Helping adolescents forgive: the use of forgiveness education at an inpatient mental health facility

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ABSTRACT

Understanding the concept of forgiveness has demonstrated to be a complex process (Walker & Gorsuch, 2004;McCullough & vanOyen Witvliet, 2002). Enright and the Human Development Study Group (1991) developed a process model of forgiveness as a way for people to constructively deal with their anger and improve overall psychological well-being after experiencing a deep hurt. Due to the reported benefits illustrated by forgiveness intervention studies, future research is needed to examine the effectiveness of forgiveness education with adolescents in a clinical setting. The current study implemented a forgiveness education intervention with adolescents at local inpatient mental health facility examining the difference between scores at pretest and posttest. Dependent variables included a forgiveness measure, anger measure, hope scale, depression scale, and a self-esteem measure. The intervention was implemented using a group format following the Journey to Forgiveness Curriculum (Knutson & Enright, 2006) in which eight participants met with the researcher on a weekly basis for a period of 15 weeks. Following the intervention period, participants demonstrated statistically significant greater scores on the cognitive and behavioral subscales as well as their overall forgiveness score. In conjunction with all other measures, the affective subscale on the forgiveness measure did not produce statistically significant results. Strengths and limitations of the current study are discussed. Implications for future research are also identified.
This Study by: Tiffany Everding

Entitled: Helping Adolescents Forgive: The Use of Forgiveness Education at an Inpatient Mental Health Facility

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIST OF TABLES</th>
<th>v</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the Definition</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding Forgiveness</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Misconceptions</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Models of Forgiveness</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgiveness and Adolescents</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgiveness and Anger in Adolescents</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgiveness Education and Interventions with Adolescents</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Case Study</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitating Forgiveness for Children and Adolescents</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgiveness Education</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgiveness and Clinical Practice</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions and Implications</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Study</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measures</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial Interview</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE</td>
<td>PAGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stages of Justice and Forgiveness Development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Variables That May Be Involved When We Forgive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive Statistics for Dependent Variables Pre/Post Test</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paired Sample T tests for Dependent Variables Pre/Post Test</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Promoting and maintaining safe environments is an important component in the practice of any mental health professional (Mcloughlin, Kubick, & Lewis, 2002). Unfortunately, children and adolescents are not immune to difficult issues pervading today's society. Sexual abuse, physical abuse, drug use, suicide, bullying, gang violence, crime, and teen pregnancy are just some of the many serious issues children and adolescents may experience (Kagan, 1991). Fortunately, educators, counselors, and other mental health professionals are trained in ways to help students cope with such tough issues. However, most of these professionals are not knowledgeable about using forgiveness as a way to help students cope with such experiences and therefore, could greatly benefit from understanding how to use forgiveness to help children and adolescents cope with hurtful events and, ultimately, succeed academically and socially. Forgiveness, although relatively new in the literature, has been demonstrated as a successful way for children and adolescents to deal with personal injury (Freedman, 2007). Since much of the research shows forgiveness as a successful coping strategy for adults, it is logical that children and adolescents could also benefit and use forgiveness as a coping strategy. However, the research does not clearly demonstrate that the forgiveness process is the same for children and adolescents as it is for adults. Thus, further exploration with forgiveness education studies and adolescents would enhance our understanding of how to help them constructively deal with hurtful events they experience.

Understanding the Definition

Before one can identify how adolescents and children understand forgiveness, it is necessary to explain the concept of forgiveness as it is defined by the literature. Although forgiveness has been examined for years in the areas of theology and philosophy, the study of its definition, development, and practical implications has only recently emerged in psychological research (Fitzgibbons, 1998; Freedman and Enright, 1996; Kaminer, Stein, Mbanga, & Aungu-Dirwayi, 2000). More specifically, forgiveness has been examined as an interpersonal process,
meaning that it occurs between people, not between a person and an inanimate object (Enright &
The Human Development Study Group, 1991; Fitzgibbons, 1986; Freedman, Enright, & Knutson,
2005; Worthington & Wade, 1999). In comparison, Christianity teaches and uses forgiveness as a
means to mend a relationship between a sinful person and a divine being (Enright et al., 1991).
Although researchers vary in their definition of interpersonal forgiveness, most agree that the
process involves an interaction where a victim’s negative responses toward an offender gradually
become positive (McCullough & Witvliet, 2002). Based on extensive research, Freedman and
colleagues (2005) define the term forgiveness as follows:

People, upon rationally determining that they have been unfairly treated, forgive when
they willfully abandon resentment and related responses (to which they have a right) and
endeavor to respond to the wrongdoer based on the moral principle of beneficence,
which may include compassion, unconditional worth, generosity, and moral love (to which
the wrongdoer, by nature of the hurtful act or acts has no right) (p. 393)

In contrast, Worthington and Wade (1999) explain the concept of unforgiveness as an
emotional response comprised of bitterness, anger, resentment, hatred, and the desire to seek
retribution against the offender. Essentially, forgiveness is a gift given to the offender by the
victim even though the offender does not deserve such a gift. It is a choice that the forgiver
makes in order to overcome or move beyond negative thoughts, feelings, and reactions toward
an offender (Enright, 2001).

The process of forgiveness is complex and includes components from the affective,
cognitive, and behavioral systems (Enright et al., 1991). Not only do researchers conceptualize
forgiveness in such a way, but also do laypeople (Kearns & Fincham, 2004). For example, Kantz
(2000) found that laypeople agree that forgiving an offender aids in anger reduction the victim
experiences (as cited in Kearns & Fincham, 2004). When forgiveness occurs, it is directly related
to the release of anger or other negative emotions (Fitzgibbons, 1998). Over time those negative
emotions are reduced and may even be replaced with positive emotions (Enright et al., 1991). As
Fitzgibbons (1998) explains, the greater the personal injury or hurt, the longer it will take to
resolve angry emotions. In the cognitive system, the victim acknowledges the negative emotions
and accepts that he or she is entitled to feel that way (Enright et al., 2001.). Although one
realizes those feelings are justified, he or she chooses to replace the negative thoughts about the offender with neutral or, sometimes, positive feelings. In this stage, the person makes the decision to forgive and release any negative thoughts and feelings (Fitzgibbons, 1998). It is important to understand that at this level the victim makes the decision to forgive, believes it is a good thing to do, but does not yet feel compassion or have a positive regard toward the offender. This may look differently depending on the offender’s remorse or lack of remorse. Once the victim makes the decision, he or she will then begin to align their behavior with their choice to forgive. That is, he or she may become more willing to interact with the offender and reduce revenge behaviors. However, it is important to note that forgiveness does not necessarily lead to reconciliation (Freedman, 1998). Usually reconciliation is a choice that is influenced by the offender’s behavior and action following the offense.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to implement a forgiveness education intervention with adolescents at an inpatient Mental Health facility. Almost all the children and adolescent patients at this facility have experienced deep, personal, and unfair hurts and are placed there after a variety of other services and placements have not worked. Most patients at this facility do not have the knowledge and skills to cope with these deep hurts. Adolescents who have experienced deep hurt carry around a great deal of anger, resentment, and negative feelings (Parrot, 1993). Helping adolescents manage their anger more effectively is a critical component of healthy development (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). Interpersonal forgiveness is one alternative to seeking revenge, and is being increasingly researched in the areas of psychology, counseling, and education (Freedman, 2007). Due to the reported benefits illustrated in forgiveness intervention studies with various populations, more research is needed to examine the effectiveness of forgiveness education with at-risk adolescents in a clinical setting.

Summary

This chapter addresses the need for further research to aide our understanding of how forgiveness education can be beneficial for adolescents experiencing mental health issues.
Chapter 2 will provide a thorough review examining the current understanding of forgiveness as defined by the literature, how forgiveness is currently understood and used with children and adolescents, and the relationship between current forgiveness intervention studies and effectively implementing such interventions in clinical and educational settings, specifically with adolescents. Chapter 3 will provide a detailed description of the methodology including the participants, materials, design, and intervention procedure. Chapter 4 will report the results from conducting pre/post comparisons of all dependent variables, while Chapter 5 will provide a thorough discussion and implications for future research.
In order to explain the definition of the term forgiveness more clearly, Enright et al. (2001) offers several clarifications for one’s understanding. As previously mentioned, forgiveness is an interpersonal process. This means forgiveness occurs between people, not objects or events. Therefore, people cannot forgive hurricanes, tornados, floods, or other natural disasters. Forgiveness occurs after the victim experiences a “deep, personal, long-lasting injury or hurt” from the offender (Enright et al., 2001). The personal injury must directly affect the victim. Furthermore, the injury must be objective and real. After the injury occurs, the victim experiences the personal injury and reacts (usually in a negative manner) toward the offender. Eventually, the victim does not seek retribution for their injury. Once this takes place, it is important to understand that an apology is not necessary in order for forgiveness to occur, nor does the offender need to be aware of the magnitude of his or her actions. In fact, the offender may not have caused the injury intentionally. The ease of forgiveness will be affected by the severity of the injury and the quality of the relationship between the offender and victim prior to the offense. It is also important to note that forgiveness is relational, and therefore could affect both parties equally. That is, the offender could also simultaneously be a victim. For example, perhaps a husband commits adultery. To get even, his wife also commits adultery. In this scenario, the husband and wife are both offenders and victims.

Common Misconceptions

Since forgiveness is such a complex construct, the term often gets confused with similar concepts such as reconciliation (Freedman, 1998), pardon, legal mercy, condoning, excusing, justifying, and forgetting (Enright, Santos, & Al-Mabuk, 1989; Enright et al., 1991; Parrot, 1993). It is important to clarify the differences in these terms to aide one’s understanding. As mentioned earlier, forgiveness occurs directly between the offender and the victim. A pardon happens when a lawful authority figure lessens the standard punishment for an offender. The authority figure
who pardons the offender is rarely the person who experiences personal injury as a result of the offender (Enright et al., 1991). The same concept is applicable to legal mercy. In forgiveness, the only person who is injured gets to offer the offender forgiveness. In contrast, the person granting a pardon or mercy is typically not the injured person. This is an important distinction to make when understanding the difference between these terms.

In addition, condoning one’s actions is not the same as forgiving. In both instances an injustice occurs. However, condoning an offense is ultimately disregarding their hurtful actions, which oftentimes leads to feelings of resentment (Enright et al., 1991). “Those who condone injustice overlook the unfairness” (Al-Mabuk, Enright, & Cardis, 1995, p. 428). According to Kearns and Fincham (2004), some participants in their study viewed condoning the offender’s actions as a central characteristic of forgiveness. In actuality, when one forgives he or she recognizes an injustice occurred, overcomes such resentful feelings, and replaces the negative emotions with positive emotions.

Similarly, excusing a transgression does not acknowledge that the act was, indeed, hurtful. To excuse an offender implies that the wrongdoing was not worthy of attention and leaves the person feeling indifferent toward the situation. Excusing suggests that the wrongdoing caused no injury (Enright et al., 1991). When one forgives, he or she acknowledges the personal injury but chooses to work through it.

Perhaps the most common misconception regarding forgiveness is the notion of forgiveness automatically leading to reconciliation. Forgiveness is an internal process, whereas reconciliation is a “behavioral coming together” of two people (Enright et al., 1991, p. 129.). Ultimately, the decision to forgive is up to one person. In contrast, reconciliation involves cooperation between two parties (Stoop & Masteller, 1991 as cited in Freedman, 1998). One does not have to reconcile in order to forgive (Freedman, 1998). It may be necessary to forgive in order to reconcile, but it is not necessary to reconcile in order to forgive. On the contrary, the two concepts could interact in the four following ways: forgive and reconcile, forgive and not reconcile, not forgive and interact, and not forgive and not reconcile (Freedman, 1998). It is
important to understand that reconciliation depends on the offender's behavior, whether the offender apologized, stopped the hurtful behavior, and/or admitted to doing wrong. Especially for people in abusive relationships, the option to forgive and not reconcile may be the safest and wisest decision. Another common misconception is that forgiving perpetuates abuse (Freedman, 2007). It is not forgiveness that perpetuates the abuse, but rather the unwise reconciliation. Even some researchers misleadingly combine the two concepts in their definition, which Freedman (1998) believes may discourage people from forgiving.

Likewise, justification is often confused with forgiveness. When one thinks an action is fair or justified, forgiveness does not need to happen. Enright and colleagues (1991) use the example of a person stealing a vehicle to drive a wounded child to the hospital. One may feel the act of stealing was justified and, therefore, forgiveness is not necessary. In other words, the act of stealing in this situation is understandable, and may make it easier for one to forgive. However, when a transgression results in a deep, unfair, personal injury one may choose and has the right to forgive.

According to Enright, Santos, and Al-Mabuk (1989), forgiveness happens most often within the framework of justice. They compared the moral development of forgiveness to that of Kohlberg's stages of justice (see Table 2). Both are stage models and are based upon the assumption that both use a sequence of strategies as a means to settle a problem. Yet, these authors maintain that there are distinct differences between using a justice and forgiveness strategy. When one forgives, he or she rejects the notion of personal justice, gives up revenge-seeking behaviors, and struggles to overcome negative feelings towards the offender. The person who chooses forgiveness liberates the offender from moral obligation. The offender can still make compensations for the offense, but the victim has overcome the negative feelings he or she has towards the offender caused by the offense.

It is also important to note that although one can avoid using a forgiveness strategy, it is often difficult to avoid using a justice strategy, such as punishment. In other words, it may be easier for one to choose a justice strategy that coincides with the stipulations under the law,
rather than choose to forgive the offender. Enright and Al-Mabuk (1989) explain that every day we are faced with justice decisions. Situations happen where we decide how to respond, using justice reasoning. In doing so, we often try to decipher what the appropriate punishment will be. In other words, does the punishment fit the crime? This mentality is commonplace and is an example of a justice problem-solving strategy. Some people may consider the decision to forgive as the “fairest” option. When using forgiveness strategies, forgiveness is not used to determine the “fairest” or most just plan of action (Enright & Al-Mabuk, 1989). In any situation, one could choose to use a forgiveness strategy; however, that is a choice the victim can choose to make or avoid. When choosing forgiveness, people avoid using revenge behaviors and intentionally forgo opportunities to seek personal retribution.

Since the stages of justice and forgiveness do correspond, one does not need to necessarily choose either model (Freedman et al., 2005). That is, forgiveness and justice can exist together. They are not mutually exclusive concepts. For example, one can be taken to court in a public way, while at the same time be personally forgiven by the victim. In this situation, the victim uses a justice-thinking strategy by taking the offender to court, while at the same time using a forgiveness strategy by choosing to forgive the offender. It is important to note that these stages are not necessarily sequential. That is, not everyone experiencing forgiveness will go through each step in order or only once. Since they are developmental, stage models each person may fit in a particular stage based upon their reaction to the offense.
### Table 1

**Stages of Justice and Forgiveness Development**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages of Justice</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage 1: Punishment and obedience orientation.</strong> I believe that justice should be</td>
<td><strong>Revengeful forgiveness.</strong> I can forgive someone who wrongs me only if I can punish</td>
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<td>decided by the authority, by the one who can punish.</td>
<td>him to a similar degree to my own pain.</td>
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<td><strong>Stage 2: Relativist justice.</strong> I have a sense of reciprocity that defines justice for me.</td>
<td><strong>Restitutional or compensational forgiveness.</strong> If I get back what was taken away from me, then I can forgive. Or, if I feel guilty about withholding forgiveness then I can forgive to relieve my guilt.</td>
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<td><strong>Stage 3: Good boy/girl justice.</strong> Here, I reason that the group consensus should decide what is right and wrong. I go along so that others will like me.</td>
<td><strong>Expectational forgiveness.</strong> I can forgive if others put pressure on me to forgive. It is easier to forgive when other people expect it.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Stage 4: Law and order justice.</strong> Societal laws are my guides to justice. I uphold laws in order to have an orderly society.</td>
<td><strong>Lawful expectational forgiveness.</strong> I forgive when my religion demands it. Notice that this is not Stage 2 in which I forgive to relieve my own guilt about withholding forgiveness.</td>
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<td><strong>Stage 5: Social contract orientation.</strong> I am still interested in that which maintains the social fabric but I also realize that unjust laws exist. Therefore, I see it as just, as fair, to work within the system for change.</td>
<td><strong>Forgiveness as social harmony.</strong> I forgive when it restores harmony or good relations in society. Forgiveness decreases friction and outright conflict in society. Not that forgiveness is a way to control society; it is a way of maintaining peaceful relations.</td>
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<td><strong>Stage 6: Universal ethical principle orientation.</strong> My sense of justice is based on maintaining the individual rights of all persons. Conscience rather than laws or norms determines what I will accept when there are competing claims.</td>
<td><strong>Forgiveness as love.</strong> I forgive unconditionally because it promotes a true sense of love. Because I must truly care for each person, a hurtful act on his/her part does not alter that sense of love. This kind of relationship keeps open the possibility of reconciliation and closes the door on revenge. Note that forgiveness is no longer on social context, as in Stage 5. The forgiver does not control the other by forgiving; he releases him.</td>
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*Note:* This table was taken from Enright, et al. (1989)

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**Models of Forgiveness**

To foster a deeper understanding of forgiveness, several researchers have developed models of forgiveness (Enright et al., 1989; Enright et al., 1991; Kaminer et al., 2000; Scobie & Scobie, 2000). According to Kaminer and colleagues (2000), current models of forgiveness fall
into the following categories: typological models, task-stage models, models based on theories of personality and psychopathology, and developmental models. While all models have strengths and limitations, most intervention studies have used a developmental, process model of forgiveness (Al-Mabuk et al., 1995; Freedman & Enright, 1996; Freedman & Knupp, 2003; Gambaro, 2002; Gassin, Enright, & Knutson, 2005). As previously mentioned, such models take into account the cognitive, affective, and behavioral systems. More specifically, the process model developed by Enright and colleagues (1991) maintains that one can complete the process of forgiveness in 20 units (see Table 2). Again, the units do not necessarily indicate the process is sequential, but demonstrates that forgiving is a “journey” and may take a significant amount of time to undergo (Freedman, 2007, p. 395).

The first eight units comprise the uncovering phase in which all the negative emotions and reactions are acknowledged by the victim. One allows himself or herself to recognize and experience the effects of the unjust act (Freedman, 2007). Forgiveness is not the first or natural way one reacts after being hurt. An individual could seek retribution, social and/or political injustice, or utilize psychological defenses (Worthington & Wade, 1999). Such psychological responses are used as a way to protect oneself after experiencing a personal injury. The types of psychological defenses include denial, suppression, repression, rationalization, reaction formation, displacement, dissociation, regression, and/or identification (Freedman, 1994). As Freedman (1994) acknowledges, these psychological defenses are very common and utilized by everyone to shield themselves from emotional distress.

Denial is defined as “a process whereby an individual avoids painful or anxiety-producing reality by unconsciously believing that it does not or did not exist” (Freedman, 1994, p. 5). This occurs when an experience is too distressing to consciously contemplate. Essentially, a person who is in denial tries to convince him or herself that the painful event did not occur. As Enright (2001) points out, denial can be temporarily health, but becomes unhealthy when someone persistently pretends the painful event did not occur. Similarly, suppression is a mechanism used in the early stages of denial (Freedman, 2007). An individual consciously tries to force
distressing thoughts and feelings out of his or her mind. Whereas denial convinces oneself that the event never actually occurred, suppression drives those feelings from consciousness (Enright, 2001).

Repression is a psychological response often confused with suppression. When an individual uses repression, he or she unconsciously pushes distressing thoughts and feelings out of the mind. However, when an individual represses a memory the person is not aware that he or she is doing so. As Freedman (2007) notes, repressed feelings of anger can be hazardous if they are not effectively acknowledged and coped with. Repressed anger can be especially damaging and may elicit feelings of fatigue and lack of enthusiasm (Hancock & Mains, 1987 as cited in Freedman, 1994). Repression is more likely to happen if the victim is a child (Enright, 2001).

When a victim uses rationalization, he or she develops reasons to justify the hurtful event. Essentially, the victim makes excuses for the offender’s actions that keep the offender from being held accountable for his or her hurtful behavior. In contrast, reaction formation is a mechanism used to suppress feelings of distress and exhibit opposite attitudes and behaviors. For example, individuals using reaction formation often use humor to hide behind their desire to cry.

Displacement is another common psychological defense mechanism. When an individual uses displacement, feelings are misdirected or transferred from the offender to someone else (Enright, 2001). Instead of identifying and dealing with the source of one’s anger appropriately, he or she may inappropriately blame others and/or unreasonably become angry with people, animals, or even objects. For example, a person may kick their pet or break an object when they are displacing anger.

Similar to denial, dissociation is a defense mechanism where the victim attempts to separate themselves from the painful experience. “By putting the hurt of unacceptable feelings into a particular personality structure and then separating from the dominant personality, one is able to isolate the hurt and keep it from conscious awareness” (Freedman, 2007, p.9).
Regression and identification with the aggressor are other psychological responses (Enright, 2001). Regression is defined as the mental and/or physical action of returning to less mature patterns of behavior (Freedman, 2007). Regression serves to remove a person from a distressing state of mind and help him or her to return to a place of less anxiety. In contrast, identification is a conscious choice to boost one's self-esteem by replicating/imitating another person or object viewed in a positive way. People who have been abused often times may abuse others as a way to regain control.

One of the most important steps in the uncovering phase is confronting one's anger. According to Fitzgibbons (1998) anger is a "strong feeling of displeasure and antagonism aroused by a sense of injury or wrong" (p. 64). One cannot forgive until he or she has identified the origin and intensity of his or her anger (Enright, 2001). Anger is a common emotional response due to one's voids of love, praise, acceptance, and justice (Fitzgibbons, 1998). Often time anger has been conveyed as an inappropriate emotion to express and, therefore, can be difficult to eliminate (Freedman, 1994). Nevertheless, expression of anger in an appropriate, constructive way can release physical and emotional anxiety (Freedman, 1994; Fitzgibbons, 1998). As Freedman (1994) points out, admitting one's anger takes strength and courage, whereas keeping anger in can cause hurt and pain. When one is angry, the psychological defense mechanisms previously described often take over. Anger can be suppressed, denied, misplaced, or misdirected. Before one can fully heal and forgive, he or she must acknowledge ones anger in order to resolve it in a constructive manner (Freedman, 1994; Enright, 2001).

Anger can lead to a desire for revenge (Fitzgibbons, 1998) or, in extreme circumstances, feelings of hatred (Freedman, 1994). A desire for revenge and retribution are normal, and forgiveness is one strategy an individual can use to release him or herself from such negative feelings. While anger is a healthy, normal reaction to a personal injury, hatred is a sign that the person needs to be healed (Smedes, 1996 as cited in Freedman, 2007). As a result, the person who feels hatred often times suffers more negative consequences than the person they hate.
The next part of the uncovering phase involves exploring feelings of guilt or shame. According to Freedman (1994), shame is a feeling of embarrassment, disgrace, or humiliation as a result of others’ reactions. People experience three common reactions when feelings of shame are elicited by a hurtful event. Children and adolescents who are bullies often are experiencing such feelings of shame. The victim may also excessively blame the offender. That is, they may inappropriately blame the offender for all their problems, instead of the initial injurious event.

In contrast, feelings of guilt occur after an individual does something wrong, or break one’s own moral standards (Freedman, 1994; Enright, 2001). It is important to note that feelings of false guilt can arise. According to Enright (2001), in order to differentiate between real guilt and false guilt is to determine how the guilt affects oneself emotionally. Real guilt often leads to feelings of anger. False guilt, on the other hand, is “a reaction toward someone we need or love” (Enright, 2001, p. 111). If an individual feels anger toward a person he or she loves, he or she may be afraid that the anger will trigger another injury. Thus, the individual internalizes the anger, causing feelings of false guilt.

After the individual experiences feelings of guilt and shame, he or she needs allow himself/herself to live through and experience the pain caused by the offense (Freedman, 1994). This is Unit 4 of the uncovering phase. He or she should dissect his or her emotions association with the hurtful event more deeply. To avoid preoccupation with the hurtful event, an individual needs to relive the event, but do so in such a way that will not cause further injury. According to Freedman (1994), the pain associated with a hurtful event can actually get worse if he or she uses negative cognitive rehearsal. To overcome these negative feelings, it is necessary to alter these thoughts and try and think about the positive outcomes elicited by the event (Eastin, 1989 as cited in Freedman, 1994). For example, an individual can focus on how well he or she is doing with the healing process. The last three units of the uncovering phase involve comparing oneself to the offender, re-examine oneself, and understand and accept the world is not fair (Freedman, 1994).
Steps nine through eleven comprise the Decision Phase. During the decision phase, a person commits to forgiving the offender. He or she has investigated the idea of forgiveness before making such a decision (Freedman et al., 2005). The possible methods of coping are presented, and the advantages of choosing forgiveness are explained to the victim (Fitzgibbons, 1998). It is during this phase that the victim has “a change of heart toward the injurer which may help him or her consider forgiveness as an option” (Freedman & Knupp, 2003, p. 139). It is important to understand that the victim can make the decision that he or she wants to forgive, even if he or she is not ready to do so at that point in time.

Units 12 through 15 represent the work phase in the model of forgiveness. These units are characterized by reframing the transgressor and/or transgression. A person uses reframing to expand the perception of the offender (Freedman, 2007). That is, the victim tries to view the offender as a human being. They are not excusing the offender’s actions, but trying to understand the events in the offender’s life that caused them to commit the transgression (Freedman, 2007). More specifically, one tries to understand the context of the offender’s circumstances in order to better identify how the betrayal occurred (Freedman et al., 2005). The goal is to help the injured person develop a sense of compassion in hopes of releasing their desire for revenge (Fitzgibbons, 1998). During unit 15, the offended person “accepts and absorbs his or her own pain as well as the pain of the offender” in order to avoid revenge behaviors (Freedman et al., 2005, p. 395). In therapy, Fitzgibbons (1998) explains the concept of forgiveness and assures his clients that deciding to forgive does not mean putting oneself at risk to be hurt again. Although trusting the offender may occur during resolution, the two processes must be distinguished to the client (Fitzgibbons, 1998). Once the client understands, an informed decision can take place.

The Deepening Phase is the final stage in this model and consists of steps 16-20. Ultimately, the offended person recognizes forgiveness as a gift and grants the offender forgiveness. More importantly, the victim experiences healing and may even experience improved psychological well-being (Fitzgibbons, 1998). The hurt once caused by the transgression no longer exists and the injured person is restored (Freedman et al., 2005). It is at
the stage the victim can finally find meaning from the suffering he or she experienced and realizes he or she may have a new purpose in life as a result experiencing such injury and successfully working through it using forgiveness.

Table 2

Psychological Variables That May Be Involved When We Forgive

Uncovering Phase
1. Examination of psychological defenses
2. Confrontation of anger; the point is to release, not harbor, the anger
3. Admittance of shame, when this is appropriate
4. Awareness of cathexis
5. Awareness of cognitive rehearsal of the offense
6. Insight that the injured party may be comparing self with the injurer
7. Realization that oneself may be permanently and adversely changed by the injury
8. Insight into a possibly altered "just world"

Decision Phase
9. A change of heart, conversation, new insights that old resolution strategies are not working
10. Willingness to consider forgiveness as an option
11. Commitment to forgive the offender

Work Phase
12. Reframing, through role taking, who the wrongdoer is by viewing him or her in context
13. Empathy toward the offender
14. Awareness of compassion, as it emerges, toward the offender
15. Acceptance and absorption of the pain

Deepening Phase
16. Finding meaning for self and others in the suffering and in the forgiveness process
17. Realization that self has needed others' forgiveness in the past
18. Insight that one is not alone (universal, support)
19. Realization that self may have a new purpose in life because of the injury
20. Awareness of decreased negative affect and, perhaps, increased positive affect, if this begins to emerge, toward the injurer; awareness of internal, emotional release

Note: This table is taken from Freedman (2007) and is an expansion of the research of the Human Development Study Group (1991).

Forgiveness and Adolescents

Now that the concept of forgiveness has been explored broadly, it will be examined specifically with regard to adolescents and children. Since forgiveness requires maturation and age differences are evident, it has been categorized as a developmental concept (Enright &
Human Development Study Group, 1994; Gaughf, 2003). In their initial study examining the social cognitive developmental model of forgiveness, Enright et al. (1989) found that adolescents and children differ from adults when conceptualizing the construct of forgiveness. In general, adolescents approached or were at the stage of expectational forgiveness. Adolescents are more likely to forgive if they feel pressure to do so. For example, perhaps a parent expects their adolescent child to forgive a sibling after a fight. Their child would be more likely to do so in such a case because that is what the parent expects. Enright (2001) found that their family and peers played a significant role influencing an adolescent’s thinking about forgiveness in this stage.

Similarly, Girard and Mullet (1997) found that age served as a function for the tendency to forgive. That is, as age increased so did the willingness to forgive. More specifically, adolescents were more willing to forgive under conditions where the victim got back what was taken away, if the offender didn’t intend to cause harm or injury, and if an apology was offered by the offender. Likewise, Enright (2001) found that authorities influenced ideas of forgiveness in late adolescence. For example, if a teacher or parent promoted forgiveness, the adolescent was more likely to listen. Unlike with adults (particularly the elderly), forgiveness is not unconditional for adolescents (Enright, 2001; Girard & Mullet, 1997; Vinsonnea & Mullet, 2001). The findings of Girard and Mullet (1997) suggest that adolescents understood forgiveness at stage two or restitutional forgiveness. In restitutional forgiveness one only forgives if he or she can get back what was taken away. In other circumstances, an individual may choose to forgive to reduce or eliminate one’s own guilt about denying forgiveness from the offender.

In order to further understand how adolescents conceptualize forgiveness, Middleton (1995) examined how adolescents define forgiveness. She found that 42% of adolescents defined forgiveness as overcoming resentment, while 21% used reconciliation. Others confused forgiveness with forgetting or justification. Furthermore, when asked to describe what they did in order to forgive, most indicated overcoming of resentment or reconciliation. Although slightly over half of the participants indicated that forgiveness should always occur, the rest maintained that forgiveness is contingent upon the severity of the offense and/or the presence of an apology.
The findings of Lukasik (2000), Vinsonnea and Mullet (2001), and Girard and Mullet (1997) illustrated this notion in their research. That is, adolescents tend to perceive an apology as a necessary component before they can begin the forgiveness process.

Among the factors that influence how an adolescent understands forgiveness is the notion of implicit theories. Dweck (2000) explains that we can either view people as having fixed, innate qualities (entity theorist) or believe that qualities are malleable and dependent upon contextual factors (incremental theorists). Adolescents who hold an incremental theory demonstrated a greater propensity to forgive a peer who caused personal injury (Beth, 2006). Beth’s (2006) findings are encouraging because incremental theories can be taught and used as interventions to increase forgiveness in adolescents. If an adolescent’s implicit theory can be changed to hold an incremental way of thinking, he or she would be more apt to forgive and experience less anxiety about the future (Beth, 2006).

Forgiveness and Anger in Adolescents

People frequently externalize forgiveness because they do not understand the role of anger during the process. Anger plays a key role in the forgiveness process (Beth, 2006; Fitzgibbons, 1998). Unfortunately, anger is a pervasive emotion among today’s adolescent population. As explained by Garbarino and deLara (2003), educators often fail to recognize the feelings of hopelessness associated with such anger. For example, when students are bullied they will endure it until they can no longer stand it. When this happens the desire for revenge occurs. Furthermore, the prevalence of aggravated assault, murder, manslaughter, and burglary committed by adolescents has increased in the last decade (Federal Bureau of Investigation as cited in Beth, 2006). Not only have the previously stated crimes increased, but also the rates of suicide and depression (as cited in Beth, 2006). “Aggressive behavior patterns are the most common reason for referral among psychiatrically referred children and adolescents” (Fombonne, 1998 as cited in Beyh, 2006, p. 8). Anger has been linked to many psychological problems experienced by adults and adolescents (Deffenbacher, Lynch, Oetting, & Kemper, 1996). Adolescents tend to cope with anger by expressing it ineffectively because they do not know what
to do with their anger. As a result, they are more likely to cause hurt to themselves or others, experience difficulties forming or maintaining interpersonal relationships, experience academic problems, and/or have low-self esteem (Deffenbacher et al., 1996). In essence, the lack of ability to effectively deal with anger can have significant long-term effects on one's physical, social, emotional, and educational well-being (Deffenbacher et al., 1996). According to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, one-third of students in grades 6-10 have reported being directly involved with serious bullying (as cited in Garbarino & de Lara, 2003).

In general, anger is a response elicited by the “failure of others to meet one’s needs for love, praise, acceptance, and justice” (Fitzgibbons, 1998, p. 64). For children, this anger can be caused by disappointment from peers, siblings, parents, or strangers. According to Fitzgibbons (1998), anger can be dealt with using the three following coping strategies: conscious or unconscious denial, active or passive aggression expression, and forgiveness. Since denial is the most common strategy used in childhood and adolescence, many adults carry with them unconscious anger. Anger leads to the desire to seek revenge. The decision to forgive can be a useful tool in acknowledging such anger and expressing it in a healthy way (Freedman, 1994).

For example, Herbst (1999) gave a speech to a juvenile facility in Pennsylvania about how to heal emotionally after his father hurt him deeply. John, a 17 year-old boy who committed aggravated assault and attempted murder wrote the following letter to Herbst:

My name is John. I am a student at North Central. I really enjoyed your speech. When you came I was all tensed up and angry. When you left I felt really good... The part I really took personal was when you said that people have to forgive people who did things wrong to us. I was sexually abused when I was a kid by my dad. I am trying my hardest to forgive him, but the pain is too strong that is stopping me. We have not talked in a long time and I would like to know if you can give me any advice on what to do... (p. 55)

As Herbst (1999) explains, John had been betrayed by the most important male figure in his life. Before this speech, John had not understood the connection between the abuse he had suffered and how his anger had manifested in violent behaviors. John seems willing to forgive but he needs help and instruction in doing so. John is one example of why forgiveness education is so critical for today’s children and adolescents.
As evidenced by the prevalence of school violence, students are in need of effective coping strategies to handle anger caused by personal injuries (Freedman, 2007). It is important to note that 75-90% of inner-city children have either witnessed a crime or been victims of a crime (Gassin et al., 2005). Gassin and colleagues (2005) explain that poverty, racism, and exposure to violence are three key factors in determining at-risk adolescents. At-risk adolescents are characterized by the likelihood of engaging in crime, using drugs, and adolescent pregnancy (Kagan, 1991). The degree of risk related to outcomes for such adolescents differs across five categories of at-risk adolescent (Kagan, 1991). As Kagan (1991) points out, the level of success will vary when implementing interventions with such adolescents due to their contrasting psychological characteristics.

According to Kagan (1991), there are at least five types of at-risk adolescents. Those who have experienced "chronic school/academic failure" are the most common type of at-risk adolescent (p.593). As Kagan (1991) notes, the likelihood of obtaining a sufficient income and/or occupation decreases dramatically if one experiences chronic school failure. This could lead to feelings of anger, antisocial behavior, or drug use. Although academic failure has been associated with social economic status (Suhyun, 2007), it is easier to address and reduce how many adolescents fail at school than to decrease the prevalence of poor families (Kagan, 1991).

The second type described by Kagan (1991) is the adolescent who was raised in an environment filled with anger, anxiety, abuse, neglect, or indifference on the part of the parents/caregivers. Often times the adolescent will identify with one of the unfavorable parents and has an increased risk to harbor anger as a result of such identification. The adolescent recognizes and perceives the characteristics of his or her parent as undesirable and is more apt to dissatisfy their parent by disobeying parental rules regarding sexuality, drugs, aggression, and/or school achievement (Kagan, 1991). Motivation and confidence to complete school work sufficiently decreases. Although this is similar to the first type of at-risk adolescent, the identification with an undesirable parent distinguishes them as a separate group. It is also
important to note that adolescents from all social classes are equally at risk to fall into this category.

The third type involves those adolescents who are extremely susceptible to peer pressure. Such an adolescent has a compelling desire to gain social acceptance by groups of his or her peers. If these peer groups engage in criminal activity and/or drug use, the adolescent is at-risk to engage in similar behavior (Kagan, 1991). The fourth type is less common, but contains a small amount of adolescents who engage in dangers and/or risky behavior in order to demonstrate his or her desire to be perceived as brave. They want to show they are not afraid of taking risks. Boys are more prone to fall into this category and often engage in delinquent behavior. Research shows boys as having higher delinquency rates and tendency to commit more property, violent, and felony offenses than girls (Herrera & McCloskey, 2001).

The last type of at-risk adolescent happens more frequently in urban areas where stealing, pregnancy, and/or drug use is commonplace among families and community members. As Kagan (1991) notes, it is sometimes difficult to help such adolescents due to their guilt, shame, and motivation to give up such behavior that is socially desirable and normative within their peer groups.

Although these characteristics of at-risk adolescents are typical, the acknowledgment that they have all experienced a deep, unjust personal injury is often absent (Freedman, 2007). As previously mentioned adolescents tend to seek revenge and have a desire to act on their anger by inflicting pain on their offenders (Parrot, 1993). To help them overcome feelings of resentment and bitterness, it is necessary to tell adolescents that they have a right to feel angry (Freedman, 2007). In order to avoid revenge behaviors, alternative ways of coping with their angry feelings should be offered. Fortunately, several treatment interventions have been shown to be effective including applied relaxation, cognitive restructuring, combined cognitive-relaxation coping skills training, social and communication skills training, and anger-focused process-oriented group therapy (Deffenbacher et al., 1996). It is logical that the earlier adolescents learn to cope with their anger the less likely they will to experience problems dealing with their anger later in life.
Forgiveness education can also be another constructive way to teach adolescents to cope with anger elicited by hurtful events they experience.

Although 61% of Americans believe that children learn about forgiveness from the family (Evangelical Press News Service, 1998), adolescents believe that church, peers, and parents could also serve as primary sources (Middleton, 1995). Paleari, Regali, and Fincham (2003) found that the quality of parent-adolescent relationship affects the occurrence of forgiveness. More specifically, adolescents who choose to forgive are less likely to engage in "destructive conflict" after a parent commits an offensive act (Paleari et al., 2003, p. 169). Since conflict within families could potentially intensify into destructive disputes, it's important that adolescents can use forgiveness to overcome such conflict. In essence, forgiveness can facilitate positive parent-adolescent relationships after transgressions occur.

Enright (2001) offers suggestions for parents in teaching the notion of forgiveness to their adolescent children. He recommends using movies, books, and television shows as starting points for discussing forgiveness. Perhaps parents can read books their children have read and discuss the moral issues elicited by the story. The same suggestion could be applied to watching a family movie. Enright (2001) cautions parents from being too authoritarian during such conversations. That is, parents should treat the adolescent as a "mature person" and allow him or her to express thoughts and opinions without arguing (p. 229). Enright (2001) offers the books *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens, *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott, and *Merchant of Venice* by Shakespeare as useful examples. *Dead Man Walking* and *Field of Dreams* are examples of movies that could be used as a forum for discussion.

In addition to using stories, parents can also encourage their adolescent children to engage in acts of generosity (Enright, 2001). Since adolescents are influenced by their parents' behavior, parents can serve as excellent role models and demonstrate generosity through behaviors (i.e. making a donation). If parents practice forgiveness themselves, their children will be more likely to use forgiveness and actually forgive their offenders. Likewise, if parents practice seeking revenge, their children may also be more likely to engage in revenge-seeking
behaviors after experiencing personal injury. It is important to note, however, that parents should not force their children to engage in generous, benevolent behaviors if his or her intent is to teach his or her children to forgive.

Forgiveness Education and Interventions with Adolescents

Unfortunately, not all adolescents have positive relationships with their parents. If a parent does not give their child adequate affection, respect, and acceptance during childhood, adolescents are left feeling unloved (AI-Mabuk et al., 1995). Furthermore, parents who divorce may cause their children to have feelings of anger, betrayal, shame, and/or embarrassment (as cited in Freedman & Knupp, 2003). Research has shown that 40% of children are growing up in single-parent families, often due to divorce (Fitzgibbons, Enright, & O’Brien, 2004). Adolescents may have negative feelings towards their parents for many reasons in addition to the two cited above. Fortunately, forgiveness education has proven to have positive effects for both situations (Al-Mabuk et al., 1995; Freedman & Knupp, 2003). Because adolescents are profoundly influenced by peers and family, it is important that they have adequate role models if they are to understand the process of forgiveness (Enright, 2001).

Since adolescents also learn about forgiveness from peers and school, it is logical for professionals to intervene and educate adolescents in such settings. Although the majority of forgiveness intervention research has occurred with adults (as cited in Freedman, 2007), many researchers have found positive effects for forgiveness interventions with adolescents (Al-Mabuk et al., 1995; Freedman, 2007; Freedman & Knupp, 2003; Gambaro, 2002; Lin, 1998; Lukasik, 2000). More specifically, the 20 unit process model of forgiveness developed by Enright (1991), as described in Table 2, has been successfully implemented with adolescents in school settings. Gambaro (2002) implemented both forgiveness and Rogerian-based support groups with middle school students as a way to cope with anger elicited from a hurtful event. The forgiveness intervention was found to be more successful than the Rogerian-based group, which not only resulted in more positive attitudes towards teachers and school, but also parents and peers. Lin (1998) also found improvements in self-esteem and an increase in the ability to forgive parents.
To help ten adolescents (grades 7, 8, 9) effectively cope with the effects of divorce, Freedman and Knupp (2003) conducted an eight-week forgiveness intervention in a mid-western junior high school. Using a group format, the leader used lecture and activities to help participants work through their emotions and reactions a specific hurt related to their parents’ divorce. Despite the fact that there were no significant increase in forgiveness between the experimental and control groups, participants in the experimental group developed a more hopeful attitude and significantly decreased trait anxiety (Freedman & Knupp, 2003). There were also indications that the participants in the experimental group were working on the forgiveness process; however, eight weeks may not have been long enough for forgiveness to occur.

A Case Study

In order to gain a better understanding of how this 20 unit model can be successfully implemented with adolescents experiencing a deep hurt, a case study conducted by Freedman (2007) will be examined. As part of a daily, seven-week forgiveness education program, 22 participants took part in “instruction, discussion, group exercises, reflective, and case studies read aloud in class” (Freedman, 2007, p. 99). Among these participants was a 16-year old female who had been raped at her ninth grade graduation party by three unfamiliar men. The rapes resulted in pregnancy at the age of 14. In addition, she explained that her mother was verbally and emotionally abusive. Through the intervention, she applied the process of forgiveness to both hurtful instances. Before implementing the intervention, Mindy described her definition of forgiveness as condoning an offense.

During the first unit, Mindy admitted to ineffectively expressing herself verbally toward her mother and physically toward her brother. Freedman (2007) identified Mindy as using suppression as her primary defense mechanism. The most important component of the first unit is to identify the pain caused by the personal injury. In unit 2, Mindy realized that she used anger to “feel powerful” and as a mechanism to protect herself from future hurtful events (Freedman, 2007, p. 103). In order to rid herself of some of the shame she was feeling as a result of the rapes, she wrote down positive features about herself (unit 3). Units 4 and 5 helped Mindy
realize how much energy she had invested in feeling angry and she used a writing exercise to help release some of the negative feelings she was experiencing. To avoid constant rehearsal of the hurtful event, Freedman (2007) suggested she set aside a specific time to limit the amount of time spent thinking about the rape and abuse. During unit 6, Mindy was able to acknowledge why her mother treated her the way she did. That is, Mindy recognized her mother also having experienced anger and hurtful events. Unit 7 helped her understand that the rape and abuse had affected her life in both positive and negative ways. She also realized that some were permanent changes, while others were temporary. In unit 8, Freedman (2007) helped Mindy recognize that although she cannot control who her mother is, she can decide how to react to the abuse. She acknowledged that forgiving was a positive way to handle her experience. All these units demonstrate how Mindy worked through her experiences in the uncovering phase.

She continued to work through the decision, work, and outcome phases of Enright's (1991) model of forgiveness. As she worked through the units, she realized that making the commitment to forgive did not mean forgiveness would occur immediately. She understood that forgiveness is different from all the misconceptions previously described. Mindy wanted to forgive in order to overcome her feelings of anger and resentment. When Mindy realized she could simultaneously feel compassion and anger toward her mother, it enabled her to more easily reframe her mother's behavior. For example, instead of regarding her mother's family as a "bunch of drunks and weirdos," she was able to think about the abuse her mother experienced when her mother was young (Freedman, 2007, p. 108). She understood that is was more constructive to absorb the pain in the forgiveness process, than to take it out on others. Mindy was an example of how the model can be successfully implemented for adolescents and result in positive outcomes.

Facilitating Forgiveness for Children and Adolescents

Enright (2001) suggests the use of stories in helping children understand the process of forgiveness. Research has shown that when material is presented in story format, the content is easier to understand and remember (Willingham, 2004). To help children grasp the nature of
forgiveness, Enright (2001) offers the four following ideas as essential in developing children’s understanding: inherent equality, generosity, moral love, and learning from opposites. As previously discussed, children do not have the developmental capacity to fully understand forgiveness. Nevertheless, these characteristics demonstrate underlying themes in the process of forgiveness.

It is important for children to understand the meaning of inherent equality. They need to understand that no matter what the circumstances, all human beings are equal and deserve to be respected. Just because two human beings may be visibly different from one another, does not mean that one person is better. As Enright (2001) notes, children tend to think in concrete terms. It may be more difficult for them to understand when a person is vulnerable. Ultimately, the goal is to help children recognize that a person is still a human being, even when he or she does something hurtful. However, it is necessary to make the distinction between inherent equality and inherent trustworthiness. That is, just because people should be respected equally, does not mean that all people are trustworthy. “Trustworthiness is usually dependent on the person’s behavior or intended behavior (Enright, 2010, p. 226).” Enright (2001) recommends Dr. Seuss’s *Horton Hears a Who* to introduce the notion of inherent equality to children. The theme of the book is that a “person is a person no matter how small” (Enright, 2001, p. 226).

Generosity is another characteristic that can be introduced using stories. Although many children’s books illustrate this idea, Enright (2001) suggests *The Polar Express* by Chris Van Allsburg. In this story the children receive a free ride to the North Pole including hot chocolate and candy. Santa shows generosity when he places a boy on his lap and asks what he wants for Christmas. On the way home, the boy loses the gift he requested. However, Santa generously places the lost gift under his Christmas tree.

Moral Love is demonstrated in Hirosuke’s Hamad’s book entitled *The Tears of the Dragons*. This story portrays the notion of unconditional love. Enright (2001) notes that it is also important to use stories that have opposite themes of the ones you are trying to convey. Parents can use stories where a person seeks revenge and talk about the consequences of revenge-

**Forgiveness Education**

Although parents can be excellent role models in teaching children about forgiveness, teachers and other educators can also be facilitators of forgiveness education. Gassin and colleagues (2005) implemented a school-based, forgiveness intervention with thirteen first-grade classes in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In doing so, they focused on unit 12, reframing who the offender is by viewing him or her in context. They focused on helping children understand that all people have worth and should be shown moral love, generosity, and respect (Gassin et al., 2005). As previously mentioned, forgiveness is not the same as reconciliation (Freedman, 1998). Therefore, the researchers were careful to distinguish the benefits of forgiving a bully, yet not reconciling with a bully.

A three-part curriculum was implemented in this school. In addition to including forgiveness in first grade classrooms, forgiveness education will also be discussed in the Milwaukee school during third grade, middle school, and early high school to ensure that the students develop their understanding of the concept. The first part of the curriculum introduces the following five concepts using books by Dr. Seuss: inherent worth, moral love, kindness, respect, and generosity. The second part presents the five elements again, but “within the context of forgiveness” (Gassin et al., 2005, p. 324). The last part discusses the five elements within the “child’s own attempt to forgive someone” (Gassin et al., p. 324). The important component of the curriculum is distinguishing between understanding the forgiveness process and making the choice to practice forgiveness. In this case, children always had the option to apply forgiveness to their own experiences of personal injury.

Since confronting anger is such a key component in the forgiveness process (Freedman, 2007), Fitzgibbons et al. (2004) suggests that educators first try to understand what is causing children to be angry. However, understanding the source of the anger does not mean teachers must accept angry behavior (Fitzgibbons et al., 2004). Fitzgibbons and colleagues (2004) offer
the four suggestions that school districts can use to handle angry students. First of all, districts could provide teachers with training in anger-reduction skills. This way, teachers can provide students with effective, alternative ways to deal with their anger. Students have expressed their desire for teachers to serve as "second parents" in their learning environments (Garbarino & deLara, 2003, p. 21). Secondly, schools should concentrate on prevention. Programs that help students control their need to seek revenge when they have been hurt, bullying-prevention, and providing bullies and victims with treatment can all be beneficial ways to prevent anger problems in schools. Fitzgibbons et al. (2004) emphasize the importance of addressing such issues at the middle school level, when bullying is often at its peak. Character development programs can also help students effectively deal with anger. Such programs help students acquire the ability to forgive, empathize, and be patient with others (Fitzgibbons et al., 2004). Lastly, parents should be included in such programs. Fitzgibbons and colleagues (2004) suggest addressing anger-reduction issues at parent-teacher meetings and explain the techniques teachers are using.

Forgiveness and Clinical Practice

Not only can forgiveness education be implemented in a school setting, but also in a clinical location. Despite the fact that Enright's (1991) model of forgiveness and forgiveness education has been shown to have positive cognitive and emotional benefits for adults and adolescents experiencing a deep hurt, the number of mental health professionals effectively utilizing forgiveness as a therapeutic tool is unclear. According to Fitzgibbons (1998), there is a "compelling need" for mental professionals to receive training in implementing forgiveness for their treatment of clients with clinical diagnoses (p. 72). Mental health counselors also have found forgiveness to be a prominent issue in clinical practice (Konstam et al., 2000). Forgiveness interventions can be used to help a gamut of areas including improving romantic relationships (Worthington & Wade, 1999), family relationships (Maio, 2008), sexual abuse victims (Freedman & Enright, 1996), feeling unloved (Al-Mabuk, Enright, & Cardis, 1995), and with eating disorders and other clinical diagnoses (Fitzgibbons, 1998).
Nevertheless, there appears to be a disconnect between current research and clinical practice. Due to the beneficial outcomes produced by forgiveness interventions, Konstam and colleagues (2000) surveyed over 350 members of the American Mental Health Counselors Association about their attitudes related to forgiveness and their use of forgiveness in their current practice. More specifically they inquired what mental health counselors perceive as key characteristics in the forgiveness process, the likelihood that they would raise forgiveness as an issue with clients, and factors contributing to their attitudes toward forgiveness. Although most believed forgiveness to be an appropriate area to explore, only half believed it was the mental health counselor’s responsibility to raise the issue in practice. As expected, counselors who had more positive attitudes about forgiveness were more likely to utilize forgiveness in their practice. Despite such positive attitudes, the majority of mental health counselors did not agree with the following units proposed in Enright’s (1991) model, especially because of the emphasis on the offender. However, research has shown that reframing the situation and separating the injurer from the injury are crucial and necessary components in the forgiveness process (Al-Mabuk, Dedrick, & Vanderah, 1998). Thus, the client must spend adequate time viewing the situation in a new perspective, which involves focusing on the offender and the offender’s actions. Therefore, even though their efforts of using forgiveness in their practice are well-intended, the mental health counselors in this research may not have been utilizing the forgiveness process effectively. In summary, there appears to be a need for professional training of mental health counselor and psychologists to align current use of forgiveness in their practice with forgiveness intervention studies.

Conclusions and Implications

Overall, research suggests that forgiveness can be a useful healing tool not only for adults, but also for children and adolescents (Freedman, 2007; Fitzgibbons et al., 2004). Although forgiveness is a complex process, forgiveness interventions in educational settings have shown to have successful results (Freedman, 2007). Since anger is a key component in a variety of clinical disorders (Fitzgibbons, 1998), it is logical that adolescents who are experiencing
difficulties coping with their anger be targeted for interventions in order to help them avoid further problems in their adult lives. Since forgiveness is not an overnight process, Freedman (2007) recommends that people implementing such interventions need to be just as invested in the process as those who are trying to forgive. Thus, forgiveness would be an appropriate and useful tool for mental health professionals to utilize in their practice, if sufficient training is offered (Enright, 2001).

**Current Study**

The present study examined the effects of a forgiveness education intervention with adolescents at a local Mental Health Institute. The hypotheses were as follows:

1. At post-test, the treatment group, in comparison to themselves, will show an increase in forgiveness toward a specific offender as measured by a forgiveness scale.

2. At post-test, the treatment group, in comparison to themselves, will show an increase in psychological well-being measured by anger, depression, self-esteem, and hope scales.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Design

This study was originally designed to utilize a randomized, experimental group design with a control group to use as a comparison. Half of the participants were to receive the forgiveness education intervention as a way to deal with their anger after experiencing a deep hurt, while the other half of the participants were to receive an anger management course provided by the treatment program at their treatment center. After interviewing 18 adolescents seeking treatment at MHI to ensure they have experienced a deep hurt, the participants were randomly assigned to the treatment or control group. The control group received an anger management class required and provided by staff at MHI, while the treatment group partook in the forgiveness education intervention. All participants were given the measures previously described prior to beginning of the intervention for the treatment group. The treatment group received the forgiveness education intervention provided by the researcher on a weekly basis for a period of fifteen weeks. The participants met as a group every week for approximately forty minutes. All participants had the option to meet the researcher individually to answer any questions the participant may have had as they worked through the process of forgiveness; however, no participants chose to do so. At the end of the fifteen week intervention, all participants were given all the dependent variable measures again. It was the researcher’s intent to compare pretest/posttest scores between the groups that received the forgiveness education intervention and those participants that did not to assess if there were any differences between the groups. Due to attrition and other outside factors, only two participants in the control group were able to complete the post-test measures. Thus, pre/post comparisons were only conducted with the eight remaining participants in the forgiveness education group.
Participants

Adolescents seeking treatment at the Mental Health Institute (MHI) in Independence, Iowa were recruited for this study. Participants were eight adolescents, five females and three males, ranging in age from 10-14 years (M=12 years), grades 5-8 (M= 7). It is important to note that one male participant, age 14, only completed the Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI) at post-test. Thus, data was examined from the seven participants that completed all measures and one participant that completed only the EFI at pre/post. All participants were diagnosed as having a behavioral and or/ psychological disorder/diagnosis. For example, some of the patients were diagnosed with oppositional defiant disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, depression, generalized anxiety, attention deficit disorder, and/or have experienced physical and/or sexual abuse(s). Almost all the adolescent patients at MHI have experienced deep, personal, and unfair hurts and are placed at MHI after a variety of other services and placements have not worked. According to the chief psychologist, MHI is “their last hope.” Most patients at MHI do not have the knowledge and skills to cope with these deep hurts. In order to participate in the intervention, subjects acknowledged experiencing a deep hurt as assessed by the individual interview and/or the EFI. One participant admitted that his anger was so severe that he stabbed his sister with a knife in order to express and deal with it. Thus, he was court-ordered to seek treatment at the inpatient treatment center.

It is important to note that most, if not all, of the participants disclosed experiencing multiple deep hurts. Some of the hurts disclosed in the initial interviews did not match the incident reported in the EFI. For example, one female participant revealed that her father murdered her mother when she was three years old during the initial interview. Thus, she doesn’t have a mom and admitted to having a poor relationship with her step-family. She also explained that she had difficulty getting along with friends and described a few friends she did have as being “backstabbers” on the EFI. She described chewing gum and listening to music as her primary way of dealing with the hurt she has experienced. Other deep hurts expressed by the participants include the following: physical abuse by biological parents (one participant described
Measures

Participants in both the treatment and control groups received the following measures before and after the forgiveness educational intervention: (a) forgiveness measure (b) anger measure (c) depression measure (d) anxiety measure (e) hope measure (f) self-esteem measure and (g) initial interview (see Appendix A). The initial interview was conducted before random assignment to treatment and control groups, and inquired about a deep hurt the participant had experienced, as well as how the participant has been coping thus far.

Initial Interview

All participants were interviewed by the researcher about a deep hurt he or she has experienced. The interview contained 20 questions related to their feelings towards the offender, and other issues regarding family, academic, and/or peer issues (see Appendix A). It also assessed their current definition and understanding of forgiveness (see Appendix B for initial interview summaries).

Forgiveness Measure

The Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI: Subkoviak, Enright, Gass in, Freedman, Olson, & Sarinopoulos, 1995 as cited in Freedman, 1994) was used to measure the degree the adolescents in the study have forgiven an offender for a deep hurt he/she has experienced. This self-report measure contains 60 items, with 20 items per subscale and is a self-report measure of interpersonal forgiveness. The subscales include measures regarding affective, behavioral, and cognitive variables. The subscales include items regarding the absence of negative affect ("I do not feel negative toward him/her"), the presence of positive affect ("I feel affection toward him/her"), the absence of negative thoughts ("I do not think he/she is evil"), the presence of positive thoughts ("I think he/she is worthy of respect"), the absence of negative behavior ("I would not neglect him/her"), and the presence of positive behavior ("I would be considerate of him/her"). The scale also contains five pseudo-forgiveness items to identify denial of the hurtful event ("There was really no problem now that I think about it"). High scores on the pseudo-
forgiveness indicate that the respondent is in denial of the event, rather than forgiven the offender. Data from participants with high scores on this scale should not be used (Barnes, 2004). High scores on the three subscales and overall total score represent a more forgiving attitude toward their offender.

Before participants rate themselves on the affective, behavioral, and cognitive domains of the EFI, they are asked to identify a hurtful experience as well as demographic information about the offender. It is important to note that the word “forgiveness” is intentionally left out in the scale to avoid social desirability and bias in their self report (Barnes, 2004). The EFI was designed for individuals ranging in age from young adolescence to adulthood. It has a fifth grade reading level. During administration, it is important to emphasize that participants should endorse responses based on their current feelings, thoughts, and behaviors toward the hurtful event and offender (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000).

The EFI was created based on the theoretical model of forgiveness developed by Enright and the Human Development Study Group (Barnes, 2004). The subscales have been found to be high in internal consistency, having alpha coefficients ranging from .93-.97 and test-retest reliabilities ranging from .67-.91 (Knupp, 1999). It is considered to be a valid measure, as it has been positively correlated with other measures of forgiveness and negatively correlated with anger, anxiety, and depression (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000).

Since many of the participants in this study varied in their reading abilities, the EFI was administered orally in a group format. Participants filled out the measures on their own, but had as-needed help reading and understanding the statements provided by the researcher and staff at MHI.

Anger Measure

The State Trait Anger Expression Inventory (STAXI) was used to assess anger (Spielberger, 1988) in individuals ages 13 through adulthood. This instrument is a self-report scale and was designed to measure the experience and expression of anger for both normal and
abnormal personalities (Senior, 2001). The experience of anger refers to the subjective state of anger that includes feelings such as irritability and intense rage (Senior, 2001). It also encompasses the notion of trait anger. Individuals experiencing trait anger have the tendency to characterize situations as irritating and frequently react with expressions of state anger. Therefore, state and trait anger are not mutually exclusive concepts. The expression of anger refers to how individuals convey the feelings of anger they experience. The STAXI conceptualizes and measures the expression of anger in the following ways: the extent to which anger is expressed toward people or objects (Anger-Out), aimed inward or internalized (Anger-In), or the extent to which individuals attempt to control their expression of anger (Anger Control).

The STAXI contains 44 items across the three following domains: State, Trait, and Anger Expression. Trait contains two subscales that measure temperament and reaction in the area of trait anger. Anger expression measures the extent to which an individual expresses anger outwardly, feels it internally, and the extent to which he/she controls his/her behavior when they feel angry.

The State Anger subscale, entitled “How I Feel Right Now” contains 10 items assessing an individual’s current state of anger on a 4-point Likert scale. Likewise, the Trait Anger subscale also contains 10 statements measuring an individual’s typical temperament within the realm of anger and is entitled “How I Generally Feel.” The Anger Expression subscale contains 24 items across the three domains of anger expression. “Anger In” contains 8 items measuring the extent to which the individual internalizes anger. “Anger Out” contains 8 items measuring the extent to which the individual expresses his or her anger toward people or objects. “Anger Control” contains 8 items assessing the extent to which the individual makes an effort to control his or her expression of anger. An overall composite score for the Anger Expression subscale is computed using a formula.

Internal consistency reliability coefficients ranged from .70-.90 for adolescent males and females (Senior, 2001). Similarly, other research as shown internal consistency reliability coefficients ranging from .61-.91 for children ages 11-13 (Reyes, Meiningher, Liehr, Chan, &
Mueller, 2003). The STAXI has also shown to be valid, as it has high correlations with tests measuring the same constructs, and low correlations measuring different constructs (Senior, 2001).

It is important to note that the STAXI is written at a 5th grade readability level. Since many of the participants in this study varied in their reading abilities, the STAXI was administered orally in a group format. Participants filled out the measures on their own, but had as-needed help reading and understanding the statements provided by the researcher and staff at MHI.

**Depression Measure**

The Children's Depression Inventory (CDI) was used to measure to assess the major symptoms of depression in children and adolescents ages 7-17 (Carlson, 2003). This self-report scale contains 27 items measuring key symptoms such as feelings of worthlessness and loss of interest in activities (Carlson, 2003). It is written at the first grade reading level and takes approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. The CDI is intended to be used to screen symptoms of depression and for research purposes. It is comprised of the five following subscales: negative mood, interpersonal difficulties, negative self-esteem, ineffectiveness, and anhedonia (the general lack of experiencing pleasure from events that one typically feels pleasurable) Total raw scores range from 0-54, with higher scores indicated greater symptoms of depression.

The CDI was originally derived from the Beck Depression Inventory and was normed using 1266 students from public schools in Florida between 1979 and 1984 (Carlson, 2003). Reliability coefficients of internal consistency range from .71-.89, while test-retest reliability coefficients range from .74-.83 (Kovacs, 1992). Since many of the participants in this study varied in their reading abilities, the CDI was administered orally in a group format. Participants filled out the measures on their own, but had as-needed help reading and understanding the statements provided by the researcher and staff at MHI.
Anxiety Measure

The Multidimensional Anxiety Scale for Children was used to assess symptoms of anxiety in children and adolescents (Caruso, 2004). The self-report scale contains 39 items and the following subscales: (1) physical symptoms (“I feel tense or upright”), (2) social anxiety (“The idea of going away to camp scares me”), (3) harm avoidance (“I keep the light on at night”), and (4) separation anxiety (“I try to stay near my mom or dad”). Participants respond using a 4-point Likert scale, rating each statement ranging from 0 (never true about me) to 3 (often true about me). Internal consistency and validity coefficients have shown that the MASC is both reliable and valid measure of anxiety in children and adolescents (March, Parker, Sullivan, Stallings, & Conners, 1997).

The MASC requires a 4th grade reading level (March et al., 1997). Since many of the participants in this study varied in their reading abilities, the MASC was administered orally in a group format. Participants filled out the measures on their own, but had as-needed help reading and understanding the statements provided by the researcher and staff at MHI.

Hope Measure

The Hope Scale (Enright et al., 1989) was used to measure the degree of optimism the adolescents have toward their future. This measure consists of 30 statements assessing areas of friendship (“I will be more satisfied in my friendships”), achievement (“I will have a high level of motivation to perform on task”), and parental relationships (“I will be more appreciative of my parents”). Participants can respond using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (a) it probably won’t happen, (b) it might happen but I am not sure, (c) it probably will happen, (d) it will happen, and (e) it will happen to a greater extent than I now realize. Scores range from 30 (low hope) to 150 (high hope). Using this scale Al-Mabuk (1990) found internal consistency of .93, in addition to positive correlations with a forgiveness measure (as cited in Knupp, 1999).

Since many of the participants in this study varied in their reading abilities, the Hope Scale was administered orally in a group format. Participants filled out the measures on their
own, but had as-needed help reading and understanding the statements provided by the researcher and staff at MHI.

**Self-Esteem Measure**

The Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (CSEI) was used to measure the adolescents' current self-esteem (Coopersmith, 1981). It is a self-report measure consisting of 25 items that assesses attitudes toward family ("My family expects too much of me"), school ("I often feel upset with my work"), and peers ("Most people are better liked than I am"). Participants can respond that the item is either "like me" or "unlike me."

Split-half reliability were found to be .87 and indicate that the CSEI is a reliable measure (Fullerton, 1972 as cited in Freedman & Knupp, 2003). Coopersmith (1981) also reported the CSEI as having test-retest reliabilities ranging from .70-.81 using samples of 5th grade children (as cited in Freedman, 1994).

Since many of the participants in this study varied in their reading abilities, the CSEI was administered orally in a group format. Participants filled out the measures on their own, but had as-needed help reading and understanding the statements provided by the researcher and staff at MHI.

**Intervention Procedure**

Before conducting initial interviews, the researcher sent consent forms parents and/or guardians of to all possible adolescents that could be participating in either the treatment or control groups (see Appendix C). All patients who had returned signed consent forms were recruited by the researcher. In doing so, the researcher explained that their participation was completely voluntary. She also briefly explained the content of the class and potential risk and benefits (see Appendix E). After recruiting participants, those who volunteered to participate were also asked to sign an informed assent form (see Appendix D).

The Journey Toward Forgiveness: A Guided Curriculum for Children, ages 10-12 (Knutson & Enright, 2006) was used as the focus of the forgiveness education intervention. This
Summer Wheels and followed the discussion questions outlined in the curriculum. The researcher also included the activity "Forgiveness for Peace Poster" where students drew pictures of seeking, receiving, or offering forgiveness that reflects these ideas in their own lives.

Lesson 3 focused on the concept of inherent worth within the context of offering, seeking, and receiving forgiveness. Students learned that all people have inherent worth, which is based upon internal qualities of their mind and heart. The researcher emphasized that all members of the human family have inherent worth, even when they treat us unfairly. When that happens, our hearts can become filled with anger. Forgiveness is one way a person can choose to respond to the unfair hurt. By forgiving and expressing love, we demonstrate the worth of people. Since this can be a difficult concept for students to grasp, the researcher provided students with a brief handout. They were also provided with 5 questions with which they could choose to journal for the remainder of the class and throughout the week.

Lesson 4 taught students the notion of agape or service love within the context of giving, seeking, and receiving forgiveness. The researcher explained that when people offer forgiveness, they are making a choice to recognize and acknowledge the inherent worth of the person who hurt them, thus, offering love. Students learned that they can demonstrate this kind of love through words, gifts, thoughts, and behaviors. Again, because this was a difficult concept to grasp the researcher spent a lot of time asking and answering questions about the topic. At the end of the session, she provided students five more questions to journal about related to agape love.

Lesson 5 explained that forgiving is a way to show kindness, respect, and generosity. Students learned the definition of those words and discussed what it means to practice those ideas when people have hurt us. After asking and answering the discussion questions as outlined in the curriculum, the researching asked students to pair up to discuss the "Journey to Joy and Forgiveness" (Knutson & Enright, 2006) questions. This involved asking students to reflect, write, or discuss with a partner (if he/she felt comfortable) the following questions: (1) What are some acts of kindness, respect, and generosity that may safely be shown to yourselves
and others? (2) Do all people—even those who behave unfairly—deserve kindness, respect, and generosity? Why or why not? (3) Do you deserve kindness, respect, and generosity—even when you behave unfairly? Why or why not? (4) Has a person to whom you were unfair ever treated you with kindness, respect, and generosity? How did it make you feel? How did it affect your relationship? and (5) What experiences in showing kindness, respect, and generosity toward a person who was unfair have made a positive difference in your relationship with that person?

The overall objective was to continue to learn about kindness, respect, and generosity within the context of forgiveness.

Lesson 6 highlighted the importance of deep worth in others and offering agape love, kindness, and respect after experiencing an unfair hurt. Students learned the importance of being able to balance seeing the worth of the person who hurt them, while at the same time seeing their own worth as they forgive. The researcher explained that if students perceive the offender has having greater worth, they may be putting themselves at risk to be hurt again. On the contrary, if they believe they have more worth they would be putting themselves at risk to become a bully. Balancing these ideas is key in the forgiveness process. Students also participated in "The Forgiveness Tightrope" activity where they used the analogy of a tightrope to apply this idea. It is important to note Lessons four through six recommend using the book *Tiger in the Tall Grass* by Robert Enright. The researcher did not have access to this material, so those activities were not conducted as part of the curriculum.

Lesson 7 focused more specifically on the idea that forgiveness is a choice. Students learned people make choices on how to deal with the hurt they've experienced. The researcher provided examples of the various psychological defense mechanisms and explained that choosing to forgive is a brave choice. Students learned that by choosing to forgive, they should experience less anger, anxiety, and sadness and, in turn, feel more joy and improve their relationships with others. The researcher read the book *I Had Trouble in Getting to Solla Sollew* by Dr. Seuss and discussed it using the questions provided in the curriculum.
Lesson 8 focused on the importance of being able to accurately distinguish the difference between an injustice and things such as inconvenience, discomfort, disappointment, and frustration from not getting one’s way. Students learned about patterns of thinking and ways people make “thinking errors.” The first error they learned about was the idea that people assume or interpret a person’s behavior based upon a past hurtful experience. For example, some people have a tendency to think that a person who committed a hurtful act is a bad person rather than viewing them as a person with worth who made a poor choice in their behavior. The second thinking error occurs when people misperceive an event as unfair when in actuality it was an everyday trouble of life (i.e. inconvenience, discomfort, disappointment). The thinking error happens when people don’t have all the information and we assume the person is treating us unfairly. One example of this is if a friend doesn’t show up at the agreed upon time because he/she got ill and couldn’t communicate that. The hurt experienced by the person was not caused by the friend deliberately breaking plans like the person initially thought. The researcher read the Dr. Seuss book again and stopped to discuss each example of “unfair” events. Students had to decipher whether it was an unfair hurt or a function of a thinking error. The researcher also developed numerous real-life examples, and made a game out of trying to identify an unfair hurt versus a thinking error. Students were given examples of unfair hurts and “every day troubles” and had to correctly identify each example and tape it under the appropriate column on the white board. Students did this in teams. The team who identified the most situations correctly won.

Lesson 9 discussed emotions and feelings that occur after an injustice. Students learned the difference between righteous anger (protective anger) and abiding (destructive) anger. They learned how anger can be destructive to themselves and others. The researcher also emphasized the notion that anger is a natural and normal emotion to hurtful experiences. The researcher discussed and explained the idea that they can choose how to behave when they become angry and that choosing to forgive is a healthy response to anger. By choosing to forgive, a person’s abiding anger will fade. Students listened to the researcher read I’m Furious
by Elizabeth Crary. Students then did the activity entitled “I’m Furious...Now What?” as outlined in the curriculum. At this point, the researcher developed a “Forgiveness Jeopardy” game to review all the concepts learned thus far before moving on to the last three lessons.

Lesson 10 continued to teach that forgiveness always begins with an injustice. Students learned that they can forgive anytime a person when he/she has failed to see their own worth and challenged students to see the worth of their offender by offering moral love. Students watched the first 25 minutes of The Chronicles of Narnia-The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe DVD by Jim Broadpent, Rupert Everett, Dawn French, and Nicole Kidman (April 4, 2006). The researcher then followed the mandatory activity as outlined in the curriculum. Students were asked to privately think about the unfair hurt they experienced, if the person failed to see their worth, challenged them to examine any thinking errors he/she might have made, and asked them to consider forgiveness as away to make them feel less sad and/or angry. The researcher concluded by saying:

“...It is important that you remember this person and this situation. As we continue to learn how to forgive, you will be asked to return to this person and this particular hurt about which you are thinking today. Anytime I say, ‘Please return to the Unfair Hurt Awaiting Forgiveness activity’ you will know that you are to remember this person and this unfair hurt. People’s unfair behavior toward us does not ever change our own worth. Even when we’ve been treated unjustly, our deep worth remains. When we have been unfairly hurt, we can continue to see our own deep worth and the deep worth of all people.”

Lesson 11 continued to explore what one’s mind, heart, and actions are like when they are angry. Students continued to learn that forgiveness can help fade their deep abiding anger. The idea that forgiveness is a choice was reinforced. They watched the next 25 minutes of the DVD and answered the discussion questions as outlined in the curriculum. They also participated in the “Is it Winter, Spring, Summer, or Fall in Your Heart?” activity. In doing so, students were asked to think about the person who hurt them. It was emphasized that this activity was private. The researcher asked a series of questions about the time, place, and feelings they experienced during the hurtful event. She then instructed them to draw a picture identifying what season they were feeling toward the person who was unfair. If they felt their heart was cold and hard like ice
they were directed to draw winter. If they felt somewhat cold and hard, but a little warm and soft then they were to draw spring. They drew Summer if their heart felt mostly warm, bright, and full of life and Fall if they felt mostly warm and alive, but a little cold and hardened. The researcher concluded the activity by telling them if any of them were feeling angry, sad, or worried about the experience there is “GREAT HOPE” for each of them. Students were reminded of their work and the importance of choosing to handle anger in a positive way, one of which is forgiveness.

Lesson 12 highlighted the notion of choosing to forgive and offered that choice to the students. During this phase the students explored the possibility of forgiving the person who was unfair. The students learned how to reframe the way they perceived the person who acted unfairly and tried to understand that person. Student learned that in order to change their thinking they needed to take the focus off themselves and place it on the person who was unfair to them. After discussing this topic in depth, students participated in the mandatory activity as outlined in the curriculum. The researcher asked them to recall the hurtful event and asked them questions about their offender. An emphasis on inherent worth, agape love, and seeing with the “eyes of their heart” was given during the questions. At the end of the activity, the researcher reminded students that forgiving is not the same as reconciling with someone who remains angry and hurtful. They were reminded that a person’s worth can be seen without entering into a friendship with that person. Reconciliation is a choice and should only occur if it is safe. The end of Lesson 12 brought participants through the decision phase.

The last three lessons that were not discussed brought participants to the work and deepening phases. Lesson 13 focuses on having a change of heart toward their offender by beginning to offer empathy, sympathy, compassion, and service love. The researcher emphasizes the idea that this is NOT an easy thing to do, but that offering this kind of love in forgiveness can be healing and restoring. In this lesson, students learn that the unfair hurt caused by the offender can cause a person’s heart to become cold and hard through “deep abiding anger” (Knutson & Enright, 2006, p.210). Students learn that forgiveness can help their hearts become warm.
Lesson 14 explains that giving gifts of kindness, respect, and generosity is NOT easy to do and the willingness to do so will vary depending on when the hurt occurred and how deep it was. The idea that giving such gifts CAN occur without being put at risk to experience addition hurts by the same person. Students learn that when these gifts are given, people will feel freedom.

The final lesson teaches students the short and long term benefits of forgiveness, both at the individual and community-wide levels. The idea that forgiveness is a choice each person makes is reiterated. The impact of not working through those units during the intervention will be discussed in the Chapter 5.

During the last week, the researcher met with the students one last time to provide a pizza party for their participation. Students were asked to write down their goals for the future and one thing they learned from taking the class.
Descriptive statistics were computed for each dependent variable in the treatment group at pre-test and post-test as reported in Table 3. Higher scores at post-test indicate improved psychological well-being on the forgiveness, hope, and self-esteem, and trait anger, and anger control measures. In contrast, lower scores for depression and anxiety indicate improved psychological well-being for those variables.

Paired sample t-tests were conducted for each dependent variable at both pre-test and post-test. The pre-test for anxiety (M=57.71, SD=22.07) versus post (M=70.25, SD=27.94) was not significant. Similarly, the pre-test for depression (M=23.50, SD 4.5), hope (M=130.38, SD=18.56), and self-esteem (M=61.5, SD=14.38) versus post-test depression (M=24.00, SD=4.55), hope (M=132.57, SD=32.59), and self-esteem (M=53.71, SD=23.76) were not significant. Pre-test measures for trait anger (M=25.71, SD=4.39), state anger (M=15.57, SD=4.39), and overall anger expression (M=37.29, SD=9.70) compared to post-test trait (M=28.57, SD=7.85), state (M=13.00, SD=5.48), and overall anger expression (M=35.14, SD=9.30) were not significant. It is important to note that higher scores after pre-test for depression and anxiety indicate a regression in psychological well-being. In other words, increased scores on the anxiety and depression measures indicate that the amount of anxiety and depression reported by the participants actually increased; however, the increase was not statistically significant.
Table 3

*Descriptive statistics for all dependent variables pre/post test*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Postest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>M=57.71</td>
<td>M= 70.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD= 22.07</td>
<td>SD= 27.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>M= 23.50</td>
<td>M= 24.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD= 4.50</td>
<td>SD= 4.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgiveness 1</td>
<td>M= 32.00</td>
<td>M= 46.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD=23.75</td>
<td>SD=15.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgiveness 2</td>
<td>M=27.63</td>
<td>M= 58.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD=18.66</td>
<td>SD=20.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgiveness 3</td>
<td>M=25.75</td>
<td>M= 78.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD=17.99</td>
<td>SD=45.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgiveness Total</td>
<td>M= 85.5</td>
<td>M= 184.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD=55.43</td>
<td>SD=69.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trait Anger</td>
<td>M=25.71</td>
<td>M= 28.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD=10.47</td>
<td>SD=7.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Anger</td>
<td>M=15.57</td>
<td>M=13.00</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD=4.39</td>
<td>SD=5.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger Expression</td>
<td>M=37.29</td>
<td>M=35.14</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD=9.70</td>
<td>SD=9.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>M=130.38</td>
<td>M=132.57</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD=18.56</td>
<td>SD=32.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Esteem</td>
<td>M= 61.5</td>
<td>M= 53.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD=14.38</td>
<td>SD=23.76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Forgiveness 1 refers to the affective subscale, Forgiveness 2 the behavioral subscale, Forgiveness 3 the cognition subscale, and Forgiveness Total is the overall score.
The paired t-test for the overall forgiveness total pre-test (M=85.50, SD=55.43) to post-test (M=184.13, SD=69.09) was statistically significant $t(7)=-3.248$, $p<.014$, supporting the hypothesis that forgiveness education can improve adolescents’ ability to move towards forgiving a specific offender. The pre-test scores on the behavioral subscale (M=27.63) compared to post scores (M=58.50, SD=20.94) was also significant $t(7)=-2.999$, $p<.020$. This suggests the way the participants reported their behavior toward their offenders had become more positive. Likewise, the cognitive subscale pre-test (M=25.75, SD=78.88) versus post test (M=78.88, SD=45.26) was significant $t(7)=-3.169$, $p<.016$. Thus, the participants endorsed responses that suggest they began to think more positively about their offender post intervention. Although descriptive statistics show improved scores on the affective subscale pretest (M= 32.00, SD=23.75) versus posttest (M=46.50, SD=15.15), the change was not significant.
Table 4

Paired Sample T Tests for all Dependent Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-1.200</td>
<td>.275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.587</td>
<td>.583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgiveness 1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-1.773</td>
<td>.120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgiveness 2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-2.999</td>
<td>.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgiveness 3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-3.169</td>
<td>.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgiveness Total</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trait Anger</td>
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<td>.555</td>
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<tr>
<td>State Anger</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anger Expression</td>
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<td>.926</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-.239</td>
<td>.819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Esteem</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.347</td>
<td>.227</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Forgiveness 1 refers to the affective subscale, Forgiveness 2 the behavioral subscale, Forgiveness 3 the cognition subscale, and Forgiveness Total is the overall score.

Although changes in scores on the anger measure were not significant, it is important to mention participants' scores on the state anger and overall anger expression decreased. Acknowledging anger plays a key role in the forgiveness process. Participants endorsed responses that indicate the amount of anger they generally feel decreased and they reported they are dealing with their anger in a more healthy way. Since the results of the forgiveness measure were significant, one would also expect the amount of anger generally felt by the participants to decrease. Thus, the results are encouraging as changes in scores were in the expected direction.

The amount of anger they currently reported to feel increased slightly, but the increase was not significant. As previously mentioned, participants were asked to recall hurtful events by a
specific offender during the forgiveness intervention process. The amount of anger they reported feeling in the moment they filled out the measure could have increased slightly, as they could have been thinking about the specific hurtful event. The amount of hurt experienced by the participants is much greater than that of typical adolescents attending general education settings.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION
Forgiveness

Participants were expected to improve in their understanding of forgiveness and ability to forgive after experiencing a deep, unfair hurt in their lives after receiving 15 weeks of the forgiveness education class. More specifically, they were expected to become more positive in their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors toward their offender. The results show statistically significant findings for the behavioral, cognitive, and overall forgiveness total subscales. The increases in scores on these scales from pretest to posttest suggest participants were able to think and display more positive thoughts and behaviors toward the offender after receiving the forgiveness education. Although the affective subscale was not significant, it did increase in the expected direction. It could be that these adolescents have experienced such deep hurts that their feelings were not able to increase in a positive direction as fast as their thoughts and/or behaviors. It is important to understand that the comprehensive treatment program at MHI implements a very behavior-focused program. Participants are rated daily on the behavior performance across settings by different staff members and are recognized and rewarded accordingly. Given the intense focus on displaying appropriate social behavior, the participants could have been more apt to improve on the behavioral subscale. That is, the participants are monitored and reinforced for their behavior at such a frequent rate that perhaps it is more likely that their behavior would improve sooner than their feelings.

It is also important to note that all of the participants in the treatment group rated themselves as further along in the forgiveness process as measured by the last item on the EFI. The very last item on the EFI asks participants to rate the extent to which they have forgiven their offender using a Likert scale of 1-5 (five meaning they have completely forgiven). All of the participants in the forgiveness education class rated themselves higher than they did prior to receiving forgiveness education. Even if the adolescents were not able to fully forgive their offender, they reported making progress. Forgiveness is a process and the pace for forgiving an
offender is different for everyone. It makes sense that not all of the adolescents had reached full forgiveness, especially since all the lessons were not able to be taught. Participants received education through Lesson 12, which worked them through the Uncovering and Decision phases; therefore, they did not reach the unit where they work on absorbing the pain and offering compassion toward their offender. Nevertheless, the forgiveness education intervention was successful in improving these adolescents’ ability to forgive despite the small numbers in the group.

Most of the participants knew very little about forgiveness prior to the intervention. The definition provided by participant number two aligned closely with the definition of expectational forgiveness (Enright & Al-Mabuk, 1989): “I can forgive if others put pressure on me to forgive. It is easier to forgive when other people expect it.”

Other participants thought forgiveness simply meant “being kind to someone.” In conjunction with the results from the EFI, participants demonstrated an improvement in their overall understanding of forgiveness by providing an example of something they learned from the forgiveness class. This question was left open-ended and participants did not receive any prompts or ideas from the researcher. Participants were able to articulate key ideas taught during the intervention. For example, Participant #13 thought forgiveness meant being nice to someone prior to the intervention. Post intervention she explained that “you don’t always have to expect apologies [in order to forgive], like when someone apologizes to you to someone else.” Another participant explained that “forgiveness is not a bad thing. Reconciliation is not necessary in order to forgive. I learned that I need to forgive the person who hurt me, not their behavior.” This statement is very compelling, as most of the participants have experienced abuse in their lives and reconciliation after forgiving an abusive offender would be unsafe. Having the ability to recognize and convey this idea is crucial in the forgiveness process. Another participant explained that they learned how to reframe their thinking about people who hurt them. He stated, “I learned to forgive people by thinking about the good things they have done and good things we have done together.”
Overall, the participants were able to improve their knowledge and understanding of what forgiveness is and what it is not. They were able to understand that reconciliation is not only unnecessary in the forgiveness process, but also can be an unsafe choice. Although the lessons taught stopped at the decision phase, participants were introduced to the concept of reframing during Lesson 5 when the concepts of kindness, respect, generosity, and inherent worth were taught within the context of offering, seeking, and receiving forgiveness. Participants were able to understand the importance of acknowledging that even though their offender caused them hurt, they can reframe the way they think about that person without making excuses for the offender. One participant explained how he was able to identify that forgiveness was a gift he can choose to give the person who caused him hurt, but by doing so it does not excuse or condone the hurtful behavior.

During Lesson 8 participants learned to better identify situations where they can choose forgiveness as an option to cope with anger associated with a hurt they experience. In order to forgive someone, the hurt must be considered unfair. Participants learned about “thinking errors” that people often make when they feel hurt. Using the Dr. Seuss book *I Had Trouble in Getting to Solla SOLlew*, students identified whether the hurt the main character experienced was an “everyday trouble” or an unfair situation based on the three thinking errors as described previously in Chapter 3. Many of the participants have experienced such hurt in their lives, that often times their perception of a hurtful situation was inaccurate. The researcher used examples from the book and real life examples to generalize this concept. For example, the researcher provided a situation such as the following: “You are supposed to have a home visit, but your parent gets very sick and is unable to pick you up.” As previously mentioned, many of the participants have poor relationships with their parents. Many of them have anger and feelings of untrustworthiness toward them. In the example, forgiveness is not an appropriate choice to deal with their hurt. Although they have a right to feel disappointed, the hurt they may experience in that situation was not purposefully caused by their parent. In other words, the hurt they’ve experienced in this situation was not caused by an unjust event, but rather disappointment and
frustration from not getting their own way. The overall point is to be able to distinguish between the hurts that are a direct result of another’s unkindness versus those caused by the events of everyday life. During this lesson, the participants (through practice and repetition) were able to distinguish the difference accurately according to the examples in the book. They were also able to generate their own examples by the end of the lesson. Again, this is a very important skill and concept for them to learn, as these adolescents have experienced multiple hurts in their lives. It’s important for them to be able to identify which hurts with which they can use forgiveness as a way to cope.

Even though these adolescents had significant mental health and/or behavioral concerns all participants were very respectful to the researcher and appeared to be very engaged and interested during the intervention process. They often asked good questions and were able to help clarify ideas to each other during group discussions. Although the participants did not reach the point where they fully forgave their offender, this study demonstrates that even with the amount of chaos in their lives, attending the forgiveness education class helped the participants to be more forgiving. Although the change in scores were significant and indicate an improvement in their ability to forgive, the overall forgiveness total is expected to be much higher than what the adolescents reported if they had reached a point where they had fully forgiven their offender. In reality, most of the adolescents that participated in this study have a long recovery road ahead of them. When asked to state their future goals, once participant listed “not going to jail” as her ultimate goal for the future. Other participants simply wanted to “get out of MHI.” They have experienced such deep, sometimes multiple, hurts complicated by other psychological and/or behavioral disabilities, that for many avoiding the court system and treatment facilities truly is their most important future goal. Attaining full forgiveness in twelve lessons taught over fifteen weeks is likely not sufficient to help these adolescents be able to fully forgive. Nevertheless, results show that despite these challenges the forgiveness education can help them improve their thinking and behavior toward their offender in a more positive way.
Psychological Well-Being

Contrary to other research studies that have found forgiveness education to improve psychological well-being (Freedman & Enright, 1996), this study did not find any significant improvements in anxiety, depression, hope, anger, and self-esteem. The mean scores in anxiety and depression actually increased, although the increase in scores was not significant. This could be due to the fact that the participants often have extremely stressful and unstable family situations. The stress and hurt from such situations may be too great to make any significant changes in the amount of depression and anxiety he/she experienced, even with the forgiveness education class. For example, one participant shared that her father murdered her mother when she was three years old. Another male participant disclosed that his father was a pedophile and had sexually abused him when he was young. Some of the participants, such as these, have experienced such deep, traumatic hurtful events in their lives that it is possible these outside variables could inhibit improvements in psychological well-being often associated with forgiveness (Freedman, 1999; Freedman & Enright, 1996; Gambaro, 2002; Gassin et al., 2005).

In reality, the fifteen weeks of the intervention is most likely not long enough to address the type of hurts these adolescents have experienced.

Most of the adolescents participating in the intervention were experiencing serious mental health and/or behavioral concerns which may have also impeded their ability to make improvements in psychological well-being as they went through the forgiveness process. During the implementation of this intervention, MHI also experienced some changes in staff. The clinical psychologist went on administrative leave two weeks after beginning the curriculum, so the participants experienced a change in the person providing their one-on-one therapy sessions. It came out later in a public newspaper that the leave of absence was due to allegations that he was sexually abusing one of his current patients. All of the participants in the forgiveness group had close relationships with him, as he was the primary provider of individual therapy. He was so well-liked the participants that three of them indicated that they wanted to be like him when asked about their future goals during the initial interview. During the intervention, the participants and
the researcher were not allowed to discuss the event at all. The researcher did not know what
the kids were told or knew regarding his leave of absence. None of the participants were allowed
to discuss the matter with the researcher. This situation could have significantly impacted the
level of stress, anxiety, and/or depression in their lives. Similarly, the social worker assigned to
the Cromwell Unit also transferred wards during the middle of the intervention. All of these
factors could have contributed to the lack of improvement in the adolescents’ psychological well-
being as measured by the scales.

The trend in self-esteem, hope, and anger showed some improvement, although their
improvements were not statistically significant. For example, one participant mentioned that after
the intervention he “learned there are other, more healthy ways to deal with his anger like
choosing to clean his room” (this was an option discussed in the book *I'm Furious*). It is also
important to note that this was the participant who had extreme problems controlling his anger, so
much so that the reason he was admitted to MHI was due to an incident where he stabbed his
sister with a knife out of anger. It could be that the participants experienced such hurt in their
lives and had such deep abiding anger, that the 15 week intervention was not enough to make a
significant improvement in the amount of anger they experienced as well as using forgiveness to
cope with it effectively.

**Limitations**

Although scores on the EFI were statistically significant, the limitations of this study need
to be addressed. Due to the complexity of the comprehensive treatment program the participants
receive, it is difficult to determine with 100% certainty that the improvements forgiveness are only
attributed to the forgiveness education intervention. To reduce the risk of confounding variables,
a control group was intended to be used to compare pre-post test measures. Unfortunately
attrition was a threat to the design of this study and, therefore, the control group was not able to
be used as a comparison. Furthermore, several of the participants, both in the control and
forgiveness education group, were discharged before the intervention was completed. Thus,
improvements on any of the dependent variables were difficult to accurately assess for those
participants. Four students were also added to the forgiveness education class after the first two lessons had occurred. In general, attendance was sporadic and inconsistent for some of the participants due to the complexity of the comprehensive treatment program offered at MHI. That is, some participants were absent due to conflicts with home visits, meetings with social workers, or had been temporarily moved to a different ward as a consequence for negative behavior.

It's also important to mention that during the entire implementation of the intervention, a teacher from MHI was always in the room to monitor students' behavior. Students were not allowed to sit at tables with mixed genders. That is, boys and girls had to be separated at all times. During the intervention, it was obvious that some of the students did not have a positive relationship with this teacher, as the teacher would often interject by making scolding students for poor behavior and would sometimes ask students to leave for the duration of the class. Her presence could have greatly impacted the adolescents' demeanor during the implementation of the intervention. Overall, not every student was able to attend every lesson throughout the curriculum, which may have affected the results of this study.

The measures used in this study also brought about some limitations. The hope and self-esteem scales used during this study have previously been used with adult participants. Likewise, the STAXI was designed for students ages 13 and older. Since the mean age of the participants was 12, some of the scales were not designed to be interpreted with those ages on those measures. The EFI was also very long and some of the vocabulary used was difficult for the adolescents to understand. Although the EFI was administered orally to address this limitation, their attention and integrity of self-report could have affected the results. The EFI asked participants to identify a recent hurt, while several participants disclosed deep hurts that occurred earlier in their childhood with which they have not yet effectively coped. Some of the participants identified different hurts during the interview than they reported on the EFI. The fact that the EFI asked to identify a recent hurt, rather than a hurt in general, could be another explanation for the adolescents' identifying different hurts. Again, some of the participants may not have felt comfortable disclosing the hurt during the interview or on the EFI. The participants
had only met the researcher once prior to conducting the interviews. Thus, they may not have felt comfortable disclosing the hurt they had experienced.

In addition, participants were expected to continue with their school day after receiving the intervention. Due to the changes in staff as previously described, students did not have access to talking with a clinical psychologist or other therapist on an as-needed basis. The taboo nature of the issue surrounding the allegations of clinical psychologist created more stress and tension than is typically present at MHI. Also, participants were sometimes asked to think about the hurtful event and/or feelings associated with their offenders during the intervention period. After the 40 minutes were over, students were expected to go on with their day. The study was originally designed to have the clinical psychologist available at any time throughout the day, should the participants need to debrief about that day's session. It was also the researcher's intent to be in constant communication with the clinical psychologist about individuals who may be having difficulties during a particular lesson. In other words, there was no "cushion" for the participants should they have needed to talk with someone after the intervention period. The researcher always offered participants the opportunity to meet individually any time he/she requested, but no one opted to do so.

Other issues with the small-group format also brought about some limitations. Although the intervention lasted 15 weeks, it may take participants up to one year to forgive their offenders. The pace of the group format may be too fast for some, and too slow for others. As previously mentioned, participants only worked through the Decision Phase during the intervention process. A modified forgiveness education curriculum was used, as the researcher only had 40 minutes for each lesson. The original curriculum called for a minimum of 60 minutes for each lesson plan. It was necessary to complete three of the lessons over two sessions, so participants were not able to partake in the entire curriculum. In addition, some of the adolescents may not have felt comfortable disclosing such sensitive issues related to the deep hurt they've experienced. To minimize these concerns, participants had the option to meet with the researcher on an individual basis to address these issues; however, none of the participants opted to do so. A wide range of
maturity level also existed between the participants. Some participants were able to focus well and did the work, while others were more distracted and needed comments on their behavior during the intervention. For some students, reading and writing were difficult so not all of the required activities in the curriculum were easy tasks. The researcher allowed some students to discuss the questions instead of write and often read questions and directions out loud to the class. Students who had difficulty attending or displayed hyperactivity were allowed to draw or write during the presentation of new material so they would be better able to sit in their seats and participate. The researcher almost always gave some kind of reward (stickers, treats, time to draw) at the end of class for displaying appropriate behavior and participating in activities. In general, the adolescents participated and appeared comfortable with the content/activities presented.

Due to the small numbers, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to the larger population of adolescents at in-patient mental health facilities. Although the study began with almost equal number of males females, most of the participants were white females. Thus, the results may be bias and cannot be generalized.

**Strengths**

Considering the limitations of the current study, it is noteworthy that the participants were able to increase their ratings in forgiveness toward a specific offender. The intervention was effective in improving the thoughts and behaviors towards a specific offender in a more positive way. This is especially remarkable since students only worked through the Decision Phase, and yet to go deep into the Work Phase of the forgiveness process. Despite all the variables going on in the lives of the participants, the intervention was able to help them deal with the hurt they’ve experienced in a more positive way through the forgiveness process. They were able to articulate a better understanding of the definition by the end of the intervention. As previously mentioned, the amount of stress, anxiety, and/or depression experienced by the participants was much greater than that of typical adolescents. As a result, it could take much longer to show
significant results on the affective subscale when implementing forgiveness education with this population. Even though the affective subscale was not significant, all participants indicated that they were further along in the forgiveness process toward a specific offender than prior to the intervention as measured by the last item on the EFI.

Even though the current study was not able to carry out the control group design to use as a comparison with the treatment group, participants were able to improve their ability to forgive. This is the first study conducted with a population of adolescents with mental health concerns so great that they are in a comprehensive, inpatient treatment program. In spite of all the behavioral and/or mental health difficulties, the forgiveness education proved to be effective in their overall ability to forgive. Since forgiveness has not been empirically examined with such a population, this study may encourage future research to further investigate the use of forgiveness education in similar settings.

Future Research

Given the prevalence and of clinical disorders in children and adolescents in conjunction with the reality of children and adolescents experiencing deep hurts by family members and friends, research in the mental health field could greatly benefit from investigating forgiveness education studies as a way for such individuals to understand and work through their anger (Fitzgibbons, 1998). Since the current study was not able to utilize a control group comparison, future studies should employ such a design in order to limit the confounding variables. The number of participants in the current study inhibited the power of the results, so future research should target larger treatment and control groups due to the number of outside variables that threaten such a design. It would also be beneficial to assess individuals after receiving the intervention in its entirety. Due to limitations in time and schedules, the researcher was only able to assess after participants went through Lesson 12. Future research should assess individuals after receiving the entire curriculum without having to shorten each lesson. Ideally, researchers should conduct a two-month follow-up to assess if participants were able to maintain and/or
improve their understanding of forgiveness post intervention. Given the results of the current study, it would also be interesting to see if the participants' scores on the affective subscale were, in fact, statistically significant. As previously mentioned, the frequency of experiencing deep hurt in these individuals' lives could have impacted the results on that subscale.

This intervention utilized a group format during the intervention process, which brought about concerns as described in the Limitations section. Future research could conduct the intervention using a group format, but include more individual sessions to better assess each participants' progress during the forgiveness process. The participants may be more likely to disclose information and ask clarifying questions about the forgiveness process during these individual sessions, so the researcher would be better able to address individual needs that could facilitate the forgiveness process more successfully during the intervention period.

It is also important to note, the hope and self-esteem scales used during this study have previously been used with adult participants. Likewise, the STAXI was designed for students ages 13 and older. Since the mean age of participants was 12, future research should further explore the use of the STAXI and self-esteem scales with adolescents as well as develop more appropriate, psychometrically-sound scales for the adolescent population. Similarly, the EFI scale was very long and could not be administered to the participants without adult assistance. Future research should also examine the use of a shortened version of the forgiveness measure for children and adolescents.

It would also be helpful to examine the process of forgiveness as part of the comprehensive treatment plan at in-patient facilities. Individuals seeking individual or group therapy may benefit from forgiveness education, even if it is not the primary focus of therapy (Worthington & Wade, 1999). That is, even if the primary focus of the treatment is not forgiveness, it may aid in the process of working through hurtful events for adolescents diagnosed with depression, anxiety, and/or behavioral disorders. Often time, group psychotherapy focuses on working through a difficult issue (Worthington & Wade, 1999), such as sexual abuse (Freedman & Enright, 1996). Forgiveness education could be implemented as a group process
in conjunction with individual and group psychotherapy. All in all, future research is needed to examine forgiveness as a clinical tool for mental health professionals in the treatment of clients of all ages experiencing psychological/mental disorders.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

INITIAL INTERVIEW

1. What grade are you currently in?
2. What school(s) did you attend before coming to MHI?
3. Have you ever changed schools? If so, why?
4. Have you thought about what you want to do as your future career? If so, what?
5. What is your current GPA? Do you think you have the potential to do better? Explain
6. Are you satisfied with your current grades? Explain
7. If you aren’t doing as well as you’d like to be doing, what do you think needs to happen in order to improve your grades?
8. When have you felt the best about your school work and grades? Explain
9. Have you ever experienced something that caused you to become very angry? Sad? Upset? If so, explain (open-ended)
10. How did you react?
11. How old were you when it happened?
12. Have you been in individual, group, and/or family therapy as a result of the experience?
13. What have you tried to feel better/deal with that experience? Do you still feel angry as a result?
14. Do you have any siblings? If so, how many? What are their ages?
15. Who is in your family? Before coming to MHI, who did you live with? Do you get to see your parents? If so, how often? Do your parents visit you at MHI often?
16. Before coming to MHI did you have a lot of friends? Any best friends?
17. If so, how long were you friends? Did your friendship change after the experience?
18. Is there anything else you think I should know about your experience?
19. What does forgiveness mean to you?
20. Where have you learned about forgiveness?
APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW SUMMARIES

Participant 1

Identifying number: 1
Age: 13
Sex: F
Ethnicity: African-American
Grade: 8
MHI attendance: about 1 month
Future Career: wants to be a cosmetologist

Other information:

Before coming to MHI, #1 attended an alternative school. She got kicked out of school in 6th grade. She likes changing schools. Currently, she is getting 2 C’s, 1 B, and 1 A. She is not satisfied with her grades and knows she can get higher than C’s. In order to improve her grades, she feels she needs to keep coming to school and get her work done on time. In her opinion, school is “ok.” It’s not as hard as it was earlier, and teachers explain things better at MHI. #1 acknowledged having experienced a deep, unfair hurt. She has done therapy and tries to think of positive things. She was 11 when it happened. She still feels angry, as a result. She has 2 sisters, ages 22 and 20 that don’t live at home. She lived with her mom and stepdad prior to coming to MHI. Her mom and stepdad visit every 2 weeks. #1 has 2 best friends since 4th and 5th grade.

Definition of forgiveness: According to #1, forgiveness means “forgiving someone for what they have done, but not having to be best friends again.” She learned about forgiveness from school.

Post Intervention:

#1’s goals for the future:

(1) Get out of MHI
(2) Become a cosmetologist

One thing I learned was...

“To be more positive and try and look for the positive. Since I have taken this class, I have been more forgiving of people.”

Participant 2

Identifying Number: 2
Age: 13
Sex: M
Ethnicity: African-American
Grade: 7
MHI Attendance: 3.5 weeks
Future Career: wants to be a comedian, a doctor, or like his clinical psychologist

Other information:

#2 says he needs to put forth more effort to get better grades. He likes school because of the girls. His favorite subjects are PE and Art. He is at MHI because he stabbed his sister. He has a 16 year-old sister, and three brothers ages 9, 4, and 2. #2 LOVES his brothers. Before coming to MHI he lived with his Grandma. His mom is still in his life. It was unclear whether his siblings live with his mother or with him and his grandma (although it sounded like he was the only one living with his grandma). Before coming to MHI, #2 had a lot of friends and a girlfriend. He says he really misses them. When asked about his deep hurt, he described his dad as a molester. He said he got “beat every day.” #2 appears to have a lot of anger, as he described wanting to kill his dad.

Definition of forgiveness: “Forgiveness is when you forgive someone for hurting you. They say ‘I’m sorry’ (offer an apology) and you accept an apology. That is what forgiveness means.” #2 learned about forgiveness from school.

Post intervention:

#2’s goals for the future:

1. Get out of MHI
2. “Be good” behave better, follow rules, follow laws

One thing I learned was...

“There are other ways to deal with my anger that I need to work on. Cleaning can be a healthy way to deal with my anger (from the book I’m Furious).”

Participant 3

Identifying number: 10
Age: 10
Sex: F
Ethnicity: Caucasian
Grade: 5
MHI attendance: 4 days prior to intervention
Future Career: NA

#10 joined the class after 2 lessons had already been discussed. Although she did not have an initial interview with the researcher, #10 did fill out the pre-measures prior to joining the class. She indicated experiencing a very unfair hurt and has not at all forgiven her offender, as assessed by the Attitude Scale. #10 was discharged 3 weeks before the intervention ended, so the researcher was not able to assess her goals for the future and/or what she learned from the class.

Participant 4

Identifying number: 13
Age: 12
Sex: F
Ethnicity: Caucasian  
Grade: 7  
MHI attendance: approx 2 months  
Future Career: wants to be a midwife and help deliver babies

Other Information:

#13 attended Bremwood Juvenile Center before coming to MHI. She has also attended St. Lukes hospital and Family Resources prior to coming to MHI in January. She describes her grades as "not so good," as she is getting 1 A (study hall), 4 F's, 2 D's, and 3 B's. Her favorite part about school is recess. She doesn't like school 'cause she thinks its “tough” or boring. #13's family life is complex. She lived with her stepmom and stepdad prior to coming to MHI. Her biological father killed her biological mother when she was very young. To cope with this hurt she chews gum and listens to music. She has 3 biological brothers, ages 21, 16, and 15 as well as 1 sister in her 20s and another ½ sister who also resides at MHI. She didn't have a lot of real friends prior to coming to MHI. To #13, forgiveness means being kind to someone. She couldn't remember where she learned about forgiveness.

Post Intervention:

#13's goals for the future:

(1) Get married and have 3 kids  
(2) To stay out of jail

One thing I learned was...

"You don’t always have to expect apologies. Like when someone apologizes to you or someone else. (You don’t need an apology to forgive someone). It's not right to take hurt out on yourself or someone else."

Participant 5

Identifying number: 18  
Age: 12  
Sex: M  
Ethnicity: Caucasian  
Grade: 7  
MHI attendance: 3 days prior to intervention  
Future Career: unsure; wants to play football in high school and college

Other information:

#18 also joined the class after 2 weeks had gone by. He also indicated experiencing a deep, unfair hurt as assessed by the attitude scale. He indicated he had not at all forgiven the person for hurting him.

Post Intervention:

#18's goals for the future:

(1) Play football in high school or college (make the team)
One thing I learned was...

"Forgiveness is not a bad thing. Reconciliation is not necessary in order to forgive. I learned that I need to forgive the person who hurt me, not their behavior."

**Participant 6**

Identifying number: 6  
Age: 12, almost 13  
Sex: F  
Ethnicity: Caucasian  
Grade: 7  
MHI attendance: NA  
Future Career: unsure

Other information:

#6 is currently in sixth grade at MHI. She attended a middle school, a detention center, and a hospital center before coming to MHI. Although she says she gets good grades, she would like to work harder to improve them. She didn't like her previous schools because there was "too much drama." She admits she actually does like school now, even though she often times she hates it. She said she "doesn't mean it." #6's family life is also complicated. She was adopted by her foster parents and has 8 sisters and 2 brothers. Her adoptive parents visit every week. Her biological parents were abusive to her for 2 years before she was removed from the home. Prior to coming to MHI she had lots of friends, although no best friends. She had 2 boyfriends (in 7th and 8th grade). She has never learned about forgiveness and was unsure what it meant.

**Post Intervention:**

#6's goals for the future:

1. Get to go home  
2. Get married  
3. Have a good relationship

One thing I learned was...

"It is possible to forgive people for bad things they have done to us."

**Participant 7**

Identifying Number: 5  
Age: 13  
Sex: M  
Ethnicity: Caucasian  
Grade: 8  
MHI attendance: 6 weeks  
Future Career: Get out of MHI and become a cosmetologist

**Other information:**

#5 attended several middle schools before coming to MHI. Although he thinks he wants to be a cosmetologist right now, he could also want to be a doctor. He isn't satisfied with his current
grades in school. He explained that he could do a lot better, but "doesn't know a lot" because he skipped a lot of school. Although he used to skip classes a lot, he does like school. Specifically, #5 likes bigger schools and bigger classes. He also acknowledged experiencing a deep, unfair hurt. He reacted to the hurt by crying and calling people names. He doesn't feel as angry about the situation because his friends have helped him cope. However, he has "not at all" forgiven. His family consists of his mom, stepdad, biological dad, and 3 older brothers. He doesn't really have a lot of friends at home, but has one best friend. #5 describes forgiveness as someone apologizing for something hurtful. He explained that it takes longer to forgive someone for a major hurt. He learned about forgiveness "at his house."

Post intervention:

#5's goals for the future:

(1) Be a cosmetologist
(2) Go to school and work to become a cosmetologist by following directions

One thing I learned was...

"To forgive people by thinking about the good things they have done and good things we have done together." (reframing)
Dear Parent/Guardian:

My name is Tiffany Everding and I am currently a graduate student in the School Psychology program at the University of Northern Iowa. I am in the process of completing my research project, which is a requirement in my program. I am studying the effectiveness of forgiveness education with adolescents who have experienced a deep, personal, and unfair hurt. I would like to invite your child to participate in a forgiveness education intervention.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The purpose of the project is to assess the effectiveness of forgiveness education as a way for adolescents to cope with anger as a result of experiencing a deep hurt. Learning about forgiveness and being able to forgive has the potential to be a positive approach that has not been tried in the services they have received in the past. The forgiveness education intervention is based upon scientific studies from a psychological perspective that have been found to help people forgive an offender and reduce his/her anger. Forgiveness is not the same as condoning, excusing, or forgetting someone’s unjustified actions.

WHAT WILL MY CHILD’S PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?

Students currently enrolled in the anger management class at the start of this intervention will be randomly assigned to either remain in the traditional anger management class (control group) or a forgiveness education class (experimental group). Participation in the forgiveness education will fulfill the requirements of the anger management class. Only the students in the experimental group will be receiving the forgiveness education; the other students will continue with the traditional anger management class. All students will be given measures of anxiety, depression, self-esteem, anger, forgiveness, and hope for the future at the start and end of the intervention. They will also complete the measures 2 months after the intervention is complete to assess whether students maintained any improvements in psychological well-being. The forgiveness education intervention will be a 16-week program where my faculty advisor and I will meet on a weekly basis for approximately an hour at a time in a group format with all the students selected for the forgiveness education course. During the course of the forgiveness education class, group sessions will be audio taped on a random basis to ensure the intervention is being implemented in accordance with the curriculum. All students’ participation will be strictly voluntary, and students will have the opportunity to stop participation at any point in the intervention. Should he or she choose to terminate his/her participation, he/she will not be penalized in any way. It is also important to note that any services provided to your child at MHI will not be affected by the decision to participate or not participate in this project. We will be using a research-based curriculum entitled “The Journey Toward Forgiveness” in which the focus is on forgiving, seeking forgiveness, and receiving forgiveness. Students in the experimental group will learn what forgiveness is and is not, what it means to seek and receive forgiveness, the foundational concepts of forgiveness, and the importance of balance in applying these principles.

ARE THERE ANY RISK OR BENEFITS?

Students in the forgiveness education class will be asked to reflect upon experiencing a deep, personal, and unfair hurt. He/she may experience some emotional stress or discomfort...
throughout the process related to discussing or thinking about the experience. However, past forgiveness education intervention studies have shown many positive benefits as a result of participating in forgiveness education. This intervention has the potential to help adolescents overcome a deep hurt that has been causing significant problems (social, emotional, behavioral, and/or academic) in their lives and may give them a more hopeful future. As incentive for full participation, we will periodically bring snacks and/or prizes throughout the intervention, and offer the students a pizza party at the end as a reward for their participation.

**WILL MY CHILD'S CONFIDENTIALITY BE PROTECTED?**

Before the forgiveness intervention begins, the group will discuss confidentiality and make it known that anything that is said in group during the intervention stays in the group. To emphasize the importance of keeping shared information confidential, all participants will sign a confidentiality agreement. All participants will be assigned an ID number, and that will be used when collecting and analyzing data to ensure confidentiality. Only myself and my faculty advisor will have access to their information, as well as any audio taped sessions. After the intervention is complete, the information collected will be kept locked in the faculty advisor's office for up to 5 years while I am working on finishing my research paper.

If you have any additional questions or concerns regarding this study please contact myself via cell phone (319-240-8395) or via e-mail, everdint@uni.edu. You may also contact my faculty advisor, Suzanne Freedman in the Department of Educational Psychology, University of Northern Iowa at 319-273-2483 or via email, freedman@uni.edu. You may also contact Anita Kleppe, the Director of Research Services, via e-mail anita.kleppe@uni.edu or phone 319-273-6148 for answers to questions about rights of research participants and the participant review process.

I am fully aware of the nature and extent of my child's participation in this project as stated above and the possible risks arising from it. I hereby agree to allow my son/daughter to participate in this project. I have received a copy of this form.

(Signature of parent/legal guardian)  (Date)

(Printed name of parent/legal guardian)

(Printed name of child participant)

(Signature of investigator)  (Date)

(Signature of instructor/advisor)  (Date)
APPENDIX D

ASSENT FORM

I, __________________, have been told that one of my parents/guardians has given his/her permission for me to participate in a project investigating forgiveness education.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The purpose of the project is to determine if forgiveness education is effective in helping adolescents cope with anger as a result of experiencing a deep hurt.

WHAT WILL MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?

Students currently enrolled in the anger management class will be randomly assigned to participate in either a forgiveness education class or remain in the traditional anger management course. All students will be asked to fill out measures assessing their psychological well-being and forgiveness. The forgiveness education intervention will be a 16-week program where my faculty advisor and I will meet with you on a weekly basis for approximately an hour at a time in a group format. Sessions will be audio taped on a random basis to ensure the education is being implemented properly. Your participation will be strictly voluntary, and you will have the opportunity to stop participating at any point in the intervention. If you choose to stop participating, you will not be penalized in any way. We will be using a curriculum entitled “The Journey Toward Forgiveness” in which the focus is on forgiving, seeking forgiveness, and receiving forgiveness. Students assigned to the forgiveness education class will learn what forgiveness is and is not, what it means to seek and receive forgiveness, and will be involved in a variety of activities such as reading books, playing games, and watching videos.

ARE THERE ANY RISK OR BENEFITS?

Sometimes students in the forgiveness education class may be asked to talk or think about something that has been a painful experience in their life with the group. This may cause them to feel emotional distress or discomfort. Students can decide how much they want to share. For your participation in the project we will have a pizza party for participants. For students in the forgiveness education class, learning about forgiveness has the potential to help them deal with their anger and resentment in a positive way not only for something that has already happened, but also as away to deal with unfair things that happen in the future.

WILL THE INFORMATION I SHARE BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

Absolutely! Before the intervention begins, the group will discuss confidentiality and make it known that anything that is said in group during the intervention stays in the group. You will also be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement stating that you will not share any information discussed in class with anyone else. All participants will also be assigned an ID number and that will be used when collecting and analyzing data to ensure confidentiality. Only my faculty advisor and I will have access to students’ information and any audio taped sessions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary. I have been told that I can stop participating in this project at any time. If I choose to stop or decide that I don’t want to participate in this project at all, nothing bad will happen to me. My grade in the anger management course will not be affected in any way.

_____________________________  __________________
Name Date
APPENDIX E

RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

"My name is Tiffany Everding and I am a graduate student at the University of Northern Iowa. As part of my program, I am required to complete a research project. I am studying the process of forgiveness and how forgiveness education can help students of all ages overcome something very hurtful that has happened to them. For my project, I will randomly assign half of you to the forgiveness education class. The other half will remain in the traditional anger management class. I'd like to teach the students in the forgiveness education class about forgiveness and how it can help one cope with his/her anger and deal with a deep hurt.

Before I begin the forgiveness education class, I'd like to meet with each of you individually to ask you some questions about yourself and if forgiveness has been something you know about already. I will also ask all students who agree to participate to fill out a series of questionnaires. No one but my faculty advisor and I will get to see the answers to those questions. During the forgiveness education class students will read books, watch videos, play games, make pictures, and write about forgiveness, but most importantly they will learn when, how, and why to forgive.

Students' participation in these lessons is voluntary. However, I think students will find the lessons interesting, fun, and helpful. We will meet as a group to do these lessons together. Sometimes students in the forgiveness education group may be asked to talk about something that has been a painful experience in your life with the group. This may cause you to feel emotional distress of discomfort. If the discomfort becomes very troublesome you can choose to stop participating in the lessons at any time if it becomes too difficult, and you will not be penalized in any way.

I would ask that anything students talk about in this class, stays in the class. Students can share as much or as little as they want, but I think it may be helpful to talk about the experience with peers. I will also be using an audio tape to record the sessions on a random basis to ensure the intervention is being implemented accurately. The only people that will know what we talk about in the forgiveness education class, or have access to the audio tapes myself and my advisor (Suzanne Freedman). If you should want to talk someone by yourself Noel will be available throughout the week, and I'd be more than happy to schedule a time to talk individually. At the end of the 16 weeks students in both classes will have a pizza party as a reward for all their hard work in both the anger management and forgiveness education classes. Learning about forgiveness has the potential to help one deal with anger and resentment in a positive way not only for something that has already happened, but also as a way to deal with unfair things that may happen in the future.

Does anyone have any questions or concerns about what we will be doing? (answer any questions) Your parents have been informed about this project, and I have described what will be involved if you remain in the traditional anger management class, or if you participate in the forgiveness education class. Thanks for letting me meet with you today. I greatly appreciate your help with my project, and hope you decide to participate!"
**Confidentiality Statement**

As a participant in the forgiveness education project I, ________________ agree to keep everything that my peers share in the forgiveness education class confidential. By signing this agreement, I promise that everything that is said in the group shall remain in the group. If someone asks me questions about what was shared in the forgiveness education class I will respond by saying "I cannot discuss that information with you." If I wish to discuss something that is shared in the group, I will ask Tiffany Everding, Suzanne Freedman, or Noel Kurt to meet with me privately. I fully understand that I am expected not to disclose any information shared by my peers with anyone else outside the forgiveness education class.

Signature ___________________________ Date ____________