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# Promoting bullying prevention and intervention through forgiveness education

Amy Gregory  
*University of Northern Iowa*

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PROMOTING BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION THROUGH  
FORGIVENESS EDUCATION

An Abstract of a Thesis  
Submitted  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Educational Specialist

Amy Gregory  
University of Northern Iowa  
May, 2016

## ABSTRACT

There is growing recognition of the severe, adverse long-term effects that bullying behaviors have, on the victims or on bullies. Although there are many existing anti-bullying programs that are designed to counteract both the behaviors and their potential long-term negative effects, forgiveness education programs may also be used to help create a positive school climate in which bullies can take responsibility for their behaviors and begin to reintegrate into the social fabric of the school. The purpose of this research proposal is to examine the effects of the International Forgiveness Institute's (IFI) forgiveness education curriculum in comparison to an anti-bullying program (Steps to Respect). Fourth and fifth grade classes from twelve elementary (K-5) schools will be chosen to participate in this study, and will be randomly assigned to either implement IFI's forgiveness education curriculum, the Steps to Respect program, or serve as a control group. It is hypothesized that the students in schools that implement forgiveness education will display greater increases in forgiveness toward an offender as measured by the Enright Forgiveness Inventory for Children. In addition, it is hypothesized that students who receive the forgiveness education will display greater increases in empathy when compared to the other treatment groups. Finally, it is hypothesized that the forgiveness education group will have a lower rate of investigations into incidents of bullying behavior.

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This Study by: Amy Gregory

Entitled: Promoting bullying prevention and intervention through forgiveness  
education

has been approved as meeting the thesis requirement for the  
Degree of Educational Specialist

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Date

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Dr. Suzanne Freedman, Chair, Thesis Committee

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Dr. Nicole Skaar, Thesis Committee Member

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Dr. Radhi Al-Mabuk, Thesis Committee Member

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Dr. Kavita Dhanwada Dean, Graduate College

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background

Over the past 50 years, attitudes toward bullying in schools have shifted significantly. Before the 1970s, bullying was seen as an expected and acceptable part of a child's school experience. Some even believed bullying wasn't harmful, it assisted in character building, and was simply “part of growing up” (Smith & Brain, 2000, p.3). In recent decades, however, the negative effects of bullying have been more widely recognized, and there is growing acceptance that experiences of bullying often lead to negative outcomes, such as poor physical and psychological health for those who are victimized (Due et al., 2005). Although no federal law currently exists that directly addresses bullying, at least 46 states currently have anti-bullying laws, and at least 45 of these laws include guidance for schools to adopt bullying policies (Stuart-Cassel, Bell, & Springer, 2011).

In response to state policies that prohibit bullying, schools are taking a closer look at the dynamics of the school environment that contribute to bullying behavior, and are beginning to introduce anti-bullying interventions with individual students, classrooms, and schools as a whole. Research (i.e., Salmivalli, Kaukiainen, & Voeten, 2005) demonstrates that bullying interventions are most successful in schools when they are implemented on an individual, class, and whole-school level. Salmivalli et al. (2005) claim that when the structure and aims of an intervention within the



school are clear, teachers and administrators are able to implement it more faithfully, which results in a greater reduction of bullying activity. There is also growing interest in examining the characteristics of bullies and victims in order to identify which experiences and qualities are associated with increased bullying behavior. This knowledge, in turn, is used to increase our understanding of bullying that occurs between individual students or in small groups of students. Utilizing knowledge of why bullying behavior occurs and combining it with a structure that promotes bullying prevention in classrooms and the school as a whole allows us to create interventions that could effectively reduce bullying incidents in schools.

While schools push to implement anti-bullying campaigns, the bullies themselves are often “lost in the mix.” After the effort has been made to eradicate bullying behavior, there is little or no attention paid to how bullies can begin to reintegrate themselves into the social framework of the school. If there is no positive way for bullies to be accepted back into the school community after changing their ways, there is little incentive for them to change their behavior. Forgiveness provides a framework through which bullies can reintegrate into the school community. In addition, it allows them to take responsibility for their actions, while recognizing that the student is “bigger than the act.” This mindset enables students to differentiate between bad actions and bad people, recognizes the humanity of all students, and encourages a more welcoming and understanding environment. Although some researchers (Egan & Todorov, 2009) claim that

forgiveness interventions can only successfully help students deal with the aftermath of being bullied, it is proposed that forgiveness education and interventions can also be a viable method of reducing bullying behavior through increasing state and trait forgiveness, and promoting an environment of empathy, respect, and compassion within the schools. Implementing forgiveness education and interventions in the school setting can not only help students that have been bullied cope with the aftermath of a transgression, but can also offer the bullies a way to reintegrate into the community. Forgiveness education gives offenders a way to cope with past experiences of deep hurt to reduce anger, and ultimately strengthens the social framework of the school to prevent further instances of bullying.

Schools are in need of a way to address bullying that is designed to not only respond to, but also prevent instances of bullying. In addition, it is vital that interventions address the problem of bullying on a school-wide, classroom, and individual level. This research proposal will provide a review of research regarding current anti-bullying efforts in schools, as well as review research on forgiveness and the potential positive effects of forgiveness education. In addition, a proposal for a study comparing the effects of an anti-bullying program and a forgiveness education program in the school setting will be presented.

### Bullying and Related Outcomes

Although bullying can occur at any time throughout one's life, such as in work settings or in relationships with intimate partners, family members or friends, bullying peaks during adolescence (ages 10 to 18) in the school setting (Book, Volk, & Hosker, 2012). Bullying is defined as a situation in which a person is "exposed repeatedly, and over time to negative actions on the part of one or more other students" (Olweus, 1995, p. 197). Bullying is not the same as assault, and consists of repeated events over time (Aluedse, 2006; Smith & Brain, 2000). Bullying takes on many forms, and can be divided into three categories: physical bullying, verbal bullying, and relational bullying (Egan & Todorov, 2009). Physical bullying involves hitting, punching, or theft; boys experience physical bullying more often than girls. Verbal bullying involves name-calling, teasing, and threatening. Relational bullying includes social ostracism, exclusion, rumors, and rejection from peers. Girls experience relational bullying more frequently than boys (Whitney & Smith, 1993). According to a study of 6th to 10th graders in the United States by Wang, Iannotti, and Nansel (2009), the prevalence of involvement in bullying activity – whether as the bully or victim – is 20.8% for physical bullying; 53.6% for verbal bullying; and 51.4% for relational bullying. All types of bullying can have significant negative long-term effects for the victim, and these effects have been documented in multiple research studies (Nishina, Juvonen, & Witkow, 2005; Aluedse, 2006; Juvonen, Wang, & Espinoza, 2010).

In the past decade, with the growing use of technology and social media, there has been increased attention to cyberbullying, which is categorized as either verbal or relational bullying, and includes a myriad of online aggressive acts, such as rumors, harassment, threats, and name-calling (Swearer, Espelage, & Napolitano, 2009). This is especially prevalent among older youth – 13.6% of 6th to 10th graders report being involved in cyberbullying, which is equally common in males and females (Swearer et al., 2009; Wang et al., 2009). Cyberbullying, also known as digital bullying, is a more sophisticated approach than typical 'schoolyard bullying,' as it allows the bully to send threatening messages through text messaging and social media websites with a significantly reduced chance of being caught (Aluedse, 2006). Cyberbullying can pose increased challenges for schools, because it provides the opportunity for anonymous bullying outside the school setting, and can occur 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In this situation, parent intervention and monitoring has been the most promising solution thus far (Swearer et al., 2009), but promoting a healthier and safer school environment may also affect student attitudes and behaviors towards cyberbullying.

### Outcomes for Victims

Victims of bullying suffer from numerous physical and emotional effects, such as lowered self-esteem, damaged reputation with peers, higher risk for depression and anxiety, increased risk for serious health issues, and lower academic engagement (Aluedse, 2006; Due et al., 2005; Juvonen et al., 2010; Nishina et al.,

2005). Bullied students are also more likely to have significant academic difficulties, and have lower grades and test scores over time (Juvonen et al., 2010). Adjustment problems in students who have been victimized by peers can arise as early as kindergarten, and these students often experience loneliness in school and school avoidance, even when controlling for peer acceptance and friendships (Juvonen et al., 2010). In schools, bullying detracts from the overall school environment, and hinders the social and educational progress of the students. The stress of being bullied is not only related to events that have already occurred, but also the fear of events that could happen in the future (Aluedse, 2006). A bullying incident has an immediate negative effect on individual students, and ultimately detrimentally affects the school environment as a whole (Egan & Todorov, 2009).

#### Outcomes for Bullies

According to Olweus (1995), the typical disposition of bullies can be described as aggressive, unempathetic, and impulsive. Multiple studies have been conducted to determine the connection between bullying behaviors and various 'Big Five' traits. Bullying has been shown to correlate with low Agreeableness and low Conscientiousness (Book et al., 2012). Other predictors include aggressiveness, isolation, and gender – boys are consistently found to be bullies more often than girls (Hixon, 2009; Olweus, 1995; Book et al., 2012; Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2005). Bullies establish dominance over other children by inducing fear and eliciting support for doing so (Boulton & Underwood, 1992). They may use physical contact,

hurtful words, make faces and obscene gestures, or make an effort to exclude an individual from a social group in order to coerce victims or gain a reputation (Olweus, 1995). Despite this, there is research that suggests that bullies may have a history of increased parent-child conflict and abuse (Georgiou & Stavrinides, 2013). This presents a different perspective on bullies and bullying, and allows communities to see bullies as individuals that have also experienced past hurts, whether from parents or peers. This approach promotes more understanding of the bullies' experiences, yet still recognizes the importance of reducing or eliminating bullying behaviors from the school environment. Research on various reasons that bullying may occur, as well as descriptions of multiple methods of bullying prevention and intervention is found in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Bullying can have negative effects for victims, the school environment, and even the bullies themselves. Fortunately, in the past few decades, schools have begun to recognize this and formally organize interventions that aim to decrease or eliminate bullying in the school environment (Enright, Enright, Holter, Baskin, & Knutson, 2007). Before discussing these interventions, however, it's helpful to further understand and examine some of the internal and external factors that contribute to (and possibly even promote) bullying behavior.

#### Factors Contributing to Bullying Behavior

As illustrated in the previous chapter, there are multiple negative effects for students who engage in bullying. In light of the negative effects that students who engage in bullying behaviors may experience, it is important to consider why students continue to engage in this behavior. After we understand why engaging in bullying behavior may be attractive to some students, we can identify more successful ways for students to interact with each other, and teach all students about conflict resolution and empathy.

#### Adaptive Benefits

Recent studies have begun to explore the concept of bullying as an adaptive behavior. Bullying "promotes access to physical, social, and/or sexual resources" (Book et al., 2012, p. 218). Bullying peaks during adolescence, which may be due to increased interest in forming dating relationships among adolescent students. For example, a bully may try to ostracize a peer who is interested in dating a person that the bully would also

like to date. Bullying behaviors may make the peer appear weaker and less desirable, thus decreasing the peer's chances of dating the desired classmate. These behaviors could also increase the bully's chances of dating the classmate, because bullies often appear powerful and in control. When it comes to peer victimization, the bullies may not outwardly seem to suffer many negative consequences associated with their actions, and sometimes even appear better off in terms of mental health, physical health, popularity, and social skills. Further evidence that bullying is an adaptive behavior is the fact that bullies tend to use a very balanced combination of aggression and prosocial behavior in order to achieve their goals. At times, bullies may be very prosocial, and may be friendly to specific classmates, because of the possibility for higher social status among their peers. Bullies often use aggression to victimize less popular individuals in order to ally themselves with those that could improve their social standing and increase their social alliances within the school (Book et al., 2012). Ultimately, if improved social standing is their goal, this combination of prosocial and aggressive behavior helps bullies ally themselves with desired individuals, while intentionally excluding less popular individuals.

### Parenting Influences

Despite the seemingly adaptive nature of bullying, the “nurture” aspect of a student's life, as well as the possibility that bullying behaviors may be learned, is often overlooked. Many times, studies that seek to describe bullying focus on the bully's inherent negative characteristics, rather than on the impact of other factors in the bully's life. Often, bullies who display aggressive behavior have seen aggressive behaviors at



home (Lines, 2008). A number of bullies have experienced harsh parenting practices from one or both parents, and may have experienced abuse or neglect (Lines, 2008). The effect that a student's home life has on his or her behavior in the school setting is often ignored, and this may lead to the idea that a student who engages in bullying behaviors is a "villain," and no thought is given to whether the child has experienced deep hurt and/or abuse or learned his or her behaviors elsewhere.

There is some argument as to whether or not parenting behaviors directly contribute to a child's bullying behaviors. Hixon (2009) purports that parenting practices are not a strong predictor for bully or victim status. Other sources, however, state that children's bullying behaviors are strongly related to parenting styles and home environment (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2005; Dehue, Bolman, Vollink, & Pouwelse, 2012). Authoritative parenting has more positive effects on children than other parenting styles and is strongly associated with lower levels of delinquency and bullying. Authoritarian and permissive parenting, however, have increased negative effects on children. Authoritarian parenting is related to lower self-control, social skills, and school achievement (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2005). Permissive parenting, on the other hand, is associated with higher dropout rates and use of tobacco and alcohol. Permissive parenting may also be associated with increased peer victimization, especially cyberbullying (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2005; Dehue et al., 2012). Further, research supports that youth with neglectful parents are significantly more likely to bully than youth with authoritative parents (Dehue et al., 2012). Parent-child conflict, which may be more common in authoritarian parenting, has also been shown to be a predictor of a child's bullying

behaviors (Georgiou & Stavrinides, 2013), indicating that conflict between a child and his or her parent may contribute to increased conflict with peers at school.

Ahmed and Braithwaite (2006) demonstrated that children who engage in bullying behavior are more likely to have experiences with parents who use punitive disciplinary practices. These punitive practices are also likely to lead to impulsive, dominating, and less empathic behavior, as well as difficulty adjusting to academic demands (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2006). However, there is a chance that the child's behavior problems may, in fact, elicit the negative responses from his or her parent, such as social withdrawal, punitive and overly dominant behavior, and denial of parental forgiveness and reconciliation (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2006). These responses may actually contribute to an increase in a child's bullying behavior in other environments, such as at school. Georgiou and Stavrinides (2013) state that increased communication and disclosure between parents and children leads to lower risk for being a bully, but in many cases, the parents' use of punitive practices prevents this bond from successfully forming. Overall, increased experiences with abuse, punitive practices, or neglect from parents leads to an increased risk for a child becoming a bully. This further supports the idea that bullies may display victimizing behaviors as a reflection of their own experiences with aggression or harsh treatment at home.

As illustrated in this section, there are a variety of research-supported reasons why an individual may engage in bullying behavior. Regardless of the fact that bullying behavior may emerge as a result of experiences with aggression or harsh treatment at home, or the fact that bullying behavior may result in short-term adaptive benefits,

bullying behavior has negative long-term effects for both victims and bullies. As a result of the many negative outcomes of bullying behavior for students (both victims and offenders), many schools are already implementing anti-bullying programs to improve school climate and prevent bullying behaviors in schools.

### Anti-Bullying Efforts in Schools

Although a student's home life may have a significant influence on bullying behaviors, schools and educators can also play a role in shaping and changing student behaviors (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2005). Previous research supports the idea that anti-bullying interventions are more successful when used through the whole school, and many current bullying interventions seek to inspire a shift in environment of the school as a whole (Egan & Todorov, 2009). Ttofi and Farrington (2011) conducted a meta-analysis of school-based programs designed to reduce bullying, and demonstrated that these programs lead to a decrease in bullying, on average 20-23%. In addition, on average, victimization was reduced by 17-20% (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). In their report, Ttofi and Farrington (2011) also examined the elements of anti-bullying programs that lead to the most reduction in bullying behaviors. They report that the more intensive a program is (in terms of hours of instruction and duration of program), the more successful it is on average. In addition, programs that included parent meetings, improved playground supervision, and firmer discipline for students who engage in bullying behaviors were more effective (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011).

Currently, there are several interventions that seek to address the problem of bullying in schools, and the Olweus method is one of the most common bullying

prevention programs that is evidence-based and frequently used (Enright et al., 2007). One of the main focuses of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program is peer support systems for victims of bullying behaviors (Olweus, 1997). In this 4-step method, students learn to report bullying, respond to it, self-manage to react appropriately when bullied and reframe the experience, and encourage empathy for one another. Ttofi and Farrington (2011) reported that in their meta-analyses of anti-bullying programs, interventions that were inspired by the Olweus method worked better on average than programs that were not inspired by Dan Olweus. The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program has had tremendous success in Norway, with reductions in school bullying of 30-70% (Egan & Todorov, 2009; Olweus, 1997). These successes, however, have not been replicated in other countries, with the United States, Germany, and Belgium seeing reductions of only 5-30%. This suggests that the cultural context in which the program is implemented may have an effect on its efficacy.

Another common program that is used to address bullying in schools is Steps to Respect. This structured program can be used in classrooms to prevent bullying behavior and promote positive behavior expectations (Felix & Furlong, 2008). The Steps to Respect program aims to reduce bullying and victimization, improve school climate, and increase school connectedness (Brown, Low, Smith, & Haggerty, 2011). It is designed to reduce bullying behavior not only by targeting individual students, but also providing interventions and support at a classroom and whole-school level. Initially, all adults in the school are trained to recognize and respond to bullying. After this training has occurred, classroom lessons begin, in which students learn about making friends, finding common

ground, recognizing feelings, and recognizing, refusing, and reporting instances of bullying (Committee for Children, 2001). Brown et al. (2011) conducted a randomized controlled trial of the Steps to Respect program with 33 elementary schools and found that teachers reported improvements in staff and student climate and reductions in physical bullying. Student reports of changes in school climate and bullying did not have large effect sizes. However, overall this study found positive effects on bystander behavior and the authors suggest that Steps to Respect is effective as a school-wide bullying prevention program (Brown et al., 2011).

Although anti-bullying programs have had some success in reducing bullying in schools, many of the methods introduced in these programs are reactive strategies. While anti-bullying efforts may aim to improve school climate, they often also introduce practices like reporting, 'refusing' or punishing bullying behavior. While reporting bullying, reacting and responding to it are important skills, they do not serve to prevent bullying behavior from happening or offer the bully a way to take responsibility for his or her actions and reintegrate into the school community. Forgiveness is a concept that could easily be introduced within the Steps to Respect program or in the third or fourth steps of the Olweus program, where it could significantly increase students' ability to frame bullying experiences in a productive manner and encourage a sense of empathy between students (Egan & Todorov, 2009). Yet, forgiveness may be just as effectively, if not more effectively, introduced as a separate intervention. In the following section, the concept of forgiveness is defined and related concepts are introduced. Forgiveness education is then presented as a method for schools to use, not only as a bullying

intervention, but also as a method of improving overall school climate and preventing future bullying behaviors.

### Forgiveness

Forgiveness is an "emotion-focused coping effort" (Worthington & Scherer, 2004, p. 388). Although forgiveness may seem straightforward, there are many different ways the forgiveness process can be conceptualized (White, 2002). In the forgiveness process, a person examines their negative feelings, thoughts and behaviors towards another following a transgression, and then seeks to release these, replacing them with feelings, thoughts and behaviors of benevolence (Denton & Martin, 1998; Freedman, 2008). Several researchers have distinguished between decisional and emotional (sometimes called process) forgiveness (Worthington & Scherer, 2004; Baskin & Enright, 2004). Decisional forgiveness involves a commitment by the wronged person to let go of their anger towards an offender. Though decisional forgiveness may lessen one's negative motivations, it doesn't always involve changing negative emotions (Worthington & Scherer, 2004). Decisional forgiveness alone doesn't qualify as forgiveness, but the decision is a vital part of the forgiveness process, as it may 'trigger' emotional forgiveness (Baskin & Enright, 2004; Worthington & Scherer, 2004). Emotional forgiveness results from working through one's negative emotions toward a feeling of resolution toward an injustice a person has experienced (Worthington & Scherer, 2004). This second type of forgiveness is much more difficult to achieve, and it takes time. Knutson, Enright, and Garbers (2008) note, however, that in the forgiveness process, time to explore one's

emotions seems to be a more necessary component than the actual decision to forgive someone.

Forgiveness can be viewed both as a mechanism to forgive an individual transgression, and as a personality trait. When discussing how forgiving an individual feels towards a transgressor of a specific incident, it's beneficial to look at state forgiveness, or what degree of forgiveness the victim feels for an offender at a specific point in time. On the other hand, looking at forgiveness as it develops into a trait (i.e. being a 'forgiving person') allows us to look at an individual's propensity to forgive, both in the present and for future transgressions. Forgiveness can be a mechanism for dealing with transgressions 'right now,' as in state forgiveness with a specific transgressor, or a mechanism that can help protect the individual against future experiences of the negative effects of unforgiveness, as in trait forgiveness.

Forgiveness is often beneficial for the victim of a transgression, as it involves a conscious effort to embrace positive thoughts, feelings, and sometimes behavior towards a transgressor (Van Dyke & Elias, 2007). The victim of the transgression has a right to feel resentment after a deep hurt, and it is important to recognize that offender does not necessarily deserve the victim's positive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors following the transgression. However, through forgiveness, the wronged individual is able to reduce his or her own feelings of anger and resentment toward the offender, without condoning or excusing the behavior (Knutson et al., 2008). As Egan and Todorov (2009) note, "forgiveness allows one to both acknowledge the full impact and wrongfulness of a transgression and overcome resultant emotional hurt" (p. 205). Ultimately, forgiveness

helps a person to recall a transgression, but reframe it in a way that allows him/her to release his or her anger associated with the event (Baskin & Enright, 2004). Forgiveness as a coping mechanism promotes better physical and psychological health (Worthington & Scherer, 2004; Toussaint, Williams, Musick, & Everson, 2001; Baskin & Enright, 2004). Forgiveness is associated with decreased stress, and is a valuable emotion-focused coping mechanism that students may use to achieve emotional relief, especially if support from others is not forthcoming (Worthington & Scherer, 2004).

Although the majority of the research discussed above deals with the victim's use of forgiveness, the offender may also feel the positive effects of forgiveness. Similar to the way a parent may provide positive support to a child when they make a mistake, forgiveness "offers a particular form of kindness to the wrongdoer" (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2006, p. 351), and may give them the opportunity to make things right and perhaps even reestablish a sense of trust and hope while still assuming responsibility for their actions (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2006). As an offender learns more about the process of forgiveness, they may come to believe that others are thinking about them in a more compassionate, empathetic way. The lack of long-term, ongoing resentment can encourage the offender to admit to wrongdoing, seek forgiveness, and begin to reintegrate back into the community while exhibiting an increased level of moral awareness and responsibility (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2006)

One of the main reasons forgiveness is beneficial for both offenders and victims is the fact that it is an exchange that occurs between equals (White, 2002). In the



forgiveness process, the victim recognizes the wrongfulness of the offender's actions, and makes a choice to let go of their feelings of resentment toward the offender.

It is important to note that the victim of an offense does not forgive the offender because they are weak or vulnerable. The victim does not have to condone the behavior, and is not required to extend pardon to the individual who wronged them. Instead, forgiveness is consistent with condemning an offender's actions, because forgiveness would not be required unless a wrong had been committed in the first place (Stewart, 2012). Another important aspect of forgiveness to consider is that forgiveness does not demand that a relationship be reestablished, although reconciliation can sometimes be a positive result of forgiving another (Gassin, Enright & Knutson, 2005). In the following section, reconciliation and appropriate circumstances for reestablishing relationships following an offense are examined further.

### Reconciliation

Reconciliation, another process that may follow forgiveness, operates on the assumption either that the offender's attitude and behavior will be changed through establishing trust and taking responsibility, or the offender's attitude and behavior has changed for some other reason (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2006). It takes forgiveness a step further by giving the wrongdoer the chance to attempt to mend the relationship (assuming there was one initially), or, at the very least, presents a chance at civility (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2006). Ideally, the goal of forgiveness can be reconciliation, but this may not always be an option or advisable (Knutson et al., 2008). In situations where the offender does not change their behavior, it is not a good idea for the victim to try to reconcile with

that individual (Freedman, 1998). Although it may not be a good idea for the parties involved to reconcile completely, experiencing forgiveness of the offender may make necessary communication in schools, workplaces, or other settings less uncomfortable, and encourage individuals who are not reconciled to be civil in any necessary interactions.

### Forgiveness Interventions and Research

There have been many forgiveness education and intervention efforts, yet at this point, many have been directed toward adults. Baskin and Enright (2004) conducted a meta-analysis of current forgiveness interventions, and showed that there were three common styles of forgiveness intervention: decision-based, process-based group, and process-based individual. The decision-based interventions were not as effective as process-based interventions, suggesting that it could take more emotional exploration to successfully forgive a hurt, as opposed to simply deciding to forgive an individual (Baskin & Enright, 2004). In addition, the researchers noted that longer forgiveness interventions were consistently more effective (Baskin & Enright, 2004). Current forgiveness therapy programs utilized in adult populations have shown reductions in anxiety, anger, and depression (Enright et al., 2007).

Since students spend so many years in school, it follows that an ongoing school-wide effort at forgiveness education would have increased success due to the length of the program. One of the studies examined in the meta-analysis dealt specifically with late-adolescents. Al-Mabuk, Enright, and Cardis (1995) examined both a decision-based and a process-based approach with college students, and suggested that the complete

process approach produces more positive and long-term effects than the initial decision to forgive on its own. Overall, current forgiveness education research points to the necessity of having a complete process-based approach to forgiveness in effective intervention. Interventions within the school setting would likely follow this process-based approach, and would seek to present forgiveness as an ongoing process, rather than as a one-time decision.

### Forgiveness in the School Setting

Although many forgiveness interventions have been successfully demonstrated with college student and adult populations, forgiveness may be an important concept to introduce in the school setting. Forgiveness provides a framework that promotes students' moral growth and encourages a sense of empathy between students. According to Lin, Enright, and Klatt (2011), forgiveness is appropriate to introduce in schools because it contains a plethora of moral content. They state that forgiveness education helps students to respond to an experience of bullying by examining it on moral grounds. Forgiveness can be a tool for building character, and introducing forgiveness education in the school setting can give children yet another chance to develop a strong character (Lin et al., 2011). White (2002) purports that it is important to teach children that we all make mistakes and sometimes behave in ways that we later regret. Students can use the moral connections they make through forgiveness education to address their own feelings and work toward forgiving an offender or forgiving themselves (Lin et al., 2011).

Increasing self-forgiveness allows the bully to recognize their actions, but move past the guilt, regret, and self-blame associated with their transgressions (Zechmeister &

Romero, 2002). Teaching self-forgiveness can have positive effects on a student's bully status if education on self-forgiveness encourages and focuses on empathy towards the victim. Forgiveness education can help students develop a sense of empathy, or the ability to recognize the emotions and humanity of another. Developing empathy alongside forgiveness may be important - studies have shown that students who bully often have lower levels of empathy than students who do not (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2006). Without the empathy factor, there is the risk of bullies using self-forgiveness to somehow justify their actions, and remove their own feelings of guilt. Forgiveness has positive effects on the school system, and can help all students, whether they're offenders or victims of bullying (Egan & Todorov, 2009).

Another benefit of introducing forgiveness education in schools is the fact that it addresses not only the specific incident, but also the aftermath. Forgiveness can act as a buffer against the effects of bullying and victimization; more forgiving individuals consistently experience superior physical and mental health, lower stress levels, and better self-reported health and life satisfaction (Egan & Todorov, 2009). Forgiveness helps victims of transgressions to overcome the negative emotions associated with bullying experiences (Egan & Todorov, 2009). Additionally, forgiveness education can - but does not always - lead to reconciliation, and may prevent repeat occurrences of bullying behavior as the bully takes full responsibility for his/her actions.

One important part of forgiveness education involves teaching students about situations in which reconciliation may be an appropriate response following an offense. White (2002) suggests that conversations about reconciliation should be introduced in the

school as children become mature enough to examine the ethical aspects of forgiving an offender. Though reconciliation may not always happen directly between a victim and bully, reconciliation may help to set up an environment where bullying behaviors are less likely to reoccur. Reconciliation allows the bully to begin to reintegrate into the social framework of the school and be more fully accepted back into the community instead of being ostracized. It's important that the bully has a 'way back in,' because if they believe they can redeem themselves within the school environment, they're more likely to invest time and effort towards making things right, and may be less likely to become a repeat offender.

As discussed earlier, students who engage in bullying behaviors may have experiences with hurts or harsh punitive practices at home, which may contribute to their displays of physical or verbal aggression at school. Students who engage in bullying behaviors can also experience hurt and transgressions in their lives, and forgiveness offers a way for them to work through these painful experiences. If the bully can increase his or her own forgiveness of others, he/she may experience the benefits of forgiveness, and be able to let go of feelings of anger and aggression instead of displaying them at school. Experiencing fewer negative emotions associated with their own experiences may discourage bullies from 'bringing' anger and aggression to the school and taking it out on other children. Research suggests that increased forgiveness may have a strong influence on bullying behavior. Higher levels of trait forgiveness and a person's own forgiveness of others are also associated with fewer instances of bullying (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2006).

When a student has higher levels of state and trait forgiveness, they are less likely to bully their peers, which in turn, has positive effects on the school as a whole.

As a result of forgiveness education in the school setting, a student who has engaged in bullying behavior would be encouraged to seek forgiveness from peers, and to take responsibility for his/her actions by genuinely apologizing and changing his/her future behavior. If the school can promote the idea that bullies can change - and avoid strategies and systems that reinforce the belief that “a bully is a bully” and “a leopard can't change its spots,” there will be more opportunity for change and rehabilitation for students who engage in bullying behaviors (Lines, 2008). It is also anticipated that forgiveness education would have positive effects for students that are not currently offenders or victims of bullying, because they will experience interpersonal hurt and may hurt others and need to seek forgiveness in the future. Ultimately, forgiveness interventions would be beneficial for all students in a school, regardless of bully/victim status, and would prevent the negative effects bullying has on the school as a whole.

#### Forgiveness-Focused Interventions and Education

Many bullying intervention programs aim to increase peer support, with the hopes that this will encourage bystanders to 'step in' when they observe bullying taking place (Cowie, 2011; Polanin, Espelage & Pigott, 2012). There is also support for interventions occurring on a whole-school level, with the goal of adjusting social norms in schools so bullying would no longer have a place in the school (Perkins, Craig & Perkins, 2011). Bullying is very difficult to eliminate in schools, so most interventions achieve only limited success (Egan & Todorov, 2009). At this point, many anti-bullying initiatives in

schools are more interested in reducing bullying behavior rather than helping students cope with a bullying experience (Egan & Todorov, 2009).

Many current forgiveness interventions, on the other hand, are empathy-focused, and may prevent some students from becoming bullies (Egan & Todorov, 2009).

Empathy-focused interventions are necessary when introducing the concept of self-forgiveness to bullies, because without considering the victim's perspective and feelings, the bully may continue to engage in bullying behavior (Zechmeister & Romero, 2002).

Forgiveness education can increase empathy among students, which helps promote a sense of school unity. In addition, forgiveness education can give students additional skills in being receptive to the needs of their peers, since it encourages an empathetic view of others. There are many literature and film resources that contain themes of forgiveness and related concepts, and can be used to help teachers guide their classes in exploring forgiveness and their personal relationships to it. Some of these resources include movies, such as “The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe” or “The Grinch Who Stole Christmas,” or books, such as *Horton Hears a Who* by Dr. Seuss, and *The Tale of Despereaux* by Kate DiCamillo (Enright, 2014). When forgiveness is introduced, it does not have to be introduced with any particular religious tradition, but instead can be a practice that helps to limit conflict and promote cooperation within the school (White, 2002).

Forgiveness can be applied in a 'two-pronged' approach, where there is a focus on both dealing with the aftermath of bullying, as well as prevention of future bullying. Current interventions that use forgiveness to reduce bullying in schools by teaching

forgiveness are primarily focused on the students learning about forgiveness, with the goal of learning to implement it in their own lives (Enright et al., 2007). Since bullying is characterized by interpersonal transgressions, and forgiveness assists in coping with interpersonal transgressions, forgiveness can be a valuable strategy to assist in coping with the delayed effects of transgressions. Forgiveness can also act as a preventive factor in coping with future transgressions (Egan & Todorov, 2009). Forgiveness training can encourage attitude shifts for all students, not just the targeted students, and therefore, it can increase positive outcomes for the entire student body (Aluedse, 2006).

One specific method of introducing forgiveness in schools is through a curriculum that teachers can utilize in their classrooms. The International Forgiveness Institute has recently developed a series of curriculum guides for students from pre-kindergarten through grade 10. The curriculum guides focus on teaching students about the five basic components of forgiveness: inherent worth, moral love, kindness, respect, and generosity (International Forgiveness Institute, 2007). The basic structure of these curriculum guides is similar across grades, which increases their utility when implementing them school-wide. These curriculums help students develop a deeper understanding of forgiveness, and serve as a springboard for incorporating forgiveness into the culture of the school. As noted earlier, when an initiative like forgiveness is implemented with individual students, in classrooms, and throughout the whole school, it is likely to have a larger effect.

Overall, though Egan and Todorov (2009) claim that "it is crucial to note that a forgiveness-focused intervention would not be intended to lead to reductions in school



bullying," (p. 215) and that "the proper application of forgiveness within the school setting would be to help students deal with the hurtful emotions caused by their having been bullied" (p. 215), there is a growing field of forgiveness education research that suggests that teaching and promoting the concept and trait of forgiveness in schools may in fact lead to reductions in school bullying. Forgiveness may also have a positive impact on bullies' ability to cope with their own experiences of hurt, and could help them improve relationships with their peers. When students who engage in bullying behaviors are asked and are able to take responsibility for their actions, yet not be permanently ostracized from the social framework at school, they are less likely to become re-offenders. Because of the many benefits for both victims and bullies, forgiveness interventions and education can be a valuable asset to schools, since they both help students cope with experiences of hurt and serve to prevent future bullying by promoting an environment of respect, empathy, and harmony within the school.

## CHAPTER 3

### STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

With the urgency for a solution that will quickly address the phenomenon of bullying, schools often turn to anti-bullying programs that introduce punishment for bullying behaviors, or focus on more reactive strategies, such as recognizing, reporting, and refusing bullying behavior (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011; Committee for Children, 2001). While it's important to work towards eliminating bullying behaviors in the school environment, it's essential to focus more on helping decrease bullying behaviors through proactive strategies, such as creating a positive school climate for all students, including those who have engaged in bullying behaviors. Introducing a forgiveness education program in the school educates all students about empathy, recognizing and identifying feelings, the importance of conflict resolution, and the negative effects of holding onto anger. In addition, forgiveness education programs emphasize the necessity of recognizing the humanity of each person, even those who commit hurtful behaviors. As a result, forgiveness promotes a supportive, positive, and welcoming community within the school. This environment allows students who bully to take ownership of their actions and provides an opportunity to reestablish good standing among their peers.

While anti-bullying programs have been successful in many schools (Brown et al., 2011; Olweus, 1997; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011), they don't often provide the opportunity for the bullies to admit to bullying behavior and learn how to change

these behaviors without associated judgment or stigmatization. When students who bully have the chance to admit their wrongdoing in a safe, supportive environment, they are less likely to reoffend. In fact, Due et al. (2005) suggest that addressing the school environment is the most important tool for reducing bullying behavior.

Forgiveness education emphasizes empathy and the fact that all human beings have worth, with an ultimate goal of harmonious living within the school environment (White, 2002).

The purpose of this study is to compare the effects of an anti-bullying program, a forgiveness education program, and a control condition in the school setting. In particular, the present study will focus on trends related to bullying behavior, students' experiences with empathy, and students' forgiveness of others.

#### Hypotheses

1. The group that receives forgiveness education will display greater increases in forgiveness toward an offender, at the end of the active intervention (January) and in the follow-up at the end of the school year (May), as measured by the Enright Forgiveness Inventory for Children.
2. Students in the forgiveness education group will demonstrate greater increases in empathy toward others (as measured by The Empathy Questionnaire), both at the end of the active intervention (January) and in the follow-up at the end of the school year (May).

3. The forgiveness education group will have a lower rate of investigations of bullying behaviors, both at the end of the active intervention (January) and in the follow-up at the end of the school year (May).

## CHAPTER 4

### METHODOLOGY

#### Participants

The participants in this study will be 4th and 5th grade students from approximately 12 elementary schools in the state of Iowa who serve students grades K-5. Although Ttofi and Farrington's 2011 meta-analysis reports that anti-bullying programs are typically more effective with children 11 years old or older, elementary students were chosen for the current study because of the variety of intensive curriculums available for these age groups. Felix and Furlong (2008) suggest that elementary schools may, in fact, be more appropriate for this type of intervention because elementary teachers work with the same group of students throughout the school day, and can therefore be more flexible in when they provide the instruction. In particular, 4th and 5th grade students were chosen because although they are typically at least nine years old, they still attend elementary school and likely have the same teacher throughout the day. As stated earlier, bullying peaks during adolescence (ages 10 to 18), so introducing this intervention with 4th and 5th grade allows for a more proactive intervention approach, as students in these grades are nearing early adolescence. Utilizing two grades in the study allows for more generalization of the results of the study, and allows participating schools to build a foundation for introducing intervention curricula with more grade levels in the future. Having at least 12 schools participate in this

study is important; a meta-analysis in 2011 demonstrated that randomly assigning a very small number of schools (three or fewer in each condition) could threaten statistical validity (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). Participating schools will each have a full-time counselor and a school psychologist who does not serve any of the other elementary schools in the study. Iowa is an ideal state in which this study can take place, because there are many training opportunities and resources that can be utilized within Area Education Agencies (AEAs) to ensure that participating schools receive training and support in implementing either forgiveness education or anti-bullying programs. Within the individual schools, all staff will be trained on implementing school-wide expectations and recognizing, reporting, and recording instances of bullying, however, the specific curriculum assigned to treatment schools will only be introduced in 4th and 5th grade classrooms. Enrollment and demographics will vary by school, and will be taken into account when assigning schools to one of the treatment groups, as described in the following section.

### Procedures

In order to control for the effects of school size and any significant demographic differences, the 12 participating schools will be sorted into four groups, each with three schools of similar enrollment and demographics. The three schools within each group will be randomly assigned to either implement the anti-bullying program, the forgiveness education program, or serve as a control group. Randomly assigning at the school level is appropriate because if we were to

randomize by class or grade within a school, it would be very difficult to limit students' exposure to elements from another intervention group (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). Schools will participate in this study over the course of one school year in order to establish the programs and gain an accurate representation of effects on the school and students. The specific curriculum assigned to the school will be introduced in 4th and 5th grade classrooms in weekly sessions during the first semester of the year, and the schools will continue to support the application of the principles of the curriculum in monthly 'booster' sessions throughout the second half of the year. Each student will receive the instruction assigned to his or her school's study condition. Written consent to collect assessment data will be obtained from parents of children in all participating schools.

In previous studies that have examined the effects of programs in schools, a teacher/psychologist consultation model has been used (Enright et al., 2007). In this type of model, psychologists instruct and support teachers in implementing either anti-bullying programs or forgiveness education programs. In this particular study, participating schools will have access to support from a school psychologist, as well as a guidance counselor and other AEA personnel who have assisted in the training for the intervention groups. Participating schools' psychologists should not be serving other schools in the study because of the chance for diffusion across intervention groups.

The particular programs that will be compared in this study – the Steps to Respect (anti-bullying program) and the International Forgiveness Institute's Forgiveness Education Curriculum (forgiveness education program) – were chosen for this study because they both provide curriculums for various elementary age groups, and they are similar in program intensity. Ttofi and Farrington's 2011 meta-analysis of anti-bullying programs demonstrated that program intensity and length of program have significant effects on treatment effects. Introducing programs with comparable program intensity and length will allow researchers to examine program effects without concern about differing intensity and length of program.

In order to be the most effective, both programs will be introduced with a three-tiered approach. At the school level, administrators will lead the school in ensuring that a set of school-wide expectations is established and taught to all students. At the classroom level, teachers in both program groups will introduce their classes to the designated curriculum and lead their class in the discussion and activities outlined in the curriculum. On the student level, within each curriculum, students will be challenged to apply their lessons from the intervention to their own lives, and students (in all treatment groups) will have access to additional support from the school guidance counselor.

For the purposes of this study, participating schools will be PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports) schools that are fully implementing Tier One. This ensures that each school that participates in the study will have an established



set of school-wide behavior expectations, which will help to eliminate the presence of school-wide behavior expectations as a covariate between treatment groups. In addition to the expectations, teachers and other school staff will learn an operational definition of bullying and be specifically trained by AEA staff on how to recognize, report, and record instances of bullying because one aspect of data collection for this study relies on teachers' fidelity of reporting instances of bullying. The differences between intervention groups will be the specific curriculums introduced in 4th and 5th grade classrooms, so factors such as school expectations and differences in definitions and reporting of bullying are controlled for when analyzing treatment effects.

#### Anti-Bullying Group

Participating schools randomly assigned to the anti-bullying group will receive training in August at the nearest AEA office. During this training, teachers and building administrators will attend a one-day workshop. A school psychologist who has experience with implementing the Steps to Respect program will lead this workshop. In addition, school psychologists and school counselors from each of the schools assigned to this condition will attend the workshop, and will act as coaches for the building administrators and teachers from their schools throughout the program implementation. This method of training is similar to the process used to train teachers in an Enright et al. study (2007). During this one-day workshop, 4th and 5th grade teachers from schools assigned to the anti-bullying condition will be

introduced to the Steps to Respect curriculum that they will use in their classrooms over the course of the year. All books and related materials will be provided during this workshop.

In order to provide additional support for teachers and administrators, the school psychologist assigned to each district will come to monthly staff meetings to field questions and provide support to teachers in their implementation of the Steps to Respect curriculum. In January, when the first semester of the school year is nearly complete, the 4th and 5th grade teachers and administrators will attend a second training session on continuing to apply the Steps to Respect curriculum during the second semester's monthly 'booster' sessions. The psychologist will continue to be available at monthly staff meetings during the second semester to provide continuing support.

After the August workshop, 4th and 5th grade teachers will introduce the Steps to Respect curriculum in their classrooms during 15 weekly sessions of 30 minutes each throughout the first semester. The Steps to Respect curriculum utilizes book passages, videos, pictures, writing tasks, and teacher-led discussion to teach students about friendship, joining groups, finding common ground with others and recognizing, 'refusing,' and reporting bullying behaviors (Committee for Children, 2001). There are three 'levels' of lessons for the Steps to Respect curriculum. Level 1 is designed for use in 3rd and 4th grades, Level 2 is designed for use in 4th and 5th grades, and Level 3 is designed for use in 5th and 6th grades. For

the purposes of this study, the Level 2 curriculum will be used with 4th and 5th grade students.

Each lesson in the curriculum books for the Steps to Respect program contains a brief description of lesson materials needed, which is followed by a lesson outline, as well as a lesson script and more detailed instructions for each segment of the lesson. For example, Level 2's Lesson 1 is split into three parts, one of which is a brief follow-up that is introduced two or three days after the initial lesson. Part 1 of this lesson (which is the first lesson in the series) begins with the teacher reading a passage from *There's a Boy in the Girls' Bathroom* by Louis Sachar. The teacher then leads the class in a discussion about the main character's feelings, as well as advice they could give the characters in the story. The teacher then introduces the Steps to Respect program, and asks students to help define the word 'respect.' The class discussion continues, with the teacher guiding students toward making a connection between respect and friendship. The students split into pairs and brainstorm ideas about how to make new friends. Finally, the students come back as a large group to discuss some of their ideas. Part 2 begins with a handout about how friendly behavior is respectful behavior. Students are instructed to think about some respectful behaviors they want to work on that week, and then they have the opportunity to discuss their ideas with a peer or with the large group. Students are given a handout with various respectful behaviors listed on it, and the teacher encourages them to highlight the behaviors they've chosen and illustrate the

behaviors around the border of the paper. The lesson ends with the teacher reminding students to keep their handout somewhere they will see it throughout the week (Committee for Children, 2001).

Throughout the intervention, the teacher will promote a safe and supportive learning environment, as outlined in the Steps to Respect program. The school psychologist, school counselor, and the teachers in each school will meet once per month for follow-up coaching. The school psychologist, school counselor, and trainer from the one-day workshop will be available throughout the intervention to provide continued support and help ensure treatment fidelity. After the 15 weekly sessions with the curriculum, the teacher will continue to provide support for their students' learning environment, and will provide 'booster' sessions monthly throughout the second half of the school year.

#### Forgiveness Education Group

Participating schools randomly assigned to the forgiveness education group will receive training in August at the nearest AEA office. Again, teachers and building administrators will attend a one-day workshop. A school psychologist who has expertise in the area of forgiveness and experience with implementing IFI's forgiveness education curricula will lead this workshop. In addition, school psychologists and school counselors from each of the schools assigned to this condition will attend the workshop, and will act as coaches for the building administrators and teachers from their schools throughout the program

implementation. The one-day workshop will emphasize three themes: the concept of forgiveness and its history, a discussion of how people go about forgiving others, and an examination of the forgiveness curriculum which will be used in the 4th and 5th grade classrooms over the course of the school year. All books and related materials will be provided during this workshop.

In order to provide additional support for teachers and administrators, the school psychologist assigned to each district will come to monthly staff meetings to field questions and provide support to teachers in their implementation of the forgiveness education curriculum. In January, when the first semester of the school year is nearly complete, the 4th and 5th grade teachers and administrators will attend a second training session on continuing to apply the forgiveness education curriculum during the second semester's monthly 'booster' sessions. The psychologist will continue to be available at monthly staff meetings during the second semester to provide continuing support.

After the August workshop, teachers will introduce the International Forgiveness Institute's forgiveness education curricula (*Reaching Out Through Forgiveness* – 4th grade; *Journey Toward Forgiveness* – 5th grade) in their classrooms during 15 weekly sessions of 30 minutes each (Enright & Enright, 2010a; Enright & Enright, 2010b). Throughout the intervention, the teacher will introduce concepts that underlie forgiveness, share literature and film stories where the characters display instances of forgiveness, and talk about how to apply

forgiveness principles if children choose (Enright et al., 2007). Although the International Forgiveness Institute has curriculums for grades kindergarten through 10th grade, for the purposes of this study, only the curriculums for grades 4 and 5 will be used.

The 4th grade curriculum – *Reaching Out Through Forgiveness* – emphasizes the concept of ‘lavish love’ (also referred to as moral love), but also emphasizes themes of inherent worth, empathy, and compassion. Students begin by learning about these concepts (utilizing the book *The Tale of Despereaux* by Kate DiCamillo), then work toward understanding them in the context of forgiveness, and finally, begin to apply them to situations in their own lives (Enright & Enright, 2010a; Enright, 2014). The 5th grade forgiveness curriculum – *The Journey Toward Forgiveness* – contains a more advanced concept of seeking and receiving forgiveness. The movie, “The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe,” based on the book by C.S. Lewis is the centerpiece of the 5th grade curriculum, and helps teachers to facilitate conversations, activities, and learning about inherent worth, moral love, kindness, respect, and generosity (Enright & Enright, 2010b; Enright, 2014).

Each lesson in the forgiveness education curriculum guide contains a ‘main idea’ for the day’s activities. Each lesson has specific objectives of what students are going to learn through the lesson, which helps guide teachers’ thinking as they present the curriculum to their students. Throughout the curriculum, there is a strong focus on understanding the five basic components of forgiveness: inherent

worth, moral love, kindness, respect, and generosity. Lessons contain a general outline for the teacher, as well as specific discussion topics and activity ideas. At the end of each lesson are questions that can be used to gauge the students' learning of the topic presented.

The school psychologist, school counselor, and the teachers in each school will meet once per month for follow-up coaching. The school psychologist, school counselor, and trainer from the one-day workshop will be available throughout the intervention to provide continued support and help ensure treatment fidelity. After the 15 weekly sessions with the curriculum, the teacher will continue to provide support for their students' learning environment, and will provide weekly 'booster' sessions throughout the second half of the school year.

### Control Group

Participating schools assigned to the control group will receive no training on anti-bullying or forgiveness education programs, but will instead be placed on a waitlist to receive training on either the forgiveness education or the anti-bullying program in the following school year. It is important to note that the control group will, however, have the same set of established school expectations as other treatment conditions, to ensure that the school expectations alone do not lead to a reduction in bullying behaviors. In addition, 4th and 5th teachers in the control group school will receive training on the operational definition of bullying, and will be trained specifically on how to complete bullying behavior referrals. The control

group schools should also have access to a school psychologist and guidance counselor to ensure that they are consistent in their reporting of bullying behaviors and their school expectations.

### Measures

Several existing studies that examine the effects of forgiveness education or anti-bullying efforts utilize pretests, post-tests, and follow-up testing to gain information about short and long term effects of the intervention (Enright et al., 2007). Pre-treatment measures will be collected for all participating schools in the fall immediately before the start of the intervention. These pretest measures will help determine how comparable participants in each group are prior to the start of the intervention (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). Post-treatment measures will be collected at the end of the first semester (January), after the weekly sessions are complete. Data will be collected on all measures once more as a follow-up at the end of the school year (May), to measure the continuing effects of the 'booster sessions' and compare long-term effects of the interventions. The data collection for this study will focus on three primary constructs: forgiveness, empathy, and occurrences of bullying in the school. A brief description of methods used to collect data for each of these three constructs follows.

#### Enright Forgiveness Inventory for Children

The Enright Forgiveness Inventory for Children (EFI-C), a children's version of the Enright Forgiveness Inventory, will be used for all groups at the beginning of



the school year as a pretest measure, at the end of the active intervention (January) as a posttest measure, and at the end of the school year (May) as a follow-up measure. This measure contains 30 items, which are designed to assess affect, behavior, and cognition toward an offender (Enright et al., 2007). Children are first asked to describe a situation in which someone hurt them. For the purposes of this study, students will write (or dictate) a brief description of the situation, which will be recorded at the time of pretest completion of the EFI-C. The situation students described during the pretest completion of the EFI will also be used for posttest and follow-up, to ensure the reliability of any changes in students' forgiveness over time. In the EFI-C, items (such as "Do you think the person who hurt you is mean?") are presented to children orally by an interviewer, which, for the purposes of this study, will be their classroom teacher. Students' responses are aided with visuals (large/small, green/red circles), which help a student indicate answers of strong yes, weak yes, weak no, or strong no. It is important to note that the term 'forgiveness' is not used throughout the scale, so it will not contaminate the answers of individuals that are not part of the forgiveness education intervention group. Enright et al. (2007) reported that the Cronbach's alpha was .94 for their study, which they reported is similar to the results of another study by Gambaro (as cited in Enright et al., 2007).

### The Empathy Questionnaire (EQ)

The Empathy Questionnaire was developed by Carston Zoll and Sibylle Enz (2010). It contains 28 items that were developed with both new items and items from existing measures that are commonly used to assess empathy (Zoll & Enz, 2010). This measure will also be used for all groups at the beginning of the school year as a pretest measure, at the end of the active intervention (January) as a posttest measure, and at the end of the school year (May) as a follow-up measure. Zoll and Enz (2010) used this measure with participants from ages eight to fourteen, and found that the items form two scales: cognitive empathy and affective empathy. In cognitive empathy, the observer attempts to understand the feelings of the target. In affective empathy, on the other hand, the observer feels emotions due to their perception of the internal emotions, thoughts, and attitudes in another person (Zoll & Enz, 2010). Respondents answer the items on a 5-point Likert scale ('I strongly disagree,' 'I somewhat disagree,' 'I don't agree or disagree,' 'I somewhat agree,' or 'I strongly agree'). Examples of items include, 'I think people can have different opinions about the same thing' and 'When I see someone suffering, I feel bad too' (Zoll & Enz, 2010). The classroom teacher will present the items orally, to ensure that each student understands the items. Students will respond by circling their answer on their test protocol. In their own research, Zoll and Enz (2010) report that the two factors (cognitive and affective) were consistent, and there were no significant differences between the three countries in which they introduced the

Empathy Questionnaire: the UK, Portugal, and Germany. Veiga and Santos (2011) indicate that internal consistency indices are strong. In their factorial analysis, Varimax rotations yielded two factors (affective and cognitive) with alpha values of 0.85 and 0.72, respectively. Veiga and Santos (2011) suggest that the Portuguese adapted version of this measure has good psychometric qualities that make it appropriate for use in education.

#### Investigations of Bullying Behavior

As part of the one-day workshop, teachers and administrators will be trained on how to recognize instances of bullying and will be informed of the importance of completing behavior referrals for bullying behavior throughout the study. All schools participating in the study will be presented with an operational definition of bullying, which they will use to guide their behavior referral process for bullying. Throughout the study, teachers will meet with the school psychologist and school counselor for monthly coaching sessions, which will help to ensure that they continue to report bullying as the study progresses. The number of investigations of bullying behavior will be reported out at the end of each school semester, during the posttest and follow-up data collections. This ensures that the data collected for the study involves schools using the same operational definition of bullying.

#### Treatment Integrity

In addition to the outcome measures, treatment integrity checks will be developed for each treatment group and will be performed by a trained individual

every quarter at each school. The trained individual, who will randomly select two teachers to observe during each quarter, will conduct these integrity checks. In the fall, observations will occur during the 30-minute class sessions. In the spring, observations will occur during the monthly 'booster' sessions.

### Data Analysis

The purpose of this study is to compare the effects of an anti-bullying program and a forgiveness education program in comparison to each other, but also to a control group. Descriptive statistics will be used to describe the participating schools, teachers, and students. Differences between pretest, posttest, and follow-up scores on the Enright Forgiveness Inventory for Children (EFI-C), The Empathy Questionnaire (EQ), teacher reports of bullying, and student reports of experiences of bullying will be used to assess change. Analysis of variance will be used to analyze the data and compare means from the three conditions. Other studies that have examined the effects of such programs in schools have utilized analysis of variance (ANOVA) to calculate differences in pre- and post-treatment measures (Enright et al., 2007). A 3X2 repeated measures ANOVA may be used to determine whether investigations of bullying behavior (reported at the end of each semester) decreased for the forgiveness education group over the anti-bullying group or the control group. This will help to determine whether the forgiveness education group has a lower rate of investigations of bullying behavior, as described in hypothesis three. A 3X3 repeated measures ANOVA will be calculated for the forgiveness measure and

the empathy measure. For these analyses of variance, there will be one within-subjects factor (pretest, posttest, follow-up), and one between-subjects factor (forgiveness condition, anti-bullying condition, and control). These analyses will help to determine whether the forgiveness education group demonstrates greater increases in forgiveness toward an offender and increases in empathy toward others, as described in hypotheses one and two. If the ANOVA is significant, post hoc comparisons may be calculated to determine where the specific differences occur.

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