these two factors possess, they will sense alienation, not knowing how to fix the gap (factor 4 knows what but not how), or knowing what to do (factor 2 knows what but has a lower interest in pulling it through). And as a result, they're stuck in stagnation.

## 6.5 Spiritual Intelligence:

As earlier presented in the theory chapter of the thesis, holding a high SQ is assumed to be a determining factor for using forgiveness benefiting both one self and the surroundings. Such people are more likely to face their suffering and they are able to transcend the pain from hurt to acceptance (Zohar & Marshall, 2001). The holistic view of life, the inner drive for forgiveness and the non-revenge attitude contributes to understanding the participants of factor 3 as individuals holding a high SQ. It is not said where the SQ originates from, whether it is subject to heredity and/or environment, or if it is a result of having experienced hurt and learned that forgiveness is way of survival. It is tempting to think that not everyone reaches this level of understanding of the balance of good and bad as those holding a high SQ, represented by factor 3. When not having the tools helping to understand or pulling through the process of forgiving and letting go of hurt (such as experience or inherited knowledge), one might stagnate in the pain not knowing what to do. It seems as this factor holds such tools, confirmed by the post interview stating that the more one forgive, the easier it gets. The tools seem easier accessible. Factor 1 also contains such tools, as it knows the path of forgiveness, and finds it easy to initiate. However, factor 1 holds a different motivational aspect, the relational attitude, questioning whether the SQ is as high as compared to factor 3 which find forgiveness itself as motivational and reasonable.

Even though factor 4 is characterized by being stuck with bitterness, there is a clear desire to be able to forgive. The factor holds a belief of forgiveness being the solution and a way out of the misery. This indicates that there are features of having a higher sense of understanding of one's situation, and one's possibilities. The participants loading on factor 4 realize that there is a way out of the mud (Zohar & Marshall, 2001), which may seem as an argument for having a somewhat high SQ. They have also previously experience with transcendence of pain, adding up to this argument. Factor 2 acknowledges the importance, but yet, they do not make use of it. Essential questions that describe having a high SQ written earlier in the thesis is something the factor wishes to ignore and forget. This points to the fact that factor 2 does not reach up to factor 4.

## 6.6 Personal Development:

The factor that has the bigger chance for acceptance and thus personal development may be said to be factor 3. The factor forgives in order to move on, regardless of what is said or done. This implies a growth as they experience and learn about themselves and others in every conflict, meeting the other with a purpose of the best possible outcome. The factor has learned a road out of the hurt, being easier to walk for each time walked. This results in continuously initiating forgiveness, without stagnating in bitterness. Factor 4 has not found the road towards forgiveness, which prevents it from moving on. The factor lacks experience, and does not manage to forgive. This factor gives the best understanding of the feeling of bitterness and helplessness. It is an example of having a violated sense of justice, responding with feeling angry and unfairly treated. It is not possible to live as if the harm did not happen, and one uses the time to scream for justice (Chapman & Thomas, 2007) – until it feels the urge for letting go. But participants will not be able to develop new experiences until they have attempted a first try. However, it may be important to assume that their strong beliefs and wishes – their high SQ – can contribute to develop possible solutions and preparing mentally to forgive and finally, move on.

Factor 2 does not want to dwell by the past. But when ignoring instead of forgiving, it seems hard not to look back. This indicates possible obstacles when it comes to use forgiveness as a possibility for development, as the hurt is not worked through well enough. They might have to go back, to accept what's there, in order to be able to look forward. Factor 1 has a limited view on who deserves forgiveness. This seems to be narrowing the factors' possibilities for development, as it prevents expansion of the understanding and/or reflection of the society. The participants only see what is closest to them, and do not pay attention to what is around. In addition, as Baasland (2009) underlined, it is important that forgiving is voluntary for it to feel genuine and real, something the participants recognizes. They sense it differently when forgiveness comes from the inner them. But they often don't forgive for themselves, rather the contrary. It seems important that the participants of factor 1 recognizes whether they are forgiving on behalf of themselves or other, and act on their wishes or not. It is for their advantage that they develop to become more independent, not

dependent of their relations when it comes to disagreements, but dare to stand in the conflict and trust themselves for what they think is right.

## 6.6.1 The meeting between client and counselor:

Working with recognition of feelings is important, as feelings are closely related to different life situations. If suppressing ones emotions, like factor 2, it will tear the individual both physical an emotional (Kølpin, 2010), and he or she will be more concerned with what one "should" be feeling (Grendstad, 2010). When such feeling is not acknowledged, they become alienated, and it is harder to act. Factor 4 acknowledge the emotions, but does not know how to solve the problem. They're left with the bitterness, without the opportunity to let go. Bitterness and blame are negative emotions, differing in size and character. Such feelings have large effect of spread, and this is where forgiveness comes in as a solution when meeting clients. As Fritz Perls writes about in relation to Gestalt Therapy: we are bound by the events of the past, which we can release ourselves from if we forgive (Grendstad, 2010, p. 69. my translation).

However, to forgive is not a fast and easy decision, and it will not change the actual event. But there will be a certain freedom from the bitterness and the blame. It is when these feelings are acknowledged that one has the opportunity to act: the conscious attempt to improve oneself in relation to the wrongdoer. What seems important in the meeting with a client is that the counselor is aware of the impact unfinished business may have on life. Illustrated by factor 3, having learned from previous experiences makes the factor more prepared for the next round, and this is something the counselor could adapt. Knowing how to forgive will make it easier to be aware of the phenomenon, it's tools, it's benefits, and it's complexities. This corresponds to Kvalsund (2005) who states that one has to learn through reflections from and around experiences, to bring these into the helping relation. Forgiveness means different things for different persons (Harris, 2007), and in a counselor and client relationship this may seem important to identify. The client's previous experience, and view on forgiveness can play a role in how the client experiences his/her temporarily situation, and affect how he/she views the possibilities in the future. These possibilities seem important as there are indications of forgiving being

essential in building and establishing any close relations as people inevitably hurt each other whether or not they mean to.

## 7. Conclusion

The factor presentation shows that all the four factors are sharing a belief of forgiveness as something positive and meaningful. There is a common perception that forgiving is present in the lives of human beings, but the differences lies in when to make use of it and to whom – if one knows the steps. The research question wanted to investigate the subjective experiences and attitudes related to forgiveness and it also wanted to see whether or not forgiveness leads to development. In being open to forgiving others regardless of who or what, one has accepted the holistic nature of life and it seems that it is easier to accept the hurt and to do something about it. When letting go, one is rewriting the past and closing the gestalt. One has accepted the hurt, forgiven the situation, and started the process with moving on. Development has taken place, and one has transcended the pain to something one can live with. In contrast, when trying to forget rather then forgive, or not managing to initiate or complete the process, one is stuck in either bad memories or in bitterness.

By raising awareness on how forgiveness can be used as a tool to start a process leading to acceptance can be relevant to personal development. However, the obvious difficulties with full forgiveness, implies that this is not an easy lesson. Regardless, one must as a counselor know that the will contains a huge power, and that forgiveness is absolutely relevant also in the secular world, as stated by Arendt (1998). In terms of positive psychology one has to ask oneself: what is *my* responsibility, and what can *I* do?

When it comes to myself, after conduction this research, I have understood that forgiveness is an art, not available for everyone. One has to know it is there, and learn how to use it. When that is done, one is left with works of art for the rest of one's life.

## 7.1 Further research

Being a broad and complex theme, it would not have been possible to reveal all the angles of the theme I find interesting. There are different aspects presented in the study, some broader and clearer than others. It would have been interesting to conduct the same research again, but with edited statements. However, it is practical to keep in

mind that the person who did the sorting may not feel the same way today, even though they has presented a view that exists.

It would also have been intriguing to do deeper research on how it experiences to be left with bitterness and anger, and how it affects the life of the individual. It would also have been interesting to follow victims through their participation of a so-called forgiveness program, such as the REACH program (Seligman, 2002), and map their experiences. There seems do be differences in the initiation of forgiveness, and it would be interesting to know what or who is the initiating factor.

Another aspect that could be rewarding is to investigate a client and a counselor relationship, and notice whether forgiveness plays a part either explicitly or implicitly within the client. There are many angels to look at in the helping relation, and it would have been one idea to look at the congruence between the real and ideal, and whether this means one has a bigger chance to forgive or not.

Either way, forgiveness seems relevant in both the personal and the professional setting. If not having reflected upon, and having awareness related to this phenomenon, either one is the wrongdoer, the victim, or both – there is so much yet to discover. It will be exiting to follow the further investigations.

## 8. References

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# 9. Appendices

**9.1 Appendix A:** Design and statements. The statements were given in Norwegian and translated in the writings of this thesis.

| Effect | Level | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Purpose/Intention** | (a) Personal | (b) Impersonal | (c) Relational |
| **Experience** | (d) (Self) acceptance | (e) Bitterness | |
| **SQ** | (f) High | (g) Low | |

**Statements according to cell combinations:**

### ADF:

6  Når jeg velger å tilgi er det fordi jeg selv ønsker det, og fordi jeg har erfart at jeg føler meg mer hel og opplever fred i meg selv

21  Jeg har en indre medfølende driv etter å rette opp i ting som er ugjort.

28  Jeg synes det er enkelt å tilgi meg selv eller andre.

39  Jeg vet hvordan jeg tilgir.

### AEG:

9  Når jeg har tilgitt (noen eller noe) har det sjelden gitt et positivt utfall.

15  Jeg vil heller gi igjen med samme mynt enn å tilgi.

44  Jeg synes det er vanskelig å se sammenhengen ved tilgivelse for å komme seg videre.

47  Å tilgi meg selv eller andre er meningsløst; jeg har ingen tro på det.

### AEF:

29  Jeg ønsker virkelig å være i stand til å tilgi, men jeg får det ikke til.

20  Jeg kjenner ofte på bitterheten som sitter igjen fra det vonde jeg ble påført, og skulle ønske at jeg klarte å tilgi og gå videre.

27  Jeg tenker enda på en hendelse jeg har tilgitt men ikke klarer å glemme.

38  Inni meg finnes det et medfølende driv etter å tilgi, men til tross for at jeg ville ta ansvar for det, greier ikke å handle ut fra det.

### BDF:

46  Jeg blir fortalt at det å tilgi er "det rette å gjøre" og at vi mennesker opplever stor fred ved å gjøre det.

14  Det sies at tilgivelse snur smerten til noe mye bedre.

40  Hvis menneskene oftere sier unnskyld til seg selv og hverandre vil det føre til større muligheter og oppfyllelse i livet.

26  Det ligger i menneskets natur at man også opplever vonde ting. Ved å tilgi aksepterer man denne helhetlige balansen mellom godt og vondt.

**BEG:**

37  Jeg får høre at uten å ordne opp i det som er vondt vil jeg ikke komme videre. Men det er bare dum teori.

30  Tilgivelse har ikke noen betydning for hverdagen

3  Hverdags visdom sier at ved å tilgi så blir alt bedre. Da slipper man kjenne på lysten av hevn.

13  Det er menneskelig å kjenne på en skam hvis man enda ikke har klart å glemme

**CDF:**

4  Jeg er ikke glad i uoverensstemmelser og konflikter med mennesker jeg er glad i, og en unnskyldning kommer derfor etter kort tid.

19  Mine relasjoner er viktige for meg, derfor er det lettere å "snu det andre kinnet til" ved konfrontasjoner og uenighet

25  Uansett om jeg bryr meg lite eller mye om de som gjør meg vondt, må jeg kunne tilgi for å la det vonde slippe taket og å komme til fred.

41  Jeg er avhengig av menneskene rundt meg, og sørger derfor for å ordne opp i konflikter slik at jeg kan føle aksept fra dem. Det gjør vår relasjon mer helhetlig og gjensidig

**BDG:**

12  Selv om man angrer på noe man har gjort eller ikke har gjort, kan man likevel akseptere situasjonen. Da er det lite hensikt i å gjøre mye ekstra ut av det.

48  Det finnes ikke mening i annet enn det vi ser rundt oss.

31  Man skal ikke stille ofte spørsmål som "hvorfor" og "hva om" relatert til hendelser i fortiden.

36  Det "rette" er å tilgi. Men det er vanlig at vi mennesker føler mest tilfredsstillelse dersom noen som har gjort meg vondt får igjen med samme mynt.

**CDG:**

5  Jeg godtar meg selv uavhengig av hva de rundt meg mener.

42  Nære relasjoner forteller meg hvor viktig det er å tilgi, slik at man klarer å komme seg videre. Men jeg ser ikke meningen med det.

18  Jeg kan tilgi vennene mine for noe de har gjort, men det er mest for at *de* ønsker det. Det spiller ikke så stor rolle for meg.

11 Jeg har sjelden behov for å snakke med relasjoner om å tilgi eller å gi slipp på noe.

**CEG:**

24  Jeg kan tilgi en venn for å ha gjort meg vondt kun for å beholde vennskapet men helt ærlig sitter jeg fremdeles med bitterhet.

32  Jeg opplever ofte konflikter i nære relasjoner. Jeg har blitt så vant med at de er der at det hjelper ikke å endre på det nå.

II

10 Det oppleves litt bittert når en hendelse ikke slipper taket. Jeg kommer meg liksom ikke videre i forholdt før jeg får gitt igjen.

35 Det får så være at jeg har såret meg selv. Ingen kan gjøre noe med det.

**BEF:**

7 Å tilgi skulle være det beste for mennesker sier alle visdomsord, dessverre ofte fungerte det ikke.

43 Noen hendelser sitter så godt at selv om  man blir rådet til å tilgi for å gi slipp heller enn å søke hevn så frister det siste alternativet mest.

8  Å tilgi er lettere sagt enn gjort.

33 Selv om tilgivelsen fant sted så slapp ikke smerten.

**CEF:**

23 For å fungere optimalt i hverdagen skylder jeg mine relasjoner å prøve å forsøke å tilgi det vonde som har skjedd meg.

1 Det var etter ønske fra mine nære relasjoner at jeg begynte å forstå hvorfor tilgivelse kunne være bra for både meg og dem.

16 Det er helbredende å legge ting bak seg, både for en selv og for andre.

45 Tilgivelse er et nødvendig og krevende tiltak for å akseptere hendelsen og seg selv, og det fører til en positiv tilværelse for de rundt meg.

**ADG:**

34 Jeg går videre med livet mitt når jeg får gitt igjen for det vonde jeg ble påført

17 Tilgivelse er ikke et ord jeg har behov for å benytte meg mye av, verken i teorien eller i praksis

22 Det er heller sjelden at jeg får noe som er vondt til å bli snudd til noe godt

2  Jeg stiller meg sjelden spørsmål som "hvorfor skjedde dette" og om det var mitt ansvar eller ikke

## 9.2 Appendix B: Q-instructions
### *Q-sortering: Struktur for gjennomføring.*

Under hele sorteringen ber jeg deg om å tenke på en situasjon hvor du har vært borti fenomenet tilgivelse, eller en situasjon du er oppi i dag - som påvirker ditt syn på det å tilgi. Opplevelsen kan være god eller vond. Svar så ærlig som mulig under sorteringen.

Du har nå utsagn nummerert fra 1 til 48 (i strimler) som skal plasseres i en matrise med 48 ruter på en skala fra +6 til -6. *Det skal KUN plasseres ETT utsagn i hver rute!*

**1.** Les først gjennom utsagnene (strimlene) for å få en oversikt over innholdet.

**2.** Del så utsagnene i 3 noenlunde like grupperinger som samsvarer med de betingelser som ligger i instruksjonen under:
>    **Gruppe a)** utsagnene som beskriver deg eller du er enig i (til høyre)
>    **Gruppe b)** utsagnene som ikke beskriver deg/du er uenig i (til venstre)
>    **Gruppe c)** utsagnene som er mer nøytrale, som ikke gir så mye
>    mening, virker tvetydige, tvilsomme, uklare eller motsigende (i mellom)

**3.** Du skal nå gjøre mer detaljerte fordelinger og velge ut tallverdier til hvert utsagn fra en skala på +6 til -6

**4.** Først, ta frem alle utsagnene i **gruppe a (**de som er lik deg) - les så gjennom dem igjen og velg ut to utsagn som er mest lik deg. Plasser utsagnene lengst til høyre, i de to rubrikkene under +6.

**5.** Deretter gjør det samme med **gruppe b** (de utsagnene som er mest ulik deg) og plasser deretter de to utsagnene som er mest ulik deg lengst til venstre, i rubrikkene under -6.

**6.** Gå så tilbake til de utsagnene som er *mest lik* deg (**gruppe a**) og velg nå 3 som fortsatt er svært lik deg og plasser dem i +5, ved siden av utsagnene i +6.

**7.** Gjør nå det samme for **gruppe b**: velg 3 utsagn og plasser dem på siden av utsagnet som du plasserte lengst til venstre; i -5.

**8.** Når du kommer til +4 kolonnen, plasser 4 utsagn først under +4 så 4 under -3. Videre for +-2, +-1 og 0 rubrikkene er det de små nyansene som avgjør i hvilken kolonne du plasserer utsagnene. (se skjemaets mønster).

**9.** Når du nå har fullført fordelingen or plasseringen, se over den på nytt og avgjør om du er enig med deg selv - hvis det fortsatt er noe du er misfornøyd med, juster plasseringene slik at du blir fornøyd.

**10.** Du må plassere *alle* utsagnene i matrisen slik at det til slutt vil stå ett tall igjen i hver rubrikk. Plasser *utsagnenes nummer i rutene på matrisen* og lever dette. Lykke til!

## 9.3 Appendix C: Information letter and consent form

### *Informasjonsskriv: forespørsel om deltakelse i studie*

Denne forespørselen og informasjonen gis i forbindelse med studien jeg skal gjennomføre ved mitt avsluttende mastergradsprosjekt i rådgiving, ved Institutt for voksnes læring og rådgivingsvitenskap, NTNU, Trondheim.

Formålet med studien er å utforske de subjektive erfaringene, tankene og følelsene rundt temaet "tilgivelse", og hvordan det å tilgi seg selv eller andre kan påvirke et individs egen utviklingsprosess. For å gjøre dette ønsker jeg rundt 25 personer til å sortere ulike utsagn som representerer forskjellige tanker og holdninger rundt tilgivelse.

I den anledning ønsker jeg at du som deltaker tenker på en tidligere erfaring du har hatt i forbindelse med å tilgi, og deretter sorterer 48 utsagn på en ferdig utformet skala etter hvor enig eller uenig du er i utsagnene. Disse leveres til meg etter ferdig sortering.

**Behandling av personopplysninger og datamateriale:**

Jeg ønsker å understreke at deltakelsen er frivillig, og at du når som helst kan velge å trekke deg uten å oppgi grunn. Dersom du trekker deg vil alle innsamlede data om deg anonymiseres. Alt datamateriale som samles inn vil behandles konfidensielt og etter studien slettes (oppgaven ferdigstilles i slutten av mai 2013), mens det som brukes i oppgaven vil være anonymisert. Det vil kun være jeg som har tilgang til informasjonen som innhentes i denne studien. Personopplysninger som fremkommer vil anonymiseres også ved veiledning.

Personidentifiserende informasjon jeg samler inn i studien vil være navn. Hvis du som sorterer etter bearbeidelse av datamaterialet viser deg å være representativ, ønsker jeg å ha mulighet til å ha en samtale med deg i etterkant. Dette betyr at du kan bli kontaktet etter gjennomført sortering og bli forespurt et post-intervju. Dette vil anonymiseres i oppgaven.

**Samtykke:**

Dersom du kunne tenke deg å være med på sorteringen i denne studien, er det fint om du skriver under på vedlagte samtykkeerklæring og sender den til meg.

Har du spørsmål til selve studien eller gjennomføringen kan du kontakte meg på telefon [nummer] eller på e-post [e-post]. Min veileder ved Institutt for voksnes læring og rådgivingsvitenskap, Eleanor Allgood, vil også være tilgjengelig for spørsmål på [e-post].

Studien er meldt til Personvernforbundet for forskning; Norsk Samfunnsvitenskapelig Datatjeneste (NSD).

Med vennlig hilsen,
Iselin Evensen

**Samtykkeerklæring:**


Jeg, _____, har mottatt skriftlig og muntlig informasjon og er villig til
å delta i studien "The Art of Forgiveness"


_____
      Signatur                                                              Dato

## 9.4 Appendix D: Approval from NSD (the Norwegian Social Science Data Services)

**Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS**
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES

NSD

Harald Hårfagres gate 29
N-5007 Bergen
Norway
Tel: +47-55 58 21 17
Fax: +47-55 58 96 50
nsd@nsd.uib.no
www.nsd.uib.no
Org.nr. 985 321 884

Eleanor Allgood
Institutt for voksnes læring og rådgivningsvitenskap
NTNU
7491 TRONDHEIM

| Vår dato: 08.01.2013 | Vår ref:32310 / 3 / AMS | Deres dato: | Deres ref: |
|---|---|---|---|

### TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 04.12.2012. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

| 32310 | The Art of Forgiveness |
|---|---|
| Behandlingsansvarlig | NTNU, ved institusjonens øverste leder |
| Daglig ansvarlig | Eleanor Allgood |
| Student | Iselin Evensen |

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet, og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger vil være regulert av § 7-27 i personopplysningsforskriften. Personvernombudet tilrår at prosjektet gjennomføres.

Personvernombudets tilråding forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, eventuelle kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/meldeplikt/skjema.html. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, http://pvo.nsd.no/prosjekt.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 20.05.2013, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

Vigdis Namtvedt Kvalheim

Anne-Mette Somby

Kontaktperson: Anne-Mette Somby tlf: 55 58 24 10
Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering
Kopi: Iselin Evensen, █████████████████

Avdelingskontorer / District Offices:
OSLO: NSD. Universitetet i Oslo, Postboks 1055 Blindern, 0316 Oslo. Tel: +47-22 85 52 11. nsd@uio.no
TRONDHEIM: NSD. Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet, 7491 Trondheim. Tel: +47-73 59 19 07. kyrre.svarva@svt.ntnu.no
TROMSØ: NSD. SVF, Universitetet i Tromsø, 9037 Tromsø. Tel: +47-77 64 43 36. nsdmaa@sv.uit.no

# Personvernombudet for forskning

## Prosjektvurdering - Kommentar

Ifølge prosjektmeldingen skal det gis muntlig og skriftlig informasjon om prosjektet og behandling av personopplysninger. Personvernombudet finner informasjonsskrivet tilfredsstillende utformet i henhold til personopplysningslovens vilkår.

Grunnet prosjektets formål og problemstilling har personvernombudet tatt høyde for at det vil bli registrert sensitive personopplysninger om politisk, filosofisk eller religiøs oppfatning jf. personopplysningsloven § 2 nr. 8 a).

Innsamlede opplysninger registreres på privat pc. Personvernombudet legger til grunn at veileder og student setter seg inn i og etterfølger NTNU sine interne rutiner for datasikkerhet, spesielt med tanke på bruk av privat pc til oppbevaring av personidentifiserende data.

Prosjektet skal avsluttes 20.05.2013 og innsamlede opplysninger skal da anonymiseres. Anonymisering innebærer at direkte personidentifiserende opplysninger som navn/koblingsnøkkel slettes, og at indirekte personidentifiserende opplysninger (sammenstilling av bakgrunnsopplysninger som f.eks. yrke, alder, kjønn) fjernes eller grovkategoriseres slik at ingen enkeltpersoner kan gjenkjennes i materialet.

## 9.5 Appendix E: Distinguishing statements of all four factors

These statements are sorted distinguishing differently in the four factors, meaning they are contributing to the differences between the factors. The statements are all significantly different on the <0.05 level, and those marked with an asterix (*) are significant on the <0.01 level.

**Distinguishing statements factor 1:**

| | | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 | Factor 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 16 | Its healing to leave things behind, both for others and oneself | 6 | 3 | 4 | 1 |
| 1 | It was my close relations that made me understand why forgiveness could be good for both them and myself | 4 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 35 | So what if I hurt myself. No one can do anything about it | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 8 | To forgive is easier said than done | 3 | 4 | 0 | 6 |
| 3 | Everyday wisdom states that forgiving makes everything better. You wont feel the want for revenge | 0 | -3 | 2 | 5 |
| 32 | I'm often experiencing conflicts in close relations. I've gotten so used to them being there I can't change it now | 0* | -3 | -6 | -6 |
| 39 | I know how to forgive | 0 | 2 | 5 | -5 |
| 26 | It's in human nature to also experience bad things. By forgiving one accepts this holistic balance between good and bad | -2 | 1 | 6 | -4 |
| 30 | Forgiveness does not mean anything in everyday life | -6 | -4 | -4 | -1 |
| 36 | The right thing is to forgive. However, it is normal that humans feel most satisfaction by revenging what's done. | -6* | 4 | 1 | 6 |

**Distinguishing statements factor 2:**

| | | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 | Factor 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 12 | Even though you're regretting something, you can accept the situation. There is little point in making something extra of it | -1 | 6* | 2 | 1 |
| 31 | You're not supposed to ask "why" or "what if" related to happenings in the past | 1 | 5* | 0 | 2 |
| 19 | My relations are important to me, that's why it is easier to "turn the other cheek" when confronted | 2 | 4 | 0 | -3 |
| 36 | The right thing is to forgive. However, it is normal that humans feel most satisfaction | -6 | 4 | 1 | 6 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | by revenging what's done. | | | | |
| 27 | I'm still thinking about an event I have forgiven but not forgotten | 0 | 3* | 1 | -2 |
| 33 | Even though forgiveness happened, the pain did not go away | 1 | 3 | 0 | -1 |
| 21 | I have an inner drive to make things right | 4 | 2* | 6 | -2 |
| 39 | I know how to forgive | 0 | 2 | 5 | -5 |
| 26 | It's in human nature to also experience bad things. By forgiving one accepts this holistic balance between good and bad | -2 | 1 | 6 | -4 |
| 15 | I would choose payback rather than forgiveness | -5 | 1 | -5 | 3 |
| 5 | I accept myself regardless of what others think of me | 2 | 0 | 2 | -3 |
| 6 | When choosing to forgive it is because I want to, and because I have experienced feeling more whole and at peace | 5 | 0 | 5 | 2 |
| 29 | I really wish I was capable to forgive, but I cant do it | 2 | -2* | -5 | 2 |
| 3 | Everyday wisdom states that forgiving makes everything better. You wont feel the want for revenge | 0 | -3* | 2 | 5 |
| 14 | Its stated that forgiveness turns the pain to something better | 1 | -3* | 2 | 2 |
| 32 | I'm often experiencing conflicts in close relations. I've gotten so used to them being there I can't change it now | 0 | -3 | -6 | -6 |
| 23 | To function optimally In everyday life I owe it to my relations to try to forgive the hurt I was caused | 0 | -4* | 3 | 1 |
| 10 | I'm experiencing some bitterness when an event does not seem to let go. I don't seem to be able to move on until I have paid back for what was done | -3 | -6* | -1 | 4 |

**Distingushing statements factor 3:**

| | | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 | Factor 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 26 | It's in human nature to also experience bad things. By forgiving one accepts this holistic balance between good and bad | -2 | 1 | 6* | -4 |
| 39 | I know how to forgive | 0 | 2 | 5* | -5 |
| 36 | The right thing is to forgive. However, it is | -6 | 4 | 1 | 6 |

X

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | normal that humans feel most satisfaction by revenging what's done. | | | | |
| 8 | To forgive is easier said than done | 3 | 4 | 0* | 6 |
| 31 | You're not supposed to ask "why" or "what if" related to happenings in the past | 1 | 5 | 0 | 2 |
| 44 | I find it hard to see the correlation between forgiveness and moving on | 1 | -1 | -3 | 1 |
| 29 | I really wish I was capable to forgive, but I cant do it | 2 | -2 | -5* | 2 |

**Distinguishing statements factor 4:**

| | | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 | Factor 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 36 | The right thing is to forgive. However, it is normal that humans feel most satisfaction by revenging what's done. | -6 | 4 | 1 | 6 |
| 20 | I often fell the bitterness remaining from the hurt I was caused, and I wish I was able to forgive and move on | -2 | 1 | -2 | 4* |
| 10 | I'm experiencing some bitterness when an event does not seem to let go. I don't seem to be able to move on until I have paid back for what was done | -3 | -6 | -1 | 4* |
| 38 | I have an inner drive to forgive, but even though I would like to own it, I cant act on it | -1 | -1 | -2 | 3* |
| 15 | I would choose payback rather than forgiveness | -5 | 1 | -5 | 3 |
| 16 | Its healing to leave things behind, both for others and oneself | 6 | 3 | 4 | 1 |
| 34 | I'm moving on with my life when having my revenge | -4 | -2 | -4 | 0 |
| 30 | Forgiveness does not mean anything in everyday life | -6 | -4 | -4 | -1 |
| 47 | To forgive others or myself is meaningless, I don't believe in it | -5 | -6 | -6 | -2* |
| 21 | I have an inner drive to make things right | 4 | 2 | 6 | -2* |
| 19 | My relations are important to me, that's why it is easier to "turn the other cheek" when confronted | 2 | 4 | 0 | -3 |
| 5 | I accept myself regardless of what others think of me | 2 | 0 | 2 | -3 |
| 26 | It's in human nature to also experience bad things. By forgiving one accepts this holistic balance between good and bad | -2 | 1 | 6 | -4 |
| 39 | I know how to forgive | 0 | 2 | 5 | -5* |

## 9.6 Appendix F: Factor Arrays

**Factor 1:**

| -6 | -5 | -4 | -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 | +4 | +5 | +6 |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 30 | 47 | 2  | 9  | 48 | 11 | 3 | 31 | 5  | 8  | 1  | 6  | 4  |
| 36 | 15 | 34 | 10 | 26 | 12 | 7 | 24 | 29 | 25 | 21 | 45 | 16 |
|    |    | 43 | 13 | 37 | 22 | 23| 14 | 28 | 35 | 41 |    |    |
|    |    |    | 17 | 18 | 38 | 27| 33 | 19 | 46 |    |    |    |
|    |    |    |    | 20 | 42 | 32| 44 | 40 |    |    |    |    |
|    |    |    |    |    |    | 39|    |    |    |    |    |    |

**Factor 2:**

| -6 | -5 | -4 | -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 | +4 | +5 | +6 |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 10 | 28 | 23 | 14 | 11 | 17 | 1 | 15 | 21 | 16 | 36 | 13 | 4  |
| 47 | 2  | 30 | 3  | 9  | 7  | 5 | 20 | 41 | 27 | 8  | 31 | 12 |
|    |    | 42 | 32 | 25 | 37 | 6 | 26 | 24 | 33 | 19 |    |    |
|    |    |    | 48 | 29 | 38 | 18| 35 | 39 | 43 |    |    |    |
|    |    |    |    | 34 | 44 | 22| 46 | 40 |    |    |    |    |
|    |    |    |    |    |    | 45|    |    |    |    |    |    |

**Factor 3:**

| -6 | -5 | -4 | -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 | +4 | +5 | +6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 32 | 29 | 30 | 2 | 18 | 10 | 1 | 11 | 3 | 4 | 16 | 6 | 21 |
| 47 | 15 | 34 | 7 | 9 | 17 | 8 | 27 | 5 | 13 | 25 | 39 | 26 |
|  |  | 37 | 42 | 20 | 22 | 19 | 28 | 12 | 23 | 41 |  |  |
|  |  |  | 44 | 38 | 24 | 31 | 36 | 14 | 45 |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  | 43 | 48 | 33 | 46 | 40 |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  | 35 |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Factor 4:**

| -6 | -5 | -4 | -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 | +4 | +5 | +6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 28 | 39 | 18 | 2 | 13 | 9 | 17 | 1 | 4 | 15 | 10 | 3 | 8 |
| 32 | 48 | 22 | 5 | 21 | 11 | 34 | 12 | 6 | 3 | 20 | 43 | 36 |
|  |  | 26 | 19 | 27 | 24 | 35 | 16 | 14 | 41 | 40 |  |  |
|  |  |  | 25 | 37 | 30 | 42 | 23 | 29 | 46 |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  | 47 | 33 | 7 | 45 | 31 |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  | 44 |  |  |  |  |  |  |

## 9.7 Appendix G: Statements translated to English

| Statements translated |
|---|
| 1. It was my close relations that made me understand why forgiveness could be good for both them and myself |
| 2. I rarely ask myself questions such as "why" and if I was responsible or not |
| 3. Everyday wisdom states that forgiving makes everything better. You wont feel the want for revenge |
| 4. I am not fond of disagreements and conflicts with the people I love, and an explanation therefore comes fast |
| 5. I accept myself regardless of what others think of me |
| 6. When choosing to forgive it is because I want to, and because I have experienced feeling more whole and at peace |
| 7. To forgive was what should have been the best for all human, said every words of wisdom. Unfortunately it does not work |
| 8. To forgive is easier said than done |
| 9. When having forgiven it has rarely turned out positive |
| 10. I'm experiencing some bitterness when an event does not seem to let go. I don't seem to be able to move on until I have paid back for what was done. |
| 11. I rarely feel the need for talking with relations about forgive or let go of something |
| 12. Even though you're regretting something, you can accept the situation. There is little point in making something extra of it |
| 13. Its only human to feel ashamed if one has not been able to forgive |
| 14. Its stated that forgiveness turns the pain to something better |
| 15. I would rather choose payback than forgiveness |
| 16. Its healing to leave things behind, both for others and oneself |
| 17. Forgiveness is not a word I see the use of, neither in theory or in practice |
| 18. I can forgive my friends for something they have done, mostly because *they* want it. It doesn't matter to me |
| 19. My relations are important to me, that's why it is easier to "turn the other cheek" when confronted |
| 20. I often fell the bitterness remaining from the hurt I was caused, and I wish I was able to forgive and move on |
| 21. I have an inner drive to make things right |
| 22. Its rather rare I get something hurtful to be made positive |
| 23. To function optimally In everyday life I owe it to my relations to try to forgive the hurt I was caused |

| | |
|---|---|
| 24. | I can forgive a friend who has hurt me only to maintain our relationship. But honestly, I'm left with bitterness |
| 25. | No matter if I care little or much about those hurting me, I have to forgive to let go and to make peace |
| 26. | It's in human nature to also experience bad things. By forgiving one accepts this holistic balance between good and bad |
| 27. | I'm still thinking about an event I have forgiven but not forgotten |
| 28. | I find it easy to forgive others or myself |
| 29. | I really wish I was capable to forgive, but I cant do it |
| 30. | Forgiveness does not mean anything in everyday life |
| 31. | You're not supposed to ask "why" or "what if" related to happenings in the past |
| 32. | I'm often experiencing conflicts in close relations. I've gotten so used to them being there I can't change it now |
| 33. | Even though forgiveness happened, the pain did not go away |
| 34. | I'm moving on with my life when having my revenge |
| 35. | So what if I hurt myself. No one can do anything about it |
| 36. | The right thing is to forgive. However, it is normal that humans feel most satisfaction by revenging what's done. |
| 37. | I get to hear that without making things right, I will not be able to move on. That is only stupid theory. |
| 38. | I have an inner drive to forgive, but even though I would like to own it, I cant act on it |
| 39. | I know how to forgive |
| 40. | If the humans said sorry more often it would have led to bigger opportunities and more fulfillment in life |
| 41. | I am depending upon the people around me, and I therefore make things right to feel accepted. It makes our relation more mutual and whole |
| 42. | Close relations tells me the importance of forgiving, to be able to move on. But I don't see the point |
| 43. | Some events are printed to such degree that even though one is advised to forgive rather than seek revenge, the last alternative is the one most tempting |
| 44. | I find it hard to see the correlation between forgiveness and moving on |
| 45. | Forgiveness is a necessary and demanding action for accepting the act and oneself, and leads to a positive existence for those around me |
| 46. | I am being told that forgiving is the right thing to do, and we humans experiences peace by doing it |
| 47. | To forgive others or myself is meaningless, I don't believe in it |
| 48. | There is no meaning in anything other than what we see |

## 8.8 Appendix H: Q-sorts

All names are pseudonyms. The x behind the loadings indicates that the person defines the factor where the x is placed. The explanatory variance is presented in the bottom for each factor. Factor 1 was defined by 4 participants, factor 2 defined by 6 participants, factor 3 defined by 8 participants and factor 4 was defined by 2 participants.

"Aina" and "Lisa" are the mixed loaders whom fell out of the analysis.

```
Factor Matrix with an X Indicating a Defining Sort

                 Loadings

  QSORT             1         2         3         4

   1 Berit        0.4798X   0.3950    0.0041    0.1256
   2 Sander       0.3800    0.0833    0.7131X   0.1246
   3 Sabrina     -0.0106    0.8769X  -0.2261   -0.0018
   4 Mari         0.3198    0.7352X   0.2824    0.0359
   5 Siw          0.6942X  -0.0578    0.0810    0.4372
   6 Sigurd       0.6054X   0.1825    0.3118   -0.2198
   7 Andreas      0.0309    0.0444    0.6628X   0.3797
   8 Peter        0.0519    0.5397X   0.2069    0.1391
   9 Iver        -0.1403    0.2330    0.0797    0.4135X
  10 Cathrin      0.3153    0.4399    0.6505X  -0.0918
  11 Martin       0.2271    0.2745    0.7994X  -0.0163
  12 Rita\        0.2260    0.5179X   0.3913   -0.1900
  13 Roger        0.7706X   0.1239    0.2664   -0.1736
  14 Jenny       -0.0563    0.0224    0.7497X   0.0058
  15 Eric         0.4844    0.1834    0.6314X  -0.2246
  16 Lisa         0.5294    0.1028    0.5211   -0.3886
  17 Camilla      0.0756    0.1348   -0.0366    0.8532X
  18 Caroline     0.1729    0.7012X   0.4724    0.2528
  19 Siri         0.2190    0.1470    0.7827X  -0.0568
  20 Aina         0.5234    0.3259    0.5395    0.2631
  21 Katja        0.0818    0.7013X   0.2557    0.3623
  22 Kristin      0.3295    0.4516    0.6654X   0.1242

  % expl.Var.       14        17        24         9
```