Forgiveness in School Bullying: Applicability and Implications for Intervention

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Declaration

I declare that this submission is my own work and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it contains no material written by another person, nor material that has been accepted for the award of another degree or diploma at a university or institution of higher learning.

The sources of information that were drawn from in the writing of this thesis include: the literature listed in the 'References' section, supervisory guidance from Prof Ron Rapee, Dr Natasha Todorov, and Dr Doris McIlwain, and the published articles Watson, H. Rapee, R., & Todorov, N. (2015a). Forgiveness reduces anger in a school bullying context. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 30*(10), 1-16 ; and Watson, H., Rapee, R., Todorov, N. (in press). Imagery rescripting of revenge, avoidance, and forgivness for past bullying experiences in young adults. *Cognitive Behaviour Therapy*.

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I dedicate this dissertation to the courageous youth of this world who find the strength to open their hearts in the face of their pain.

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Abstract

Forgiveness has been used successfully as a therapeutic intervention across many forms of interpersonal hurt. However, it has not been experimentally applied to a school bullying context. This dissertation begins with a study in which an attitude of forgiveness was experimentally induced through hypothetical scenarios, and this was contrasted with experimentally induced revenge and avoidance in the context of school bullying. Providing youth aged 11 to 15 with advice to forgive a bully resulted in less anger about the event than advice to avoid or take revenge. This finding has significant implications for clinical practice, revealing a novel pathway to effective anger management in bullied youth populations and providing impetus for future studies in this area. A second study extended these findings to a clinical sample using an imaginal exposure intervention. Among young adults aged 17 to 24 who had previously been bullied, both imagined forgiveness and avoidance resulted in decreases in negative affect whereas imagined revenge did not. Positive evaluations of the event also decreased with imagined revenge, but not with imagined forgiveness or avoidance. Finally, imagined forgiveness was more stressful than either imagined avoidance or revenge. These results pointed to the complicated relationship between forgiveness and avoidance and provided an indication of why people often do not choose forgiveness as a response to bullying victimisation. A third study evaluated the impact of imagined forgiveness and revenge in a sample of boys aged 12 to 14 and found that both of these interventions produced positive impacts that did not significantly differ. Combined with the results from Study 2, this somewhat unexpected finding pointed to potential differences in the impact of forgiveness and revenge across different ages and genders. A final study then evaluated conceptualisations of forgiveness across primary school students (aged 11), secondary school students (aged 12 to 15) and young adults (aged 17 to 24) and a definitional model was established. This

gave a depth of understanding regarding the differences found in the first three studies, as

a wide variety of individual differences in conceptualisations of this construct were

revealed. Taken together, these findings advance the field by providing the first

experimental evidence for the benefits of forgiveness as a response to youth bullying, and

indicating suggestions for its clinical application, including the use of avoidance and

internal processing as a part of the pathway.

Bullying interventions commonly reflect societal views on systems of justice and punishment. However, the current model of retributive justice in Western society results in high recidivism rates (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010) and alternative forms of justice with more focus on restorative practices have been found to be more effective at preventing future harm (Latimer, Dowden & Muise 2005). Therefore, a shift in focus from retribution to more restorative responses to bullying behaviours has a great deal of merit, and is seen in many current intervention strategies (eg Rigby, 2005; Rigby & Griffiths, 2011). One element of many restorative justice responses to harm is forgiveness of the perpetrator by the victim of the abuse. Forgiveness has been found to have powerful positive impacts across many instances of violence and aggression (Enright, 2001) and is theorised to play a vital role in positive proactive responses to serious harm (Tutu, 1999), with specific benefit to the development of youth (Van Dyke & Elias, 2007; Reich, 2009). Research shows the benefit of forgiveness on perpetrators of bullying and studies investigating its impacts on victims show promising correlational results and theoretical links (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2005; Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2005; Flanagan, Vanden Hoek, Ranter, & Reich, 2012; Egan & Todorov, 2009). However, there is a lack of empirical literature investigating the application of forgiveness in a school bullying context. This thesis aims to fill this gap in the research in order to improve the effectiveness of interventions on building resiliency in and preventing future harm for victims of school bullying.

Definitions of Forgiveness. A uniform definition of forgiveness has not been reached within the literature. Past research has defined forgiveness as an interpersonal phenomenon. This has been explored through the social-cognitive elements of the victim-offender dyad (Boon & Sulsky, 1997). It has also been shown through the perspective of forgiveness as part of a greater motivational system that governs responses to

interpersonal conflict (McCullough et al., 1998). Conversely, forgiveness has also been

theorised as purely an intrapersonal process involving a replacement of negative with

positive emotions (Harris & Thoresen, 2005). It has also been viewed as a functional

response to achieve specific aims for the individual that may involve the self, the

offender, or the relationship (Strelan, McKee, Calic, Cook, & Shaw, 2013). While many

different models of forgiveness exist (McCullough & Worthington, 1994), it is widely

conceptualised as a coping process whereby a stressor resulting from a perception of

interpersonal hurt is neutralised (Strelan & Covic, 2006).

Forgiveness does not involve condoning, excusing, forgetting, justifying, or

calming down, but rather is defined as a process in which one acknowledges that an act

was unfair and that one has a moral right to anger, but subsequently relinquishes that

anger or resentment and develops a positive attitude towards the offender (Enright, 2001).

The presence of ongoing negative emotions following a stress response has been called

unforgiveness, and manifests as attitudes and behaviours of avoidance or vengeance

(Worthington & Scherer, 2004). Forgiveness is one pathway to decreasing this state of

unforgiveness, which goes beyond expressive suppression (a reduction in negative affect)

to also creating an increase in positive affect (Gross & Thompson, 2007; Witvliet,

DeYoung, Hofelich, & DeYoung, 2011).

Forgiveness involves many steps (Worthington, 2001). It only occurs after the

emotions that have been aroused by the offensive behavior including the underlying

shame of the event have been addressed and processed fully (Harber & Wenberg, 2005;

Lawler-Row, Karremans, Scott, Edlis-Matityahou, & Edwards, 2008; Lansky, 2007).

Without this acknowledgement of the injustice or injury, the result is not forgiveness but

rather may be damage to one's self-respect and a forgoing of justice (Luchies, Finkel, &

McNulty, 2010; Murphy, 2005; Reed & Aquino, 2003). Forgiveness involves maintaining

a perspective of empathy for the abuser (Davis & Gold, 2010). It is a perspective that includes considering others as worthy of love and understanding (Recine, Werner, & Recine, 2007). At the same time, it involves holding others accountable for their actions (Bradfield & Aquino, 1999). Forgiveness is compatible with inclusive definitions of justice that focus on the values of universalism and benevolence (Strelan & McKee, 2014). It is therefore seen as a process of empowerment, where an individual takes control over themselves to improve their situation (Walton, 2005).

  Theoretical Models of Forgiveness. The ways in which forgiveness is processed in the individual are also defined variously in the literature, with many different explanatory models (McCullough & Worthington, 1994). The forgiveness process is an under-researched area due to this discrepancy in an understanding of the construct (Strelan & Covic, 2006). However, a widely accepted model encompasses four phases: uncovering the extent of the harm caused and facing associated feelings; making a decision to forgive the perpetrator; gaining perspective and empathy for the offender as a rationale for offering forgiveness; and finding meaning in the suffering (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). Further research suggests a final phase of restoring a sense of self (Lawson, 2010). Forgiveness is seen in the literature as a conscious process enlisting cognitive control (Wilkowski, Robinson & Troop-Gordon, 2010). This occurs through the regulation of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours about the event, specifically by reducing ruminative thoughts and drawing on empathic ones instead (Pronk, Karremans & Overbeek, 2010; Farrow et al. 2001). Forgiveness is therefore a strategy that can be supported in therapeutic cognitive interventions at any stage of the process.

  Benefits of Forgiveness. State forgiveness has been correlated with physical health benefits such as lower alcohol use, fewer medications, fewer physical symptoms, and lower heart rate (Lawler-Row, Karremans, Scott, Edlis-Matityahou, & Edwards,

2008). It has also been associated with psychological benefits such as reduced depression and stress (Lawler-Row & Piferi, 2006; Van Dyke & Elias, 2007). Forgiveness has been found to result in a greater sense of justice in the victim (Wenzel, Turner, & Okimoto, 2010). It has been found to reduce aggression (Copeland-Linder, Johnson, Haynie, Chung, & Cheng, 2011), rumination (Louden-Gerber, 2009), and hopelessness (Toussant, Williams, Musick, & Everson-Rose, 2008). It has been correlated with more positive relationship quality (Berry & Worthington, 2001). It has also been related to fewer emotional experiences accompanying physical pain (Carson et al., 2005). Forgiveness has also been theorised as providing specific benefit to children and adolescents through contributing to moral development (Van Dyke & Elias, 2007; Lin, Enright, & Klatt, 2011).

Interventions promoting forgiveness have been found to increase positive mental and physical health outcomes in victims of domestic violence suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (Reed & Enright, 2006), victims of sexual abuse (Walton, 2005), and adult children of alcoholics (Osterndorf, Enright, Holter, & Klatt, 2011). In turn, these positive increases in mental and physical health are proposed to provide resilience against future transgressions (Egan & Todorov, 2009). These benefits may be due to a reduction in the negative effects of prolonged stress reactions (Brosschot & Thayer, 2003; Harris & Thoresen, 2005; Worthington & Scherer, 2004). In support of this, evidence has been found that individuals with higher trait forgiveness experience less cortical reactivity when imagining their relationship (Berry & Worthington, 2001). In addition, forgiveness has been found to lower cardiovascular reactivity during the initial cognitive processing of the event as well as during mental recreations of the event, due to a reduction in allostatic load (Larsen, Darby, Harris, Nelkin, Milam, & Christenfeld, 2012; Witvliet, Ludwig, & Laan, 2001).

In popular culture forgiveness is often portrayed as weakness, but the literature suggests that this perspective is not supported. However, there are certain instances where forgiveness has not yielded positive results, such as for some survivors of violent trauma and women in domestic violence situations who return to their partners (Connor, Davidson, & Lee, 2003; Gordon, Burton, & Porter, 2004). In these cases forgiveness has the potential to result in dangerous outcomes. It has also been found that forgiveness does not necessarily facilitate long-term psychological adjustment in all cases (Orth, Berking, Walker, Meier, & Znoj, 2008). This may be due to the fact that forgiveness is more difficult for the individual to achieve than attitudes such as revenge or avoidance because it involves directly facing the hurt within oneself (Mullet, Riviere, & Sastre, 2007). In addition, forgiving out of obligation does not result in as great a reduction in negative affect (Huang & Enright, 2000). Forgiveness must therefore be a personal choice, not the result of societal or therapeutic pressure (Armour & Umbreit, 2005). It must be understood and processed in full by the individual in order for its benefits to be experienced. In addition, the context of the situation may result different outcomes, so the application of forgiveness as a response to conflict should be made with awareness and caution.

Lay Conceptualisations of Forgiveness. Strong individual differences exist in the way people conceptualise forgiveness in every-day life (Mullet, Girard, & Bakhshi, 2004; Kadima Kadiangandu, Gauche, Vinsonneau, & Mullet, 2007). The decision to forgive is determined by the individual's understanding of the construct (Scobie & Scobie, 2006), so therapists must have an understanding of the subtleties of the forgiveness process and how their clients define it (Freedman et al., 1991). Lay people tend to define forgiveness differently to theorists, seeing forgetting and reconciliation as necessary components of the construct (Kearns & Fincham, 2004; Macaskill, 2005). They

also perceive negative aspects to forgiveness (Kearns & Fincham, 2004), often viewing it as a difficult task that can lead to emotional problems if it is not processed fully (Mullet, Girard, & Bakhshi, 2004; Kanz, 2000).

Definitions of forgiveness have been found to be similar across different religious groups (Tripathi & Mullet, 2010). However, they have also been found to fluctuate between various cohorts of the population. People have been found to differ in their perceptions of forgiveness as being an interpersonal or intrapersonal process and whether or not the transgression is ignored as a result of adopting this response (Wohl, Kuiken, & Neols, 2006). Clinical social workers have been found to agree on some correlates of forgiveness, but disagree on whether it involves an interpersonal element (Denton & Martin, 1998). Collectivist cultures have been found to view forgiveness as more of an interpersonal process than individualistic cultures (Kadima Kadiangandu, Gauche, Vinsonneau, & Mullet, 2007). Former child soldiers have been found to hold a more favourable view of forgiveness than those that have lived through a war as a noncombatant (Goins, Winter, Sundin, Patient, & Aslan, 2012). And finally, college-aged adults have been found to hold more rigid views of the possibility of forgiveness than older adults (Younger, Piferi, Jobe, & Lawler, 2004).

There also appear to be limitations to one's ability or willingness to achieve forgiveness. People tend towards experiencing lasting resentment, achieving unconditional forgiveness, or incorporating sensitivity to the circumstances of the event into their decision to forgive (Worthington & Wade, 1999). Belief systems derived from family and religion play a role in which one of these tendencies an individual holds (Akl & Mullet, 2010). When circumstances are a part of the decision to forgive, they include many facets of the situation. The intent of the perpetrator, apology from the perpetrator, offender remorse and empathy, and a cancellation of consequences are requirements for

forgiveness for some people (Girard, Mullet, & Callahan, 2002; Armour & Umbreit, 2006). Relationship status with the wrongdoer, the closeness of this relationship prior to the event, and the quality of the relationship determine a decision to forgive for others (Karremans, Van Lange, Ouwerkerk, & Kluwer, 2003; Mead, 2008). For some people, generous attributions and appraisals about the event and the perpetrator or rumination about the event factor into the choice of forgiveness (McCullough, 2001). In addition, variables such as interdependence with others, time passing, one's parents' perspectives of forgiveness, avoidance behaviours, benevolence towards others, and spirituality play a role in choosing forgiveness for some (Recine, Werner, & Recine, 2007). It also appears that these differences are individual in nature, and not a function of demographics features such as age and gender (Fehr, Gelfand, & Nag, 2010).

Such differences in conceptualisations of what is involved in the forgiveness process may lead to different outcomes for the individual (Tripathi & Mullet, 2010). Certain attributes are related to higher levels of state forgiveness, such as seeing forgiveness as a passive letting go process (Lawler-Row, Scott, Raines, Edlis-Matityahou, & Moore, 2007). Conceptualising forgiveness as a broad process that involves positive feelings for the offender has also been linked to higher levels of unconditional forgiveness in the individual (Ballester, Sastre, & Mullet, 2009. In addition, having an interpersonal conceptualisation of forgiveness has been related to higher forgiveness levels when the relationship with the offender continues (Hook et al., 2012). Therefore, therapeutic conceptualisations of forgiveness must be made clear to the client before suggesting it as a coping strategy (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000).

Conceptualisations of Forgiveness among Youth. When looking specifically at youth, there is a lack of empirical research into the ways in which they conceive of forgiveness (Denham, Neal, Wilson, Pickering, & Boyatzis, 2005). In the research that

does exist, there appear to be differences in conceptualisations of forgiveness across the lifespan, even though these do not relate to whether or not forgiveness is present in the individual (Park & Enright, 1997).

Younger adolescents beginning high school appear to place more emphasis on sensitivity to circumstances than their older peers in years eight and nine (Chiaramello, Mesnil, Munoz Sastre, & Mullet, 2008). Similarly, forgiveness definitions have been found to become more complex as children age (Flanagan, Loveall, & Carter, 2012). A developmental stage model of forgiveness has been proposed, suggesting that different levels of cognitive capacity underlie the forgiveness process (Enright, 1994; Enright et. al, 2014). As this model has been developed, it has revealed that different age groups express different stages of the factors that influence forgiveness, moving from lower to higher stages with age. Children in Year 4 seem to forgive only when restitution has been granted, adolescents in Years 7 and 10 tend to base their decision to forgive on external validation such as peer pressure, and college students tend to look to authority for determining whether to grant forgiveness (Enright, Santos, & Al-Mabuk, 1989). This area of research is growing and is in need of more empirical grounding and support.

Alternatives to Forgiveness. Two alternate attitudes to that of forgiveness are avoidance and revenge (Worthington & Scherer, 2004). These have been conceptualised as being indicators of presence or absence of forgiveness (McCullough, 2001). Both are well-researched responses to bullying victimisation (Meyer-Adams & Conner, 2008; Dehue, Bolman, & Vollink, 2008; Camodeca & Goosens, 2005). Both have been associated with poorer mental health outcomes, and also with overall increases in victimisation due to the rumination that is present in both of these responses (Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004; Berry, Worthington, O'Connor, Parrott, & Wade, 2005).

Revenge. An attitude of revenge has been defined as a tendency to harbour desires for a perpetrator to experience harm, as well as a greater propensity to carry out these desires across time, situations, and relationships (McCullough, Bellah, Kilpatrick, & Johnson, 2001; Stuckless & Gorenson, 1992). Revenge is related to depression (Newman, 2011; Rijavec, Jurcec, & Mijocevic, 2010), lower affect and increased anger (Carlsmith, Wilson, & Gilbert, 2008), higher stress responses (Witvliet, Worthington, Root, Sato, Ludwig, & Exline, 2008), and is associated with poor mental health outcomes (Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004). Vengeful reactions to peer victimisation are correlated with heightened victimisation and perpetration of bullying (Camodeca & Goosens, 2005), which leads to increased overall negative outcomes (Sourander et al. 2007).

However, the properties of vengeance are not simply the inverse of forgiveness, but rather a complicated relationship appears to exist, with angry rumination being a crucial factor that perpetuates the distress following interpersonal transgressions (Ysseldyk, Matheson, & Anisman, 2006; Johnson, Kim, Giovannelli, & Cagle, 2009; McCullough et al., 1998). Such rumination on thoughts of revenge appears to be the biggest barrier to forgiveness (Barber, Maltby, & Macaskill, 2005). Paradoxically, fantasies of revenge have been found to cause none of the harm associated with angry rumination (Seebauer, Fros, Dubaschny, Schonberger, & Jacob, 2014) and in fact can be an effective therapeutic technique in clinical settings with traumatised youth (Haen & Weber, 2009). Also, the perceived ability to punish has been found to increase the likelihood of later forgiveness (Strelan & Van Prooijen, 2013). There is therefore a need to distinguish between vengeful rumination and fantasies of revenge and the differing implications each has for interpersonal transgressions.

Avoidance. Avoidance is defined as the circumvention of specific social interactions or places due to fear of attack or harm, a response that commonly results in

negative life impacts for the individual (Hutzell & Payne, 2012). Avoidance responses do not lead to long-term emotional habituation and therefore do not resolve unhelpful responses to offences (Houbre, Tarquinio, & Lanfranchi, 2010; Worthington & Sotoohi, 2009). These negative outcomes could be derived from the fearful rumination and worry that accompanies long-term avoidance behaviours (Berry, Worthington, O'Connor, Parrott, & Wade, 2005).

Despite its long-term limitations, avoidance has been found to be useful as a short-term strategy in performance situations such as sport as it reflects a process of cognitive control that reduces the interference of unwanted stimuli (Anshel & Anderson, 2002; Gardner, & Moore, 2008). So perhaps avoidance can be seen as an effective short-term coping strategy, if this form of self-distancing is done in order to then process the event fully (Ayduk & Kross, 2010). Avoidance is a very common strategy used following interpersonal transgressions and specifically in peer-victimised youth (Meyer-Adams & Conner, 2008; Dehue, Bolman, & Vollink, 2008). It is therefore imperative to understand the manner in which it is utilised and how this relates to positive and negative coping and resiliency in the individual.

Bullying

Bullying has been defined as aggressive acts repeatedly perpetrated with intent to cause harm, involving a power imbalance felt by the recipient (Olweus, 1999). It has also been identified as the willful, conscious desire to hurt another or put them under stress (Tatum & Tatum, 1992), and as a systematic abuse of power (Smith & Sharp, 1994). It is a widespread social issue that leads to mental and physical health problems (Hawker & Boulton, 2000), depression (Penning, Bhagwanjee, & Govender, 2010), substance abuse (Tharp-Taylor, Haviland, & D'Amico, 2009), and low levels of school satisfaction and

achievement (Miller, Verhoek-Miller, Ceminsky, & Nugent, 2000). It has also been found to incur worse long-term effects on young adults' mental health than childhood maltreatment in general and is therefore an important area for intervention (Lereya, Copeland, Costello, & Wolke, 2015).

Interventions. There are many different versions of evidence-based school-based anti-bullying programs, with varying levels of effectiveness at reducing bullying and victimisation (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). There are programs aimed at raising awareness about the negative effects of violence (Baldry & Farrington, 2004), teaching conflict resolution skills (Beran & Shapiro, 2005), and improving social skills (Derosier & Marcus, 2005). Some programs target parents and teachers as well as students (Cross, Hall, Hamilton, Pintabona, & Erceg, 2004) and some seek to address the mental health issues of the children involved (Fonagy et al., 2009). Many programs take a systemic approach, including anti-bullying as a part of the school curriculum (Jenson & Dieterich, 2007) and attempting to change the school climate (Menard, Grotpeter, Gianola & O'Neal, 2008). Some focus on bystander interventions (Menesini, Codecasa, Benelli & Cowie, 2003) and strengthening interpersonal relationships in the school (Ortega, Del-Rey & Mora-Mercan, 2004), while others encourage accountability, building pro-social behaviours (Sprober, Schlottke & Hautzinger, 2006) and encouraging self-reflection on students' own behaviour (Salmivalli, Kaukiainen &Voeten, 2005). Research suggests that school-wide programs are successful at decreasing bullying and victimisation across all of these evidence-based approaches, although those that include work with peers have been less effective and may even lead to an increase in victimisation (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). The wide variety of intervention approaches suggests a need for more universally

accepted and understood evidence-based methods for combatting the problem of school bullying.

Victim-Specific Interventions. Universal interventions for bullying that rely on contextual strategies have been effective in many ways (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). However, it is argued that more focus on individual responses is also needed (Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek, 2010). Many individual responses target perpetrators of bullying, using a behavioural approach with youth who disrupt school relationships (Meyer & Lesch, 2000). Individual strategies to assist victims of bullying often involve managing their emotional responses (eg Field, 2007) and providing clinical support (Beran, Tutty, & Steinrath, 2004). However, there is a lack of research on victim responses to bullying and the impact these have on resiliency and future victimisation.

Forgiveness Interventions. Teaching and cultivating forgiveness is one possible intervention strategy for peer victimised youth, given its positive outcomes in so many interpersonal conflict and violence scenarios. Prior research has established correlations between forgiveness and bullying which present encouraging results. Forgiveness is part of a wider group of restorative justice approaches modelled after reintegrative shaming theory that incorporate conflict resolution strategies, which are a useful approach in bullying intervention programs (Braithwaite, 1989; Soutter & McKenzie, 2000). Forgiveness has been shown to have positive effects for perpetrators of bullying, such as reducing externalising behaviours (Perez, 2008). Correlational studies have shown that when parents forgive their children for bullying others, those children are significantly (22.4%) less likely to bully again in the future, potentially because being forgiven creates a chance for bullies to build the emotional scaffolding needed to boost self-regulation (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2005; 2006). In addition, schools that encourage the

acknowledgement of feelings and perspective taking which are inherent to the forgiveness

process experience reduced levels of bullying (Roth, Kanat-Maymon, & Bibi, 2011).

Victim Impacts of Forgiveness Interventions. The benefit of forgiveness on

victims of bullying is less researched, however the theoretical ties between forgiveness

and bullying are promising. Forgiveness is associated with positive socio-emotional

adjustment in early adolescents and so may also be applicable in cases of bullying among

youth (Reich, 2009). Forgiveness increases one's sense of personal empowerment and

interpersonal power, allowing adolescents to exert control where they are usually unable

(Egan & Todorov, 2009; Hargrave, & Hammer, 2011; Karremans & Smith, 2010). This

sense of control may increase self-efficacy and access to more effective coping

mechanisms for dealing with bullying (Craig, Tucker, & Wagner, 2008). Along with

believing that the bully has the potential to change, these cognitive benefits should

increase youth's ability to cope with bullying experiences (Yeager, Trzesniewski, Tirri, &

Nokelainen, 2011; Terranova, Harris, Kavetski, & Oates, 2011). Forgiveness also

inherently involves empathy for the abuser, which prevents victims from self-attributions

of blame, and should lead to higher levels of self-esteem in bullying situations (Davis &

Gold, 2010; Noll, 2008).

In a school bullying context, forgiveness has been correlated with positive coping

strategies such as conflict resolution and support seeking, higher self-esteem, and lower

levels of social anxiety (Flanagan, Vanden Hoek, Ranter, & Reich, 2012). A culture of

forgiveness and harmony decreases instances where bullying victims become perpetrators

themselves, which leads to the worst outcomes, often including increases in future

victimisation (Hui, Tsang, & Law, 2011; Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004; Champion & Clay,

2006; Dukes, Stein, & Zane, 2009; Sourander et al., 2007). In addition, different

conceptualisations of forgiveness across a developmental stage model have been linked to varying levels of victimisation among youth. For instance, forgiveness marked by conditional variables has been associated with higher levels of peer victimisation in 12 to 14 year olds (Coleman & Byrd, 2003). This literature therefore points to the potential value of including forgiveness towards the bully as a way of improving resiliency and positive outcomes for victims, specifically when developmentally advanced conceptualisations are promoted. Given the lack of empirical data in this area, there is a clear need for more specific exploratory and experimental investigations.

Dissertation Aims and Plan

The aims of this dissertation are to explore the impacts of forgiveness and the alternative strategies of avoidance and revenge as methods of dealing with bullying among primary school students (age 11), secondary school students (age 11-15) and university students (age 17-24). The body of this dissertation is comprised of four papers, which together aim to expand an understanding of the impacts of forgiveness on young victims of bullying, using both clinical and non-clinical samples, through experimental and qualitative designs. Each of the papers was written to stand alone, however they are intended to complement one another, each one leading to further understanding in this topic area. Paper 1 is the first experimental study that exists in this area of research. It explores the emotional, cognitive, and behavioural reactions of providing advice to forgive, avoid, or take revenge following bullying transgressions in primary and secondary school students aged 11 to 15. This in turn points to the possible application of forgiveness as an intervention strategy among bullied youth. The second paper uses an experimental intervention based on imagery rescripting to determine the emotional impacts, evaluative responses, and stress reactions of imagined forgiveness, avoidance, and revenge following bullying victimisation in university students aged 17 to 24. This

study was designed to test the application of these three attitudes in a clinical setting with an older sample before progressing to a more vulnerable youth population. Based on results from Paper 2, Paper 3 extends this exploration to a youth sample and uses imagery rescripting in a clinical population of secondary school boys (aged 12 to 14) who had recently been bullied to investigate the effects of imagining revenge and forgiveness on emotional impacts and evaluative responses. Following on from all previous results, the final paper seeks to expand the definitional understanding of forgiveness in youth (aged 11 to 15) and young adult (aged 17-24) populations. Qualitative data from all three previous samples is analysed in order to understand lay conceptualisations of forgiveness and how these may impact results from the first three studies and the deeper nuances of including forgiveness in bullying interventions. In all, this dissertation represents the first experimental application of forgiveness in youth bullying victimisation experiences. It provides an understanding of lay conceptualisations of forgiveness that provides clinical implications on the impacts of, as well as strategies for, promoting forgiveness in bullying interventions for peer victimised youth.

Paper 1: Watson, Rapee & Todorov, 2015

Forgiveness Reduces Anger in a School Bullying Context

Hayley Watson, Ronald M. Rapee and Natasha Todorov

Abstract

Background: Forgiveness has been shown to be a helpful strategy for victims of many different forms of abuse and trauma. It has also been theoretically linked to positive outcomes for victims of bullying. However, it has never been experimentally manipulated in a school-bullying context.

Method: This research investigates an experimental manipulation providing children with response advice following a bullying incident. Children read hypothetical physical and verbal bullying scenarios, followed by advice from a friend to either respond with forgiveness, avoidance, or revenge, in a within-subjects repeated measures design. 184 children aged 11 to 15 from private schools in Sydney participated in this study.

Results: Results indicated that advice to forgive the perpetrator led to significantly less anger than advice to either avoid or exact revenge. Avoidance was the most likely advice to be followed by students, and the most likely to result in ignoring the bullying and developing empathy for their abuser. However, it also resulted in interpretations of the bullying as being more serious.

Conclusion: Forgiveness is suggested as an effective coping response for ameliorating the affective aggressive states of victimized youth, with further exploration needed regarding the interplay between the avoidance and forgiveness processes.

Bullying has been defined as aggressive acts repeatedly perpetrated with intent to cause harm, involving a power imbalance felt by the recipient (Olweus, 1999). Bullying is a social problem that has an impact on children across all strata of society often leading to mental and physical health problems (Hawker & Boulton, 2000), depression (Penning, Bhagwanjee, & Govender, 2010), aggression and suicidal ideation (Harris, 2009), substance abuse (Tharp-Taylor, Haviland, & D'Amico, 2009), and low school satisfaction

and achievement (Miller et al. 2000). Universal interventions for bullying that rely on contextual strategies have not been found to decrease self-reported bullying or victimization levels in youth, and it is argued that more focus on individual responses is also needed (Cook et al. 2010).

One individual approach to dealing with interpersonal transgressions that has been found to have a powerful positive impact across many instances of violence and aggression is forgiveness (Enright, 2001). While there is no uniform definition of forgiveness in the literature, it has been widely conceptualized as a coping process, whereby a stressor resulting from a perception of interpersonal hurt is neutralized (Strelan & Covic, 2006) through a deliberate decision to relinquish feelings of resentment towards someone who has caused harm (Enright, 2001). It has been found to lead to positive mental and physical health outcomes in situations of prior sexual abuse (Brown, 2003), domestic violence and post-traumatic stress disorder survivors (Reed & Enright, 2006), and victims of violent crime (Barbetta, 2002).

School bullying presents a unique application of forgiveness, because unlike most literature in this area that relates to past cases of violence, bullying is an experience that is repetitive and ongoing in nature. The question of whether or not it is applicable in this

context is therefore an important and contentious one. Prior research has established correlations between forgiveness and bullying which present promising results. Young adults with higher levels of trait forgiveness have been found to experience less emotional hurt in response to past bullying incidents (Egan & Todorov, 2009), forgiveness has been correlated with positive coping strategies (Flanagan et al. 2012), and an ethos of forgiveness and harmony has been argued to decrease instances of bullying victims becoming perpetrators themselves (Hui, Tsang, & Law, 2011). However, no study to date has experimentally manipulated the impact of providing advice to forgive in situations of current bullying. Forgiveness is presented in the literature as an *absence of vengeful or avoidant responses* (Worthington & Sherer, 2004). Vengeful reactions lead victims to become bullies themselves, putting them in the highest risk category for negative outcomes (Sourander et al. 2007), and avoidance behaviors also result in negative life impacts for the individual (Hutzell & Payne, 2012). These two alternative responses are therefore an important and useful measure against which to investigate the impact of forgiveness in this context. Thus, the aim of this study was to investigate the impact of providing young adolescents with advice to forgive, avoid, or take revenge in a school-bullying context, thereby yielding information regarding the causal impact of this advice. The three hypotheses involved the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral reactions to these varying types of advice, predicting that participants would have more effective coping responses across all three areas.

Method

Participants

Participants were selected through two private schools in Sydney, one all boys' school, and one all girls' school, each catering to both primary and secondary students.

The schools were matched on the amount of time, energy and resources dedicated to bullying prevention and management (both high as reported by school psychologists). They were also both religious schools, of the Christian faith. The boys' school reported medium levels of bullying at their school, and the girls' school reported low levels (both by school psychologists). Levels and types of bullying were further clarified from participants, specifying that in the current sample 50% of students experienced physical bullying, and 75% of students experienced verbal bullying in the previous school term. Permission was sought from parents of every student in Years 6 and 8 in each of the schools. 46% of parents returned consent forms for their children to participate in the study. Of those that were returned, 90% wished to participate, creating a total of 184 students (43% of students overall) who participated in the study. This was comprised of 104 boys (42 in Year 6, and 62 in Year 8) and 80 girls (23 in Year 6, and 57 in Year 8). Their ages ranged from 11 to 15, with a mean age of 13.0 ($SD = 1.09$). This age range was chosen in order to capture data before and after the transition into high school, when a peak in bullying occurs (Rios-Ellis, Bellamy, & Shoji, 2000). Age and gender were not expected to affect the results, as these individual factors have not been found to impact on one's willingness or ability to forgive (Chiaramello et al. 2008; Fehr, Gelfand, & Nag, 2010).

Procedure

Researchers attended each school to administer an online survey to students participating in the study. Participants took the survey in a computer laboratory in their school or on their school-issued tablets in their own classrooms, under the supervision of researchers and teachers. The study was approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee.

Design

Vignettes were created for this study using verbal and physical bullying scenarios, as these types of bullying are the most salient across genders in early adolescence (Wang, Iannotti & Nansel, 2009). Given that these two types of bullying were both reported as high in the current sample, ecological validity was also gleaned for using these specific bullying dynamics. Three different scenarios for each type of bullying were utilized, in order to adequately test across settings/conditions of the scenarios. In each vignette the requisite conditions of a power imbalance and the repeated nature of the transgression were embedded in the scenario. Each Vignette also contained an ending that depicted a friend suggesting that the participant respond in one of three ways: With revenge, avoidance, or forgiveness. Each statement of advice included an initial empathic response, followed by the simple instructions of how the child should respond. Examples of vignettes are found in the Appendix. The gender of the friend matched the gender of the participant in each scenario, while the gender(s) of the bully or bullies remained neutral. Each participant received each type of advice one time in the verbal bullying scenarios, and one time in the physical bullying scenarios.

The two alternative conditions of revenge and avoidance were chosen because forgiveness has been defined as the absence of both of these in the literature (Worthington & Sherer, 2004). Revenge in this context was intended to specifically relate to the wish for retribution. This form of revenge goes beyond holding the offender accountable for their actions, and includes the desire for the offender to suffer in some way (Gerber & Jackson, 2013). Negative feelings towards the perpetrator are relinquished and when one forgives (Enright, 2001), and so it is the negative feelings associated with a desire to punish that are highlighted in the revenge condition.

The survey was designed to minimize order and matching effects by counterbalancing across different conditions. Matching the three conditions of Forgiveness, Revenge, and Avoidance to the three verbal bullying and three physical bullying scenarios was done through creating all possible pairings of the above. This resulted in nine versions of verbal vignettes, and nine versions of physical vignettes. The verbal and physical scenarios were then combined by randomly generated pairings. The resulting six versions were then counterbalanced for order of questions through a random number generator allocating both 1) the order of the three physical and three verbal vignettes, and 2) whether verbal or physical would appear first in the alternation between bullying types (physical and verbal scenarios alternated in every version). Each student was then randomly allocated to one of the fixed six female or six male versions of the survey at testing time.

Analysis of Statistical Data

As there were no missing data, repeated measures analyses of variance (ANOVA) 2 (bully type: verbal, physical) x 3 (advice: avoidance, revenge, forgiveness) were conducted for each dependent variable. For explorative post-hoc comparisons, tests of simple effects were applied, if appropriate using multiple pairwise comparisons. All *p* values were Bonferonni adjusted.

Measures

Emotional reactions. Following each scenario, participants were given a scale measuring affective coping responses to the scenario taken from Egan (2005), which measured their emotional reactions (*sad, angry, anxious, ashamed)* as well as their interpretations of the emotional impact of the event (*perceived ability to cope,* and *seriousness of the event*) all of which were measured on a 4-point scale (*not at all* to *very*).

Cognitive reactions. Each participant was then given a set of questions developed for this study, which measured their likelihood to respond with the cognitive appraisal of an internalizing response to the situation (*think there was something wrong with me; wish I was different*), or an externalizing response (*think there was something wrong with them; think they are in pain themselves to act so mean*). These items were all rated on a 5-point scale (*very unlikely* to *very likely*) and measured the level of coping self-efficacy of each participant, through their engagement with the victim role and level of psychological self-blame, both of which have been shown to be important mediating factors for anxiety and depression following a bullying incident (Singh & Bussey, 2010). Forgiveness inherently involves an external attribution of blame, through holding the perpetrator accountable for their actions (Bradfield & Aquino, 1999). This allows for victim empowerment in this process. Detrimental internalizing responses that attribute blame to oneself are often mistaken for forgiveness, and so it is imperative to distinguish between the two in researching this topic.

Behavioral reactions. Participants were then asked to rate their likely behavioral responses to the event (*tell someone; ignore them and carry on with my day; follow the advice; want to get even*). These items were also rated on a 5-point scale (*very unlikely* to *very likely*), and were designed to measure the impact of this advice on common behavioral responses to childhood bullying experiences.

<div align="center">

Results

</div>

The aim of this study was to look at the influence of different forms of advice (forgiveness, avoidance, revenge) on reactions to victimization. As expected from previous research findings, age and gender were both found to be non-significant correlates, and were therefore not included in the analyses.

Descriptive Statistics

54% of participants were Caucasian ($n = 100$), 29% classified themselves as multiracial ($n = 52$), just over 8% were Asian ($n = 15$), and the remaining were from other ethnic origins. Just over 80% of participants identified with a religion, 70% ($n = 126$) being Christian, just under 4% ($n = 7$) being Muslim, and the rest identifying with other religions. Just over 75% reported being victims of verbal bullying at least once in the last school term ($n = 136$), while just under 50% reported physical victimization at least once in the last school term ($n = 89$).

Emotional Reactions to Advice

There were no significant effects of advice on the emotions of shame ($F_{(2, 358)} = 2.86$, $p = .059$, $\eta_p^2 = .016$), anxiousness ($F_{(2, 358)} = 0.41(2)$, $p = .663$, $\eta_p^2 = .002$), or sadness ($F_{(1.93, 344.54)} = 0.55$, $p = .570$, $\eta_p^2 = .003$), nor on how well participants felt they could handle the situation ($F_{(2, 358)} = 0.79$, $p = .457$, $\eta_p^2 = .004$). There was, however, a significant influence of advice on the emotional reaction of anger ($F_{(2, 358)} = 4.75$, $p = .009$, $\eta_p^2 = .026$). Pairwise comparisons revealed a significant difference between both forgiveness and avoidance $t(179) = 2.57$, $p = .032$, $\eta_p^2 = .036$; and forgiveness and revenge $t(179) = 2.69$, $p = .023$, $\eta_p^2 = .039$. Participants were significantly less angry when given the advice to forgive than to avoid or take revenge. A non-significant difference was found between avoidance and revenge, $t(179) = .033$, $p = 1.00$, $\eta_p^2 = .000$. There was also a significant influence of advice on the extent to which participants felt the situation was serious ($F_{(2, 358)} = 3.72$, $p = .025$, $\eta_p^2 = .020$). Pairwise comparisons indicated no significant differences between forgiveness and revenge $t(179) = .16$, $p = 1.00$, $\eta_p^2 = .000$; avoidance and revenge t(179) = 2.37, $p = .056$, $\eta_p^2 = .030$; or avoidance and forgiveness t(179) = 2.29, $p = .067$, $\eta_p^2 = .028$. However, the trend pointed to participants finding the situation more serious when given advice to avoid, rather than to forgive or take revenge.

Table 1 displays the means and standard deviations of emotional reactions based on type of advice.

Cognitive Reactions to Advice

There were no significant differences between the three advice groups regarding how much participants wished they were different ($F(1.86, 333.69) = 0.95$, $p = .382$, $\eta_P^2 = .005$), considered the situation to be their fault ($F(2, 358) = 0.01$, $p = .987$, $\eta_P^2 = .000$), or thought that something was wrong with the bully ($F(2, 358) = 0.64$, $p = .526$, $\eta_P^2 = .004$). However, there was a significant difference between groups in the thought that the bully must be in pain themselves to act this way ($F(1.90, 339.50) = 4.30$, $p = .016$, $\eta_P^2 = .023$). Pairwise comparisons revealed a significant difference between avoidance and revenge $t(179) = 2.78$, $p = .018$, $\eta_P^2 = .041$, with participants thinking that the bully was in pain more when given advice to avoid than to take revenge. Non-significant differences were found between avoidance and forgiveness $t(179) = 1.84$, $p = .212$, $\eta_P^2 = .019$; and revenge and forgiveness $t(170) = .10$, $p = .920$, $\eta_P^2 = .000$. Table 2 displays means and standard deviations of thought content based on type of advice given.

Behavioural Reactions to Advice

There were no significant differences based on the type of advice participants received for how likely they were to tell someone about the situation ($F(2, 358) = 1.26$, $p = .284$, $\eta_P^2 = .007$), or how much they felt like getting even with the perpetrator of the abuse ($F(2, 358) = 0.24$, $p = .790$, $\eta_P^2 = .001$). There was, however, a significant difference based on advice for how likely the participant was to follow that advice ($F(1.73, 308.93) = 5.37$, $p = .008$, $\eta_P^2 = .029$). Pairwise comparisons revealed a significant difference between avoidance and forgiveness $t(179) = 1.71$, $p = .001$, $\eta_P^2 = .016$, with participants being more likely to follow the advice to avoid rather than to forgive the perpetrator.

Non-significant differences were found between forgiveness and revenge $t(179) = .035$, $p = 1.00$, $\eta_P^2 = .000$; and avoidance and revenge $t(179) = 2.33$, $p = .062$, $\eta_P^2 = .029$. There was also a significant difference between groups for how likely children were to ignore the bully and carry on with their day ($F(1.81, 323.07) = 3.23$, $p = .046$, $\eta_P^2 = .018$). Pairwise comparisons indicated no significant differences between avoidance and revenge $t(179) = 2.21$, $p = .085$, $\eta_P^2 = .027$; revenge and forgiveness t(179) = 1.29, p = .587, $\eta_P^2 = .009$; or avoidance and forgiveness $t(179) = 1.50$, $p = .418$, $\eta_P^2 = .012$. However, the trend was that participants were most likely to ignore the bully when given advice to avoid than to take revenge. Table 3 displays the differences in means and standard deviations in behavioral reactions to type of advice given.

Discussion

Emotional Reactions to Advice

These results found that found that advice of avoidance led to an interpretation of the event as being more serious in nature than advice of revenge or forgiveness. This reflects literature showing that avoidance reactions lead to increases in victimization and decreases in self-esteem, as they do not result in long-term emotional reduction (Houbre, Tarquinio, & Lanfranchi, 2010). It was also found that advice to forgive led to significantly less anger than either advice to avoid or exact revenge. This is reflective of literature revealing that the affective shift most often reported between forgiveness and retaliatory attitudes is that of anger (eg Johnson, 2012). Shameful events such as peer harassment have been found to lead to *humiliated fury* in youth (Thomaes et al. 2011), and thus the experience of anger may be the most salient for recipients of school bullying. The relationship between peer victimization and delinquency is significantly mediated by feelings of anger (Sigfusdottir, Gudjonsson, and Sigurdsson, 2010). Victimized students who become bullies themselves exhibit more anger than their victimized peers (Yeager et

al. 2011) and incur the worst outcomes (Dukes, Stein, & Zane, 2009; Sourander et al. 2007), including increases in future victimization (Champion & Clay, 2006; Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004). Conversely, children classified as defenders, outsiders, and those not involved in bullying have been found to be lower on reactive aggression (Camodeca & Goosens, 2005), suggesting that a reduction in anger could alter the role that children play in bullying scenarios.

Cognitive Reactions to Advice

These results found that advice to avoid elicited more empathy for the bully than advice to take revenge. Seeing the bully beyond merely their role as aggressor has many positive benefits, such as a reduction in the debilitating emotions of hatred and shame (Yeager et al. 2011). Empathy is a necessary step in the forgiveness process (Davis & Gold, 2010), and these results indicate that some aspect of avoidance may be one path to achieving this cognitive shift. This is an important area for further study, as long-term avoidance strategies have many negative implications (Hutzell & Payne, 2012), and the use of forgiveness as the next step to such an approach could have far-reaching implications for intervention.

Conflict monitoring theory argues that cognitive control is the function that elicits forgiveness and reduces anger (Wilkowski, Robinson, & Troop-Gordon, 2010) and therefore more cognitive change was expected to occur in these results. These findings therefore also indicate that the emotional impact of advice following a bullying incident occurs before many cognitive shifts manifest, and may be a precursor to eliciting such changes.

Behavioral Reactions to Advice

These results found that participants were most likely to follow the advice of avoidance, and were most likely to ignore the bully when advised to avoid. This is in line

with research showing that avoidance is the most common strategy used by peer-victimized youth (Dehue, Bolman, & Vollink, 2008). While ignoring the bully is often suggested as a helpful strategy for children faced with bullying (Leadbeater & Hoglund, 2006), it is important to distinguish between different mental interpretations of ignoring on the part of the victimized child. Research shows that many children who attempt to ignore the bully only succeed in pretending to do so (Dehue, Bolman, & Vollink, 2008), suggesting that the cognitions accompanying this behavior could vary greatly from case to case, and they must be addressed as well in order to determine the full impact of this behavior.

It is notable in this study that the desire for revenge was not affected by instructions to forgive, although anger was significantly reduced. Revenge and forgiveness obey different cognitive rules (Mullet, Riviere, & Sastre, 2007), and so do not always operate in opposition. A reduction in negative affect without the accompanying loss of a desire for retribution has been termed *expressive suppression*, in which the forgiveness process is begun but remains incomplete (Gross & Thompson, 2007). This would reflect a lack of cognitive shift, and is a viable interpretation of these results, as participants were only given brief instructions, and the process of forgiveness involves many steps (Strelan & Covic, 2006), with the desire for revenge decreasing when a state of forgiveness is truly achieved (Worthington, 2001). This reveals the specific emotional impact of providing advice to forgive, and underscores the need for an in-depth therapeutic process in the application of forgiveness in bullying incidents in order to elicit behavioral and cognitive change as well.

Limitations

The present research has several limitations that are important to discuss. First, the current analyses were based on self-reports, which involve inherent reporting biases.

However, students were assured of anonymity and undertook the survey on a secure online format, therefore minimizing social desirability effects. Second, as the current sample was drawn from mainly Caucasian private religious schools in Australia, generalizing these results to wider populations must be done with caution. However, given that this sample consisted of students who reported a significant amount of recent bullying, and was constituted of standard Australian ethnicities and religious orientations, it can be seen to be a useful and accurate representation of many Australian youth. Finally, these results are based on hypothetical scenarios of victimization, and so rely on children's beliefs about what they would do rather than behavioral reports of actual

bullying experiences or on observations. The use of this method could explain the relatively low effect sizes in the data. In addition, given the complexity of forgiveness, providing a single, hypothetical piece of advice to "forgive" may not have provided a

complete test of this construct. However, most of these children have been bullied recently so they have real life experiences to draw from in forming their responses. In addition, the fact that significant findings were established even within the confines of hypothetical scenarios and a simple instruction of advice suggests the strength and importance of these findings.

<div align="center">**Implications for Practice**</div>

The results of this study reveal certain specific areas of potential for intervention that could increase the positive outcomes for youth victims of peer abuse. Findings indicate that providing young adolescents with advice to forgive a bully leads to decreased levels of anger for the victim. As anger is a strong correlate of negative outcomes of bullying victimization, this is an important area for therapeutic intervention. Current popular approaches to anger reduction are cognitive behavioral therapy-based

strategies, however only moderate effects are shown (Blake & Hamrin, 2007), and longer-term effects are still unclear (Cole, 2008). These results suggest that forgiveness could potentially be used as an adjunct to current approaches for anger reduction in peer-victimized youth. This adds to literature revealing the successful use of forgiveness as a clinical intervention to reduce externalizing behaviors in adolescent delinquent populations (Perez, 2008).

These results also show that developing empathy for an abuser may best be achieved through advising students to initially distance themselves from the bullying situation. As empathy is an aspect of the forgiveness process (McCullough et al. 1997), and reducing hostile attributions is not enough to create the desired behavior change (Perren et al. 2013), the most effective therapeutic impact for peer-victimized youth in the 11-15 year old age range might be achieved through a combination of forgiveness and avoidance.

Table 1: *Summary of Means and Standard Deviations for Affective Reactions to Different Types of Advice*

Variable	Advice	Mean	SD	95% CI
Shame	Forgiveness	2.86	1.20	(2.69, 3.04)
	Avoidance	2.76	1.23	(2.58, 2.94)
	Revenge	2.89	1.30	(2.70, 3.09)
Anxiousness	Forgiveness	3.02	1.12	(2.86, 3.19)
	Avoidance	3.07	1.20	(2.89, 3.24)
	Revenge	3.06	1.23	(2.88, 3.23)
Sadness	Forgiveness	3.39	1.04	(3.24, 3.54)
	Avoidance	3.42	1.09	(3.26, 3.58)
	Revenge	3.36	1.15	(3.19, 3.53)
Anger*	Forgiveness	3.66	0.91	(3.53, 3.79)
	Avoidance	3.80	0.90	(3.67, 3.93)
	Revenge	3.82	0.95	(3.68, 3.96)
Can handle it	Forgiveness	3.41	0.86	(3.29, 3.54)
	Avoidance	3.38	0.84	(3.25, 3.50)
	Revenge	3.35	0.88	(3.22, 3.48)
Seriousness*	Forgiveness	3.56	0.92	(3.43, 3.70)
	Avoidance	3.68	0.86	(3.55, 3.81)
	Revenge	3.55	0.94	(3.41, 3.69)

Table 2: *Summary of Means and Standard Deviations for Cognitive Reactions to Different Types of Advice*

Variable	Advice	Mean	SD	95% CI
Wish they were different	Forgiveness	2.16	1.22	(1.98, 2.34)
	Avoidance	2.09	1.18	(1.92, 2.26)
	Revenge	2.11	1.27	(1.93, 2.30)
Think it is their fault	Forgiveness	1.77	0.92	(1.63, 1.90)
	Avoidance	1.78	0.88	(1.65, 1.90)
	Revenge	1.77	0.95	(1.63, 1.91)
Think something is wrong with the bully	Forgiveness	2.79	1.02	(2.64, 2.94)
	Avoidance	2.74	1.09	(2.58, 2.90)
	Revenge	2.79	1.11	(2.63, 2.96)
Think the bully is in pain*	Forgiveness	2.65	1.06	(2.49, 2.81)
	Avoidance	2.75	1.05	(2.60, 2.90)
	Revenge	2.60	1.09	(2.44, 2.76)

*Note. * p < .05*

Table 3: *Summary of Means and Standard Deviations for Behavioral Reactions to Different Types of Advice*

Variable	Advice	Mean	SD	95% CI
Follow advice*	Forgiveness	2.74	0.99	(2.59, 2.88)
	Avoidance	3.05	1.01	(2.90, 3.20)
	Revenge	2.78	1.15	(2.61, 2.95)
Ignore bully*	Forgiveness	3.16	1.15	(2.99, 3.33)
	Avoidance	3.23	1.14	(3.06, 3.40)
	Revenge	3.08	1.22	(2.90, 3.26)
Tell someone	Forgiveness	3.43	1.26	(3.24, 3.61)
	Avoidance	3.37	0.92	(3.23, 3.50)
	Revenge	3.25	0.99	(3.10, 3.40)
Want to get even	Forgiveness	3.42	1.13	(3.26, 3.59)
	Avoidance	3.44	1.04	(3.28, 3.59)
	Revenge	3.46	1.10	(3.30, 3.62)

Note. * *p* < .05

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Paper 2: Watson, Rapee & Todorov, 2015

Imagery Rescripting of Revenge, Avoidance, and Forgiveness for Past Bullying

Experiences in Young Adults

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: Forgiveness has been found to be a useful intervention for past trauma across a variety of situations. However, this has yet to be experimentally tested in victims of bullying. The aim of the current study was to evaluate the impact of imagining forgiveness, avoidance, or revenge responses towards a perpetrator among young adult victims of bullying.

Methods: 135 undergraduate psychology students aged 17 to 24 who reported a recent experience of being victimized were led through imagery re-scripting where they recalled a personal episode of bullying and imagined a new ending to one where they forgave, avoided, or took revenge on the bully.

Results: Results indicated significant differences between Time 1 (imagining the event as it occurred), to Time 2 (imagining an alternate ending) for all three processes. Negative affect decreased significantly in the forgiveness and avoidance conditions, but not in the revenge condition. Positive evaluations of coping decreased significantly in the revenge condition, but not in the avoidance or forgiveness conditions. However, imagined forgiveness of the bully was more stressful than either imagined avoidance or revenge.

Limitations: The short-term measurements and the researcher-directed rescripting limit the interpretation of results, however yield valuable information about the immediate impact of imaginal exposure and point to future research directions.

Conclusions: The impact of focusing on immediate stress reduction in dealing with bullying is explored, and a combination of short-term avoidance and longer-term forgiveness is highlighted as a potentially effective strategy to deal with the negative emotional consequences of victimization.

Bullying has been defined as aggressive acts repeatedly perpetrated with intent to cause harm, involving a power imbalance felt by the recipient (Olweus, 1999). Bullying is a widespread social issue that leads to mental and physical health problems (Hawker & Boulton, 2000), substance abuse (Tharp-Taylor, Haviland, & D'Amico, 2009), and lower levels of school satisfaction and achievement (Miller, Verhoek-Miller, Ceminsky, & Nugent, 2000). It has been found to incur worse long-term effects on young adults' mental health than other forms of maltreatment in childhood and is therefore an important area for intervention (Lereya, Copeland, Costello, & Wolke, 2015). There are many organizational or whole school approaches aimed at reducing instances of bullying (Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek, 2010) but far less work has focused on reducing negative outcomes for those who are victimized.

The Role of Forgiveness

One individual approach that may help to reduce negative outcomes for victims is to encourage forgiveness of the offender by the victim (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2006). Forgiveness is part of a wider group of restorative justice approaches that incorporate conflict resolution strategies, which are integral to successful bullying intervention programs (Soutter & McKenzie, 2000). Forgiveness is an in-depth process of relinquishing feelings of resentment towards someone who has caused harm (Enright, 2001). This process decreases *unforgiveness*, the delayed negative emotions of a chronic stress response such as anger or fear (Worthington & Scherer, 2004) and therefore has the

potential to ameliorate negative health consequences (Harris & Thoresen, 2005).

Forgiveness is associated with positive socio-emotional adjustment in early adolescents

(Reich, 2009), greater physical and mental health benefits (Lawler-Row & Piferi, 2006),

and more positive relationship quality (Berry & Worthington, 2001). Forgiveness

interventions have been found to improve outcomes in victims of domestic violence

suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (Reed & Enright, 2006), victims of sexual

abuse (Walton, 2005), and adult children of alcoholics (Osterndorf, Enright, Holter, &

Klatt, 2011).

Forgiveness increases one's sense of personal empowerment (Hargrave, &

Hammer, 2011), which could give youth a sense of self-efficacy and access to more

effective coping mechanisms for dealing with bullying (Craig, Tucker, & Wagner, 2008).

Forgiveness also allows adolescents to exert control in their lives in novel ways (Egan &

Todorov, 2009). This, along with advocating for non-aggressive behaviours, should

increase youth's ability to cope with bullying experiences (Terranova, Harris, Kavetski, &

Oates, 2011). Forgiveness also inherently involves empathy for the abuser (Davis &

Gold, 2010), which precludes victims from self-attributions of blame, and should lead to

higher levels of self-esteem in bullying situations (Noll, 2008). Correlational studies have

shown that when parents forgive their children for bullying others, those children are

significantly (22.4%) less likely to bully again in the future (Ahmed & Braithwaite,

2006), potentially because being forgiven creates a chance for bullies to build the

emotional scaffolding needed to boost self-regulation (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2005).

Further correlational studies point to positive impacts for the victim as well. Egan

and Todorov (2009) found that young adults with higher trait forgiveness experienced

less emotional hurt when reflecting on past bullying experiences. In a school bullying

context, forgiveness has been correlated with positive coping strategies such as conflict

resolution and support seeking, higher self-esteem, and lower levels of social anxiety (Flanagan, Hoek, Ranter, & Reich, 2012). Without a culture of forgiveness and harmony, there are increases in instances where bullying victims become perpetrators themselves (Hui, Tsang, & Law, 2011), leading to the worst outcomes (Dukes, Stein, & Zane, 2009; Sourander et al., 2007), often including increases in future victimization (Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004; Champion & Clay, 2006).

However, there is a lack of research on the clinical use of restorative justice approaches in school bullying (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011) and there has been little research to date that experimentally measures the impact of forgiveness interventions on victims of bullying. The first experimental study in this area promisingly revealed that providing youth with advice to forgive a bully in a hypothetical situation leads to less anger than advice to avoid or exact revenge (Watson, Rapee, & Todorov, 2015). There is therefore a clear need to explore this area further and apply forgiveness to real cases of bullying.

Imagery Re-scripting

Imagery is one particularly powerful mechanism for responding to trauma. Imagery goes beyond the impact of cognitive restructuring to influence highly automatic defense systems that respond to trauma memories (Hagenaars, Mesbah, & Cremers, 2015). Imagery therefore serves to change the meaning of the event, which is particularly helpful in bullying, where victims are subject to repeated negative messages about themselves that they often internalise (Lereya, Copeland, Costello, & Wolke, 2015). One potential therapeutic application of forgiveness in a bullying context is therefore through the use of imagery re-scripting. Imagery has been used in research on interpersonal transgressions to provide accurate information regarding emotional responses (Witvliet, Ludwig, & Bauer, 2002). Imagery re-scripting, where the individual imagines a different

and desired end to a personal trauma, was found to have better effects on anger control, externalized anger, hostility, and guilt than the standard strategy of imaginal exposure treatment, where the individual imagines the event itself (Arntz, Tiesma, & Kindt, 2007). Such imagery re-scripting has also been found to lead to fewer intrusive thoughts after witnessing trauma than both imagery re-experiencing and positive imagery (Hagenaars & Arntz, 2011), and has been successfully applied as treatment for patients with complicated PTSD (Arntz, Sofi, & van Breukelen, 2013). Memories of stressful bullying victimisation have been shown to be predictive of PTSD symptomatology in both adults and youth (Laschinger & Nosko, 2015; Litman et al., 2015). Therefore, bullying is well suited for imagery interventions that have been used successfully in other trauma scenarios.

Previous research has found that unforgiving thoughts about a transgression prompt significantly greater increases in skin conductance than forgiving thoughts (Witvliet, Ludwig, & Laan, 2001). This points to the increased allostatic load that results from strong negative emotions and cognitive avoidance, leading to the overall negative health implications of unforgiving attitudes. However, subsequent research has not found the same results in regards to crime victimization scenarios (Witvliet et al., 2008) and there are no data that measure this stress response specifically in bullying situations. Previous research shows that imagery of a safe place is more effective at changing emotions than revenge imagery (Seebauer, Frob, Dubaschny, Schonberger, & Jacob, 2013), but this has also not been tested in a bullying-specific scenario. The use of imagery re-scripting with an outcome of forgiveness in youth bullying situations is therefore an area that holds great potential for both research and intervention strategies, and is a field that is currently entirely unexplored.

The Current Study

Before evaluating the effects of imagery re-scripting among young vulnerable populations who have been chronically victimized, this preliminary study investigated the impacts of this intervention strategy on young adults who had experienced more limited victimization. Unforgiveness is characterized by attitudes and behaviours of avoidance or vengeance (Worthington & Scherer, 2004). Avoidance and revenge are both well-researched responses to bullying victimisation (Meyer-Adams & Conner, 2008; Dehue, Bolman, & Vollink, 2008; Camodeca & Goosens, 2005). Therefore, these two alternative strategies were contrasted with forgiveness. The aim of this study was to determine the effects of imagery re-scripting terminating in images of forgiveness, revenge, or avoidance of a past bullying victimization scenario in young adults, on affect, evaluative responses, and levels of stress. Given that avoidance is correlated with depression, anxiety, and eating and substance abuse disorders (Aldao, Nolen-Hoeksema, & Schweizer, 2010), and revenge is related to depression (Newman, 2011; Rijavec, Jurcec, & Mijocevic, 2010), and is associated with poorer mental health outcomes (Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004), it was hypothesized that forgiveness would lead to more positive responses across these measures than either avoidance or revenge.

Method

Participants

135 undergraduate psychology students who had been bullied in the past six months (110 females and 25 males) participated in this study. All students were recruited through an official university online protocol for study participation, and were provided course credit for their involvement in the research. Bullying was explained using Olweus' (1999) recognised definition: Having someone in their life who had hurt them who they felt had power over them, and they wanted to change the situation but did not know how. Only those students who had experienced such a situation in the last six months, where

the bullying had ceased, and were aged less than 25 years were asked to participate. The six-month time limit was stipulated in order to ensure that participants had access to recent vivid memories of the event, given the imaginal nature of the intervention. The requirement for the bullying to have ceased was necessary in order to ensure emotional consistency in the sample. The age cut-off was made in order to draw a sample of young adults, as differences are likely within a wider age range and the focus of this research was on youth populations. Ages ranged from 17 to 24, with a mean age of 18.39 years ($SD = 1.22$). 118 (87.4%) were in their first year of university, with the remainder being in their 2nd to 4th years. 121 participants (89.6%) had completed a Secondary School diploma as their highest level of education, while 12 (8.9%) had completed a previous undergraduate degree, and 2 (1.5%) had completed a post graduate diploma. 121 participants (89.6%) lived with their parents or family, while the remainder lived with a house mate, partner, or alone. 66 participants identified as being Caucasian (48.9%), 39 (28.9%) identified as being Asian, and the remainder (22.2%) identified with other ethnicities. 69 participants (51.1%) identified as Christian, 28 (20.8%) with other religions, and 38 (28.1%) identified as having no religion.

Imagined Scenarios

Participants listened to two pre-recorded auditory tapes during testing and were asked questions measuring their emotional and evaluative responses after each one. The first recording took them through a visualization process regarding their past experience of victimization. This recording lasted 4.75 minutes, and asked them to recall a specific incident when they were hurt by this bullying dynamic. They were asked to imagine the event in detail, recalling their memory of all five senses in order to maximize the vividness of the imagery. Measures were then taken on their current state affect and their evaluative responses to the event. For the second recording, participants were randomly

allocated to one of three conditions: Forgiveness, Avoidance, or Revenge. Each recording lasted approximately 6.5 minutes, and all followed an imagery re-scripting process whereby the participant was asked to visualize the bullying incident again, changing the ending to one of forgiveness, avoidance, or revenge. In each of these conditions the recording asked participants to imagine the specific bullying incident for a second time.

A rationale was provided for the specific re-scripting condition to which the participant was allocated. For the forgiveness condition, this process was modeled after the four phases of forgiveness proposed by Enright and Fitzgibbons (2000), in which forgiveness encompasses uncovering the extent of the harm caused and facing associated feelings, making a decision to forgive the perpetrator, gaining perspective and empathy for the offender as a rationale for offering forgiveness, and finding meaning in the suffering. For the revenge and avoidance conditions, the recording also mirrored these stages through uncovering the extent of the harm caused, making a decision to take revenge/avoid the perpetrator, gaining perspective on why revenge/avoidance is an appropriate way of responding, and finding meaning in the suffering. Cognitive avoidance was created in the avoidance condition by asking participants to imagine a place that brings them happiness and is away from the bully, and escaping to that place instead of facing the bully. In the revenge condition participants were instructed to imagine any version of vengeance that they wished, in which they felt they were getting back at the perpetrator for the wrong done to them.

The three conditions matched each other as closely as possible, addressing all of the same topics and ideas, but from different perspectives. Participants were then asked to reflect on how their allocated way of responding made sense in their current situation. Finally, they were asked to imagine the bullying incident again, but changing the ending in their mind to one where they avoid (escaping to a place that brings them happiness),

forgive, or take revenge on the instigator of the abuse. After this second recording, participants' current state affect and evaluative responses to the event were measured again.

Skin Conductance Responses

Electrodermal activity was measured using PowerLab 4/30 by ADInstruments, ML886, GSR1319. Two electrodes of 2 by 2.5 cm were attached to the medial phalanges of the first and third fingers of the left hand. Electrodermal activity was recorded through the software program LabChart, using a range of 40 µs, and extracting 200 samples a second. Means and standard deviations were calculated for a baseline of 1 minute prior to the first recording, and at 10-second intervals during the second recording from the point at which the recordings diverged into the different conditions.

Measures

DASS21. The 21-item Depression and Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS 21) was used to determine the overall level of psychological wellbeing of each participant over the previous week. The DASS 21 is a set of three self-report scales designed to measure the negative emotional states of depression, anxiety, and stress (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). All items are rated on a 4-point scale (*did not apply to me at all* to *applied to me very much, or most of the time*), and the psychometric properties are excellent (Anthony, Beiling, Cox, Enns, & Swinson, 1998).

Current levels of bullying. Levels of current bullying were determined by providing participants with a recognised definition of bullying (Olweus, 1999: *Bullying is when a person or group of people repeatedly does mean and hurtful things to you that make you feel bad (hurt, sad, angry, etc) and you don't know how to make it stop.*) Participants were asked how often they had experienced physical bullying *(any form of touching, pushing, shoving, hitting, etc)*, verbal bullying *(any words spoken to you or to*

others about you), or cyber bullying *(messages or images posted about you or to you online)* in the past year (on a 5-point scale from *never* to *nearly every day).*

PANAS. The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) was used to measure the affect states of participants after both recordings. Scores after Recording 1 represented the individual's ratings about the event before the intervention (Time 1), and scores after Recording 2 measured ratings about the event after the intervention (Time 2). The PANAS is a 20-item, 5-point response scale (from *very slightly or not at all* to *extremely),* measuring both negative (10 items) and positive (10 items) emotional states, and has strong psychometric properties (Crawford & Henry, 2004).

Evaluative responses. Participants' cognitive responses to their current bullying situation were also measured after each recording through questions about levels of rumination (*how overpowering are your thoughts about this situation*), self-esteem in relation to the problem (*how good do you feel about yourself in relation to this issue*), coping (*how well do you think you can cope with this situation*), self-blame (*how much do you think that the situation is your fault*), and empowerment (*how much power do you think you have in the situation*). All items were rated on a 5-point scale (from *not at all* to *very*). These items were measured after each recording.

Procedure

Participants responded to a recruitment description of the study that outlined the inclusion criteria and then individually attended a private research room on campus. All signed an informed consent agreement at the time of testing. Participants responded to questions on an online survey and listened to taped recordings, while their skin conductance response was measured from sensors on their left hand.

Participants were randomly allocated to one of the three groups (forgiveness, avoidance, or revenge) through a random number generator prior to their arrival for the study. Each participant filled in the same survey online, listened to the same first recording, and listened to the second recording allocated to their condition. The study was approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee.

Analyses of Statistical Data

As there were no missing data for the survey responses, 2 (time: before and after intervention) x 3 (advice: avoidance, revenge, forgiveness) repeated measures analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted. In measuring affect, these analyses were performed on the previously developed scales (PANAS), whereas in the case of evaluative responses, principal components analysis was carried out on the individual cognitive responses in order to group them appropriately before the other analyses were performed. Where significant interactions were identified, tests of simple effects were applied using multiple pairwise comparisons, to determine the specific time effect for each group. For the electrodermal activity data, a random intercept model was used, with time coded as a numeric variable, and including a squared version of time to assess differences between the groups in terms of non-linear change. For post-hoc comparisons, interaction contrasts in curvilinear and linear change were applied, if appropriate.

<div align="center">

Results

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Current Mood and Previous Bullying

Participants' levels of current distress based on their scores on the DASS 21 fell predominantly in the severe range, with a mean score of 11.6 ($SD = 3.63$) on anxiety, 11.9 ($SD = 4.00$) on depression, and 14.7 ($SD = 4.09$) on stress. 131 participants (97%) reported having been verbally bullied; 40 (66%) reported having experienced cyber bullying; and 34 (44%) reported being victims of physical bullying in the past year. Table

1 provides a summary of participants' relationship to the person who bullied them, and the length of time the bullying had been affecting them.

Results of Guided Visualisations

A measure of the extent to which participants were able to engage in the visual imagery task was taken as a reliability check for the procedures used in this study. This resulted in a mean of 3.2 on a 5-point scale (ranging from *not at all* to *very*), suggesting that the resulting data accurately reflect the impacts of this imagery task.

Affect. Means and standard deviations for affect over time are reported in Table 2. Levels of positive affect showed a significant main effect increase over time, $F(1) = 66.196$, $p = <.001$, $\eta_p^2 = .334$; but no significant main effect of group, $F(2) = 2.585$, $p = .079$, $\eta_p^2 = .038$. There was no significant group by time interaction, $F(2) = 2.087$, $p = .128$, $\eta_p^2 = .031$. Levels of negative affect did not differ significantly between groups, $F(2) = 0.129$, $p = .880$, $\eta_p^2 = .002$. However, there was a significant main effect reduction over time, $F(1) = 84.389$, $p = <.001$, $\eta_p^2 = .390$, which was qualified by a significant group by time interaction, $F(2) = 10.894$, $p = <.001$, $\eta_p^2 = .142$. Pairwise comparisons revealed that in the Forgiveness group, negative affect dropped significantly from Time 1 to Time 2, $t(132) = 6.561$, $p = <.001$, $d = .8$. In the Avoidance group, negative affect also dropped significantly from Time 1 to Time 2, $t(132) = 7.711$, $p = < .001$, $d = .9$. However, in the Revenge group there was no significant change between Time 1 and Time 2, $t(132) = 1.584$, $p = .796$, $d = .2$.

Evaluative Responses. Principal component analysis suggested that two factors best described the structure of the evaluative responses. Values on the factors were scored through the regression method within the factor analysis. The first factor, with an

eigenvalue of 2.24, represented positive evaluations (self-esteem about the event, coping self-efficacy, and perceived power in the situation), and the second, with an eigenvalue of 1.13, representing negative evaluations (self-blame, rumination about the incident). Factor loadings for each subscale on each factor are displayed in Table 3. A measure of the internal consistency of these two factors was established using Cronbach's alpha. For the positive evaluations scale, there was good internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.8$), and for the negative evaluations scale internal consistency was not as strong ($\alpha = 0.4$). There was no significant main effect of group on participants' positive evaluative responses in relation to their bullying experience, $F(2) = 1.411$, $p = .248$, $\eta_p^2 = .021$, nor a significant main effect of time, $F(1) = 0.002$, $p = .965$, $\eta_p^2 = .000$. However, there was a significant group by time interaction, $F(2) = 4.376$, $p = .014$, $\eta_p^2 = .062$. Pairwise comparisons showed that participants' positive evaluations decreased significantly from Time 1 to Time 2 in the Revenge group, $t(132) = 2.391$, $p = .018$, $d = .4$; but there was no significant change in the Forgiveness group, $t(132) = 1.074$, $p = .286$, $d = .1$; or the Avoidance group, $t(132) = 1.366$, $p = .175$, $d = .2$. On participants' negative evaluative responses in relation to their bullying experience there was no significant main effect of group, $F(2) = 0.525$, $p = .593$, $\eta_p^2 = .008$, or time, $F(1) = 0.000$, $p = .997$, $\eta_p^2 = .000$. Nor was there a significant group by time interaction, $F(2) = 0.159$, $p = .853$, $\eta_p^2 = .002$. Table 3 displays differences between groups in affect and evaluative responses before and after the intervention.

Electrodermal Activity. Analysis of the GSR data revealed a significant interaction between group and time squared across time, $F(2) = 4.81$, $p = .008$. Interaction contrasts were used to assess pairwise differences in curvilinear change between the slopes, and revealed that forgiveness differed from both avoidance and revenge. Participants in the forgiveness condition experienced a decrease in arousal during the

intervention that was less steep in slope than participants in the other two conditions. In other words, participants in the Forgiveness group exhibited less arousal reduction than those in the other two groups. There was a significant difference between Forgiveness and Avoidance $t(4414) = 2.97$. $p = .003$; and between Forgiveness and Revenge $t(4414) = 2.28$, $p = .023$; but not between Avoidance and Revenge $t(4414) = 0.71$, $p = .480$.

As a further check, a model which calculated a main effect of squared time but not differences between time squared and group was tested in order to assess differences in linear change between groups. No significant differences were found between groups in terms of linear change, $F(2) = 1.50$, $p = .223$. It appears that the change across time between groups was purely in terms of the steepness of the slopes. The variance accounted for by the squared time interaction (in comparison with the linear interaction plus squared time main effect) was .014%. So the differences between time squared in the three different conditions were subtle, yet significant. Figure 1 displays actual and predicted change over time, including both linear and quadratic (time squared) change in the calculation.

Discussion

The findings of this study partially supported the hypotheses. Forgiveness imagery was found to be more beneficial than revenge imagery in emotional impacts and evaluative responses, but avoidance imagery was also found to have similar positive results. In addition, forgiveness was found to be initially more stressful than either revenge or avoidance. Specific findings are discussed below.

Results showed that engaging in imagery re-scripting describing either avoidance or forgiveness about a past bullying incident resulted in significant reductions in negative affect, whereas imagery re-scripting describing revenge did not. The lack of reduction in negative emotions following revenge re-scripting was expected, as hostile attributions

have been found to increase aggression (Perren, Ettekal, & Ladd, 2013). These results reflect literature showing that when making the decision to forgive, *expressive suppression* (Gross & Thompson, 2007) of negative emotions occurs as a first step towards emotional forgiveness (Worthington, Witvliet, Pietrini, & Miller, 2007). The fact that avoidance led to an immediate reduction in negative affect is consistent with literature on the usefulness of avoidance as a short-term strategy in performance situations such as sport (Anshel & Anderson, 2002).

However, while avoidance restrains negative emotions in the short term, it does not ultimately resolve unhelpful responses to offences (Worthington & Sotoohi, 2009) because unlike forgiveness, it does not result in long-term emotional habituation (Houbre, Tarquinio, & Lanfranchi, 2010). Literature in this area points to poor outcomes for avoidance in the longer term (Hutzell & Payne, 2012), but avoidance remains a common strategy used by peer-victimised youth (Meyer-Adams & Conner, 2008; Dehue, Bolman, & Vollink, 2008). The current results are unable to shed any light on these longer-term results, however they do reveal the immediate reduction in emotional tension that could be perpetuating this coping response.

When individuals engaged in an imagery re-scripting of revenge about a past bullying incident, their positive evaluations about themselves in the situation decreased, whereas self-evaluations remained consistent following imagery of either avoidance or forgiveness. It has been argued that forgiveness reduces negative affect by increasing perceptions of cognitive control (Wilkowski, Robinson, & Troop-Gordon, 2010). Similarly, avoidance has been conceptualized as a process of cognitive control (Gardner, & Moore, 2008). Surprisingly then, the current results did not indicate that imagining avoidance or forgiveness increased positive beliefs about bullying experiences in young adults. This could be due to the brief nature of the intervention, and more therapeutic

processing may be needed to achieve these cognitive shifts. Nonetheless, imagined scenarios involving forgiveness and avoidance retained more positive evaluations about the bullying situation than thoughts of revenge, indicating that revenge is not an effective cognitive coping strategy (Copeland-Linder, Johnson, Haynir, Chung, & Cheng, 2011).

Participants in the forgiveness condition experienced less of a decline in arousal as the intervention progressed than did those imagining revenge or avoidance. This seemingly paradoxical effect reflects literature suggesting that forgiveness is more difficult for the individual to achieve than attitudes of revenge or avoidance (Mullet, Riviere, & Sastre, 2007), because it is a process that involves directly facing the hurt within oneself. However, these results are not consistent with previous imagery re-scripting research on forgiveness to interpersonal transgressions where participants have shown decreased stress responses (Witvliet, Ludwig, & Laan, 2001; Larsen, Darby, Harris, Nelkin, Milam, & Christenfeld, 2012), or to hypothesized crime victimization scenarios where no difference was found in stress responses when imagining forgiveness (Witvliet et al., 2008).

The current data therefore suggest that situations of bullying may represent a unique category of harm. In severe situations such as that of the repeated harm and power imbalance found in bullying (Olweus, 1999), forgiveness may be a more stressful process. Forgiveness reduces prolonged chronic stress (Worthington & Scherer, 2004), which is detrimental to physical and mental health (Brosschot & Thayer, 2003). However, these data reveal one possible pathway that leads people to forgo this long-term benefit, for the immediate gratification of short-term stress reduction. These results could therefore be useful in understanding people's responses to bullying, and in assisting clinicians to address the short and longer-term impact of these responses. As avoidance has been found to increase empathy for the bully (Watson, Rapee, & Todorov, 2015) and

these results show that it is less stressful in the short-term, perhaps a combination of short-term avoidance and longer-term forgiveness may be the most effective and acceptable therapeutic intervention strategy for victims of bullying.

In addition, the prevalence rates of bullying victimisation in this study are notable and warrant further discussion. These results reveal that in this sample of bullied university students 97% experienced verbal bullying, 66% experienced cyber bullying, and 44% experienced physical bullying. In other studies, overall levels of bullying among college students have been reported at around 30-45% (Rospenda, Richman, Wolff, & Burke, 2013). When comparing between types of bullying, cyber bullying rates tend to be higher than off-line harassment rates (Beran, Rinaldi, Bickham, & Rich, 2012). Cyber bullying is reported to range between 10% and 55% in college students overall (Na, Dancy, & Park, 2015). In addition, physical bullying rates are generally found to be lower than other types of bullying in this demographic (Wang, Iannotti, & Luk, 2012). The current results add to this literature by revealing higher rates of verbal bullying in comparison to cyber bullying than is found elsewhere in the literature, and consistently high levels across all three types of bullying. This points to the importance of interventions aimed at bullying victimisation in young adult populations, and the need for further research to fully understand and respond to this phenomenon.

Limitations and Future Directions

It is important to recognize certain limitations inherent in the design of this research. The short-term nature of the reactions tested in this study was the most significant limiting factor in interpreting the results. These findings reveal only the immediate impact of forgiveness, avoidance, and revenge in the individual. Naturally, clear clinical implications will only come from research looking at the longer-term impacts. However, looking at these immediate responses has yielded important

information regarding the rationale for choosing avoidance as a coping strategy, due to its immediate reduction in affect, cognitive evaluations, and stress response. Future studies could build on this research, looking at the longer-term impacts of responses of forgiveness, avoidance, and revenge in bullying situations. The lack of ecological validity in this study can also be seen as a limitation, given the guided visualization instruction of imagery rescripting, which is usually led by the patient. However, as this was a first study looking at the manipulation of forgiveness in bullying situations, the use of imagery re-scripting is a helpful tool, specifically because it can act as a template for developing forgiveness interventions based on this procedure (Wenzel & Okimoto, 2010).

This research was also based partly on self-reports, which involve inherent reporting biases. However, responses were provided anonymously in an online format, minimizing social desirability and as reported attitudes are a good predictor of behaviour in students (Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004), this is a valid method of indicating response patterns in individuals. Skin conductance measures were also used as a more objective measure of participant stress response. The sample of mostly female first year psychology students can also be seen as a limitation in this study, although it should be pointed out that the bullying experiences they drew on were real and recent and that their levels of depression, anxiety and stress were in the severe range on the DASS. Further, a recent meta-analytic synthesis found that neither gender nor age was significantly related to one's ability or likelihood to forgive (Fehr, Gelfand, & Nag, 2010). Therefore, these limits in sample should not greatly impact the generalizability of the results. In addition, levels of bullying victimisation in participants were measured but levels of bullying behaviours were not. The impacts of coping strategies may differ between bully/victims and those who are purely victims of bullying. Therefore, future research could draw this

distinction within samples in order to further explore these coping mechanisms across populations.

Bullying levels were measured using verbal, physical, and cyber distinctions, which are common categorizations for youth populations. However, other categorizations of bullying such as relational bullying do exist, but were not addressed specifically in this study. This may be a limitation of this research, and future studies could include more breadth of bullying distinctions, with a specific focus on relational bullying victimisation in young adults. Internal consistency of the negative evaluative responses scale may also be seen as a limitation. Given that this scale held only two items, a low Cronbahc's alpha score is expected, however future studies should look at expanding items on this scale in order to enhance its reliability. Finally, avoidance was measured in this study through an exercise where individuals imagined that they escaped from the experience. This method was used in order to mimic as closely as possible the other conditions of revenge and forgiveness re-scripting, and can therefore be seen as a strength of this experimental design. However, this imagined avoidance could in fact be construed as an effective coping strategy, if this form of self-distancing is done in order to be able to process the event fully (Ayduk & Kross, 2010) or gain control of the situation, which can ultimately reduce their avoidance behaviour (Sartory, 2006). Therefore, the results in this study highlight the need to explore further the fine line between avoidance as a short-term positive coping response to bullying, and as a negative longer-term response leading to chronic stress in the individual.

Conclusions

The current results indicate that both forgiveness and avoidance lead to more positive cognitive and emotional coping responses than revenge directly following imagination of a bullying transgression. Skin conductance data suggested that forgiveness

is the more immediately stressful process, providing insight into why people may choose avoidance strategies, which are associated with negative impacts in the longer term (Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004; Houbre et al., 2010; Hutzell & Payne, 2012; Dehue et al., 2008; Hunter & Boyle, 2004). Hence, a combination of short-term avoidance and longer-term forgiveness may provide the most promising balance between positive short-term and long-term benefits for victims of bullying.

Figure 1*: Electrodermal Activity – point where slopes diverge (Avoidance and Revenge*

with steeper slope than Forgiveness) indicated at line
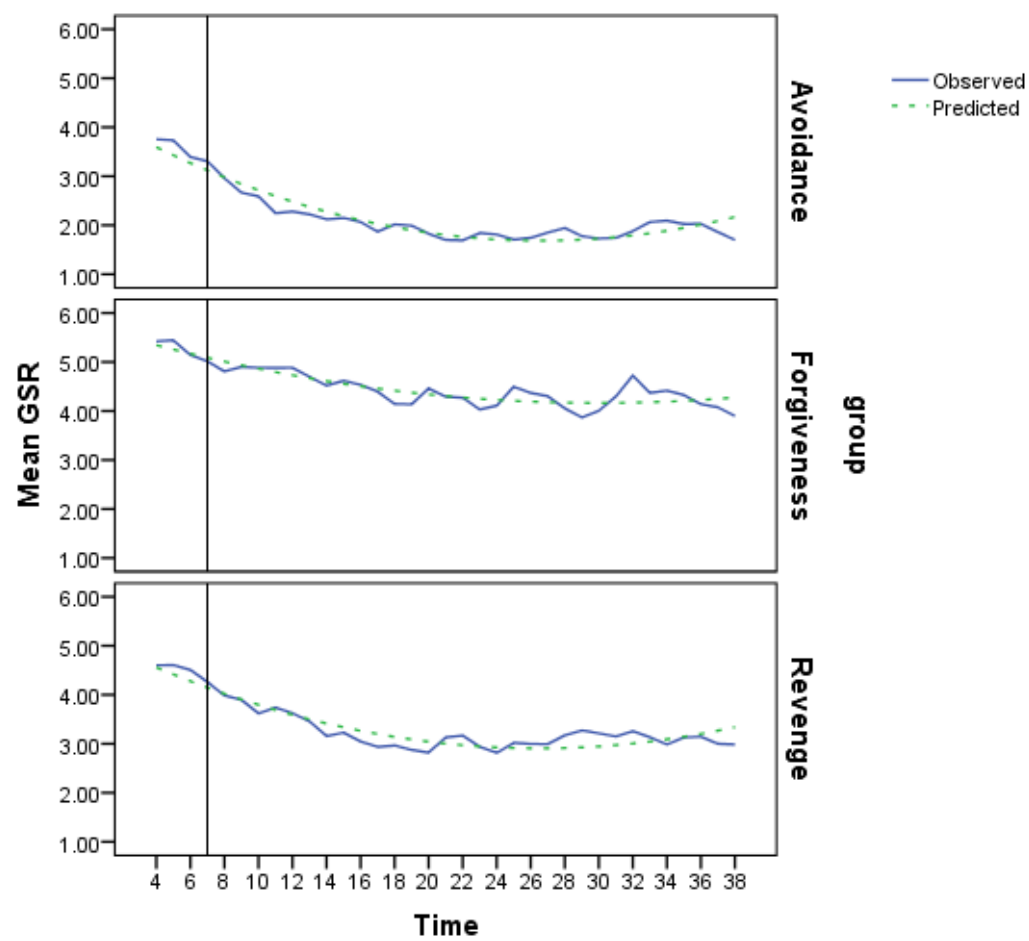
Table 1: *Relationship to Bully and Length of Bullying Experience across Groups*

Relationship to Bully	%	Length of Time of Bullying	%
Avoidance Group			
Friend	53.3	Over two years	28.9
Boyfriend/girlfriend – current or past	13.3	One to two years	17.8
Parent or step-parent	13.3	Six months to one year	13.3
Acquaintance	11.1	One to six months	13.3
Extended family	2.2	One week to one month	20.0
Sibling	0	Less than one week	6.7
Stranger	0		
Other	6.7		
Forgiveness Group			
Friend	47.7	Over two years	27.3
Boyfriend/girlfriend – current or past	15.9	One to two years	20.5
Parent or step-parent	11.4	Six months to one year	22.7
Acquaintance	2.3	One to six months	20.5
Extended family	6.8	One week to one month	6.8
Sibling	6.8	Less than one week	2.3
Stranger	0		

Other	9.1		

Revenge Group

Friend	54.3	Over two years	19.6
Boyfriend/girlfriend – current or past	17.3	One to two years	21.7
Parent or step-parent	10.9	Six months to one year	19.6
Acquaintance	4.3	One to six months	19.6
Extended family	2.2	One week to one month	6.5
Sibling	2.2	Less than one week	13.0
Stranger	4.3		
Other	4.3		

Table 2: *Affective Responses*

Variable	Condition	Mean(SD) T1	Mean (SD)T2	95% CI T1	95% CI T2
Positive Affect	Avoidance	19.51 (7.54)	25.47 (8.78)	(17.25, 21.78)	(22.83, 28.11)
	Forgiveness	17.66 (5.57)	21.16 (5.86)	(15.97, 19.35)	(19.38, 22.94)
	Revenge	18.57 (6.71)	22.30 (8.28)	(16.57, 20.56)	(19.84, 24.76)
Negative Affect*	Avoidance	21.24 (6.98)	15.04 (5.54)	(19.15, 23.34)	(13.38, 16.71)
	Forgiveness	20.61 (7.28)	15.27 (5.28)	(18.40, 22.83)	(13.67, 16.88)
	Revenge	19.17 (6.33)	17.91 (6.34)	(17.29, 21.05)	(16.03, 19.80)

Note: * = significant difference at $p < .05$

Table 3: *Factor Loadings for Evaluative Responses*

Subscale	Factor	
	1	*2*
Self-Esteem	.810	-.117
Coping Self Efficacy	.797	-.227
Sense of Power	.839	.140
Rumination	-.397	.581
Self-Blame	.119	.883

Table 4: *Evaluative Responses*

Variable	Condition	Mean(SD) T1	Mean (SD)T2	95% CI T1	95% CI T2
Positive	Avoidance	0.074 (1.03)	0.26 (1.12)	(-0.24, 0.38)	(-0.08, 0.59)
Evaluations*	Forgiveness	-0.09 (1.06)	0.05 (0.94)	(-0.41, 0.23)	(-0.23, 0.07)
	Revenge	0.02 (0.92)	-0.30 (0.86)	(-0.26, 0.29)	(-0.56, -0.05)
Negative	Avoidance	-0.05 (1.03)	-0.11 (0.90)	(-0.26, 0.36)	(-0.16, 0.38)
Evaluations	Forgiveness	0.08 (1.00)	0.14 (1.15)	(-0.39, 0.22)	(-0.48, 0.09)
	Revenge	-0.03 (0.99)	-0.03 (0.95)	(-0.26, 0.33)	(-0.26, 0.31)

*Note: * = significant difference at $p < .05$*
Note: Positive and Negative evaluations were calculated using z scores

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Direction of Dissertation Following Paper 2

This paper found that for university students who had been bullied, imagining either forgiveness or avoidance led to significantly less negative emotions than imagining the event as it occurred, whereas imaging revenge did not. It also found that imagined revenge led to significantly less positive evaluations about one's ability to cope with the situation than imagining the event as it occurred, whereas imagined forgiveness and avoidance did not. Results from Study 1 revealed that advice to forgive led youth aged 11 to 15 to experience less anger about a bullying situation than advice to avoid or exact revenge. These findings together lay significant empirical grounding for the applicability of forgiveness as an intervention for bullied youth. The next study therefore sought to solidify these findings with a sample of peer-victimised adolescents. An imagined avoidance condition was not included in the design because it was hypothesised that it would have the same impact as forgiveness, given the results of Study 2, and it was felt to be more important to maximize power to evaluate the effectiveness of forgiveness over revenge for bullied youth.

Paper 3: Watson, Rapee, & Todorov, 2015

Imagery Re-scripting of Bullying Victimization among Young Boys: The Impact of

Forgiveness and Revenge

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Abstract

The aim of the current study was to evaluate the impact of imagining forgiveness or revenge towards a perpetrator among teenage victims of bullying. Forty three boys aged 12 to 14 who reported a recent experience of being victimised were led through imagery re-scripting where they recalled a personal episode of being victimised and imagined a new ending to one where they either forgave or took revenge on the bully. Somewhat surprisingly the results did not differ significantly between conditions. Both forgiveness and revenge re-scripting were shown to have positive impacts on emotional outcomes and on some cognitive measures. The implications are discussed in regards to clinical interventions and future research.

Bullying is a pervasive and debilitating issue for youth that can lead to substance

abuse (Tharp-Taylor, Haviland, & D'Amico, 2009), worse outcomes at school (Miller,

Verhoek-Miller, Ceminsky, & Nugent, 2000), and mental and physical health problems

(Hawker & Boulton, 2000). Bullying is defined as aggressive acts repeatedly perpetrated

with intent to cause harm, with a perceived power imbalance felt by the recipient

(Olweus, 1999). Many whole-of-school approaches aimed at reducing instances of

bullying have demonstrated positive effects on the frequency of bullying (Cook,

Williams, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek, 2010; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011) but less has been

achieved to decrease the negative consequences of bullying specifically among those who

are victimised.

Forgiveness

A theoretically important strategy for coping with bullying is to assist victims to

manage their emotional responses (eg Field, 2007). One such therapeutic technique that

may help to reduce negative emotional outcomes for victims is forgiveness (Ahmed &

Braithwaite, 2006). Forgiveness is defined as a process in which one acknowledges that

an act was unfair and that one has a moral right to anger, but subsequently relinquishes

that anger or resentment and develops a positive attitude towards the offender. It does not

involve condoning, excusing, forgetting, justifying, or calming down (Enright, 2001). It is

a process of neutralizing a stressor resulting from a perception of interpersonal hurt

(Strelan & Covic, 2006) that involves many steps (Worthington, 2001), firstly

acknowledging that an act was unfair and that one has a moral right to anger, but

subsequently relinquishing that anger or resentment and developing a positive attitude towards the offender (Enright, 2001). Forgiveness may appear to require a forgoing of justice (Reed & Aquino, 2003), but it has actually been found to result in the restoration of a sense of justice, as it resolves the questioning of values, and it returns status and power to the victim through their heightened sense of morality (Wenzel, Turner, & Okimoto, 2010).

Forgiveness is theorised to be a vital part of positive proactive responses to serious harm (Tutu, 1999) by helping break the cycle of future trauma through healing past memories and restoring present trust (Worthington & Aten, 2010) and reducing aggression over time (Copeland-Linder, Johnson, Haynie, Chung, & Cheng, 2011). Trait forgiveness is correlated with mental and physical health benefits, and provides an independent contribution to psychological well-being (Lawler-Row & Piferi, 2006). This may be due to the fact that it has been found to reduce prolonged chronic stress (Worthington & Scherer, 2004), which is detrimental to physical and mental health (Brosschot & Thayer, 2003). Clinically, positive outcomes from forgiveness interventions have been shown in victims of domestic violence suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (Reed & Enright, 2006), victims of sexual abuse (Walton, 2005), and adult children of alcoholics (Osterndorf, Enright, Holter, & Klatt, 2011).

Forgiveness is associated with positive socio-emotional adjustment in early adolescents (Reich, 2009), and therefore may be valuable in cases of bullying among youth. Correlational studies have shown that parental forgiveness of bullying perpetration is related to significantly fewer future bullying episodes (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2006), potentially because it gives bullies an opportunity to build the emotional scaffolding needed to boost self-regulation (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2005).

These benefits also extend to victims of this type of abuse. Egan and Todorov (2009) found that young adults with higher trait forgiveness experienced less emotional hurt when reflecting on past bullying experiences. Forgiveness has been associated with a greater sense of interpersonal power (Karremans & Smith, 2010) and has been theorised to provide adolescents with a sense of control in their lives (Egan & Todorov, 2009). Having such a sense of control has been found to predict less avoidant behaviour in response to peer aggression (Terranova, Harris, Kavetski, & Oates, 2011).

Forgiveness in negative peer experiences has also been correlated with effective coping responses such as conflict resolution and support seeking, higher self-esteem, and lower levels of social anxiety (Flanagan, Hoek, Ranter, & Reich, 2012). It is theorised that a school climate that promotes forgiveness as a part of positive youth development may prevent this cycle (Hui, Tsang, & Law, 2011). However, even with the emergence of this body of correlational data and theoretical links, there remains a paucity of research on the clinical use of restorative justice approaches in school bullying (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011) and there has been little research to date that experimentally measures the impacts of forgiveness interventions on victims of bullying.

Revenge

Another way of responding to transgressions is by adopting an attitude of revenge against the perpetrator. In contrast to the positive outcomes associated with forgiveness, revenge attitudes have been associated with depression (Newman, 2011; Rijavec, Jurcec, & Mijocevic, 2010) and poor mental health outcomes (Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004). Reactive aggression is also correlated with heightened victimisation and perpetration of bullying (Camodeca & Goosens, 2005). Children who are both victims and perpetrators of peer aggression have lower self-esteem and higher delinquent behaviour (Dukes, Stein, & Zane, 2009), higher instances of anxiety and antisocial personality disorder (Sourander

et al., 2007), and experience increases in future victimisation (Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004; Champion & Clay, 2006). Despite these negative associations, fantasies of revenge have been found to produce positive outcomes in clinical settings with traumatised youth (Haen & Weber, 2009).

However, there is a lack of research into the applicability of revenge fantasies in victims of bullying and few comparisons between attitudes of revenge and forgiveness. The first experimental study in this area revealed that providing youth with advice to forgive a bully in a hypothetical situation led to less anger than advice to avoid or exact revenge (Watson, Rapee, & Todorov, 2015a). A subsequent study showed that in young adults, imaginal re-scripting ending in forgiveness decreased negative affect more strongly and led to more positive cognitive evaluations of the event than imagined revenge (Watson, Rapee, & Todorov, in press). These positive results indicated the value of extending these findings to a sample of younger individuals.

Imagery Re-scripting

Imagery re-scripting refers to a therapeutic process whereby the individual imagines a different and desired end to a personal trauma. It has been shown to have better effects on anger control, externalized anger, hostility, and guilt than the standard strategy of imaginal exposure, where the individual imagines the event as it really occurred (Arntz, Tiesma, & Kindt, 2007). Imagery re-scripting has also been found to lead to fewer intrusive thoughts after witnessing trauma than both imagery re-experiencing and positive imagery (Hagenaars & Arntz, 2011) and has been applied as treatment for complicated PTSD patients with promising results (Arntz, Sofi, & van Breukelen, 2013). The use of imagery re-scripting focused on either forgiveness or revenge is yet to be explored in youth bullying situations and is therefore an area that holds great potential for research and intervention strategies.

The Current Study

The aim of this study was to determine the effects of imagery re-scripting terminating in images of either forgiveness or revenge of a bullying victimisation scenario on affect and evaluative responses to the bullying. Given that previous research with young adults found significant differences between emotional and cognitive reactions to bullying for imagery re-scripting that involved forgiveness or revenge (Watson, Rapee, & Todorov, in press) this hypothesis was extended to the current study in a youth sample. As revenge is associated with poor mental health outcomes (Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004) and forgiveness is associated with improved mental and physical health (Lawler-Row & Piferi, 2006), it was hypothesised that re-scripting to an ending of forgiveness would lead to more positive responses across these measures than a script that ended in revenge.

Method

Participants

Forty-three boys from school Years 7 (N=31) and 8 (N= 12) who had been bullied in the past six months participated in this study. All participants were recruited through a letter and/or an email sent to parents from two participating private boys schools in Sydney. Parents who believed their child had been bullied in the past six months and who provided consent nominated their children for participation in the study. Consent was also sought from students before the study began. Bullying was defined as having someone in their life who had hurt them repeatedly who they felt had power over them, and that they had wanted to change the situation but did not know how. The past nature of the bullying was clarified with participants, so that only bullying that had ceased occurring was addressed. Ages ranged from 12 to 14, with a mean age of 12.81 years ($SD = .707$). Thirty-seven participants (86%) were Australian born; 28 (65.1%) had a mother who was born in Australia; and 25 (58.1%) had a father born in Australia. Thirty-three participants

(76.7%) identified as Christian, 3 (7%) identified with other religions, and 7 (16.3%) identified as having no religion.

Imagined scenarios

Participants engaged in two visualisations. The first involved visualising their victimisation as it occurred and the next involved changing the ending to one involving either revenge or forgiveness. Participants listened to two pre-determined scripts read by the researcher during testing and were asked to complete questions on an online survey measuring their responses after each one. The first script took them through a visualisation process regarding their recent experiences of victimisation. This script asked them to recall a specific incident when they were hurt by this bullying dynamic. They were asked to imagine the event in detail, recalling their memory across all five senses in order to maximize the vividness of the imagery. For the second script, participants were randomly allocated to one of two conditions: Forgiveness or Revenge. Each followed an imagery re-scripting process whereby the participant was asked to visualise the bullying incident again, changing the ending to one of forgiveness or revenge. In each of these conditions participants were asked to imagine their past bullying incident for a second time.

A rationale was provided for the specific re-scripting condition to which the participant was allocated. For the forgiveness condition, this process was modeled after the four phases of forgiveness proposed by Enright and Fitzgibbons (2000), in which forgiveness encompasses uncovering the extent of the harm caused and facing associated feelings, making a decision to forgive the perpetrator, gaining perspective and empathy for the offender as a rationale for offering forgiveness, and finding meaning in the

suffering. Giving forgiveness prematurely without an acknowledgement of the injustice or injury can be damaging to one's self-respect (Luchies, Finkel, & McNulty, 2010) and so this was an inherent element of the steps of scripted visualization. For the revenge condition, the script also mirrored these stages, with differences in stage two of making a decision to take revenge on the perpetrator, and in stage three of gaining perspective on why revenge is an appropriate way of responding. Participants were instructed to imagine any version of vengeance that they wished, in which they felt they were getting back at the perpetrator for the wrong done to them. The two conditions matched each other as closely as possible, addressing all of the same topics and ideas, but from different perspectives. Participants were then asked to reflect on how their allocated way of responding made sense in their current situation.

Measures

DASS21. The 21-item Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS 21) was used to determine the overall level of psychological wellbeing of each participant over the previous week. The DASS 21 is a set of three self-report scales designed to measure the negative emotional states of depression, anxiety, and stress (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). All items are rated on a 4-point scale (*did not apply to me at all* to *applied to me very much, or most of the time*), and the psychometric properties are excellent (Anthony, Beiling, Cox, Enns, & Swinson, 1998). The DASS-21 has been found to be valid and reliable with Australian youth (Tully, Zajac, & Venning, 2009).

Current Levels of Bullying

Levels of current bullying were determined by providing participants with a definition of bullying ("*Bullying is when a person or group of people repeatedly does mean and hurtful things to you that make you feel bad (hurt, sad, angry, etc) and you*

don't know how to make it stop.") which was modeled after Olweus' widely used

definition of bullying (1999). The online survey asked participants how often they had

experienced physical bullying *(any form of touching, pushing, shoving, hitting, etc)*,

verbal bullying *(any words spoken to you or to others about you),* and cyber bullying

(messages or images posted about you or to you online) in the past semester (on a 5-point

scale from *never* to *nearly every day*).

PANAS. The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule – Child (PANAS-C)

(Laurent et al, 1999) adapted for children in Years 4 to 8 from the original PANAS

(Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) was used to measure the current affect states of

participants after both recordings. Scores after Recording 1 represented the individual's

ratings about the event before the intervention (Time 1), and scores after Recording 2

measured ratings about the event after the intervention (Time 2). The PANAS-C is a 27-

item, 5-point response scale (from *very slightly or not at all* to *extremely)*, measuring both

negative (15 items) and positive (12 items) emotional states, and has strong psychometric

properties (Laurent et al, 1999).

Evaluative Responses. Participants' evaluations of their past bullying situation

were measured after they visualised it as it happened and again after they visualised an

ending of either forgiveness or revenge. These evaluations were comprised of a series of

single-item questions about levels of rumination (*how overpowering are your thoughts*

about this situation), seriousness of event (*how serious is this situation*) self-esteem in

relation to the problem (*how good do you feel about yourself in relation to this issue*),

coping (*how well do you think you can cope with this situation*), self-blame (*how much do*

you think that the situation is your fault), empathy (*how much do you think that the other*

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person must be in a lot of pain to act this way), empowerment (*how much power do you feel you have in this situation*), and control (*how much control do you feel you have in this situation*). All items were rated on a 5-point scale (from *not at all* to *very*). These items were measured after each recording.

Procedure

Participants individually attended a private room at their school. All signed an informed consent agreement at the time of testing. They responded to questions on an online survey and listened to a script read by the researcher. Participants were randomly allocated to one of the two groups (forgiveness or revenge) through a random number generator prior to their arrival for the study. Each participant filled in the same survey online, listened to the same first script, and listened to the second script allocated to their condition. All students were offered a session with the school counselor after the research was complete. The study was approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee as well as the principal at each school.

Analyses of Statistical Data

As there were no missing data for the survey responses, 2 (time: before and after intervention) x 2 (advice: revenge and forgiveness) repeated measures analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted. In measuring affect, these analyses were performed on the previously developed scales (PANAS-C). In the case of evaluative responses, principal components analysis was carried out on the individual evaluative responses in order to group them for further analyses. However, the resulting two factors were similar but not identical from Time 1 to Time 2 and so individual analyses were carried out on each evaluative response.

<center>**Results**</center>

Current Mood and Previous Bullying

Participants' levels of current distress based on scores on the DASS 21 showed

mean scores of 11.5 ($SD = 4.45$) for depression (moderate range), 11.5 ($SD = 3.81$) for

anxiety (extremely severe range), and 12.7 ($SD = 4.40$) for stress (severe range)**.** Thirty-

four participants (79.1%) reported having been physically bullied; 37 (86%) reported

having experienced verbal bullying; and 13 (30.2%) reported being victims of cyber

bullying in the past semester. Table 1 provides a summary of participants' relationship to

the person who bullied them, and the length of time the bullying had been affecting them.

Affect

Means and standard deviations for affect over time are reported in Table 2. Levels

of positive affect showed a significant main effect increase over time, $F(1) = 28.530$, $p =$

<.001**,** $\eta_P^2 = .410$; but no significant main effect of group, $F(1) = 1.758$, $p = .192$, $\eta_P^2 =$

.041. There was no significant group by time interaction, $F(1) = 0.788$, $p = .380$**,** $\eta_P^2 = .019$.

Levels of negative affect showed a significant main effect reduction over time, $F(1) =$

13.559, $p = .001$, $\eta_P^2 = .249$; but did not differ significantly between groups, $F(1) = 2.813$,

$p = .101$, $\eta_P^2 = .064$. There was no significant group by time interaction, $F(1) = 2.899$, $p =$

.096, $\eta_P^2 = .066$.

Evaluative Responses

Several evaluations showed no significant effects as follows: Rumination (main

effect of time, $F(1) = 2.69$, $p = .109$, $\eta_P^2 = .063$; main effect of group, $F(1) = 2.21$, $p =$

.145, $\eta_P^2 = .052$; group by time interaction, $F(1) = 0.78$, $p = .382$, $\eta_P^2 = .019$); ability to

cope with the event (main effect of time, $F(1) = 0.19$, $p = .665$, $\eta_P^2 = .005$; main effect of

group, $F(1) = 0.28$, $p = .597$, $\eta_p^2 = .007$; group by time interaction, $F(1) = 3.86$, $p = .056$, $\eta_p^2 = .088$); self-blame (main effect of time, $F(1) = 2.49$, $p = .122$, $\eta_p^2 = .059$; main effect of group, $F(1) = 0.39$, $p = .535$, $\eta_p^2 = .010$; group by time interaction, $F(1) = 1.11$, $p = .299$, $\eta_p^2 = .027$); and finally, empathy for the bully (main effect of time, $F(1) = 3.04$, $p = .090$, $\eta_p^2 = .0.78$; main effect of group, $F(1) = 2.04$, $p = .162$, $\eta_p^2 = .054$; group by time interaction, $F(1) = 1.11$, $p = .299$, $\eta_p^2 = .009$). However, results showed several main effect differences between Time 1 and Time 2 for evaluative responses of the event, although no differences between groups were found. The extent to which participants viewed the event as serious showed a significant main effect decrease over time, $F(1) = 5.68$, $p = .022$, $\eta_p^2 = 1.24$; but did not differ significantly between groups, $F(1) = 1.11$, $p = .299$, $\eta_p^2 = .027$; and showed no significant group by time interaction, $F(1) = 2.05$, $p = 0.16$, $\eta_p^2 = .049$. The level of self-esteem that participants felt in relation to the event showed a significant main effect increase over time, $F(1) = 12.18$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .233$; but did not differ significantly between groups, $F(1) = 0.27$, $p = .610$, $\eta_p^2 = .007$; and showed no significant group by time interaction, $F(1) = 0.04$, $p = .838$, $\eta_p^2 = .001$. The amount of power participants felt they possessed in the situation showed a significant main effect increase over time, $F(1) = 6.20$, $p = .017$, $\eta_p^2 = .134$; but did not differ significantly between groups, $F(1) = 0.26$, $p = .873$, $\eta_p^2 = .001$; and showed no significant group by time interaction, $F(1) = 2.35$, $p = .133$, $\eta_p^2 = .055$. The amount of control that participants felt in relation to this incident showed a significant main effect increase over time, $F(1) = 6.10$, $p = .018$, $\eta_p^2 = .132$; but did not differ significantly between groups, $F(1) = 1.00$, $p = .324$, $\eta_p^2 = .024$; and showed no significant group by time interaction, $F(1) = 0.14$, $p =$

.706, $\eta_p^2 = .004$. Means and standard deviations for evaluative responses over time are reported in Table 3.

Discussion

These results showed that engaging in imagery re-scripting led to immediate significant reductions in negative affect and increases in positive affect in young boys aged 12 to 14. However, these effects did not differ significantly according to the type of re-scripting. That is, there was no significant difference according to whether the imagery re-scripting ended in revenge or forgiveness. The processes of forgiveness and revenge are inherently in opposition, with one harbouring resentment and one relinquishing it (Lawler-Row, Karremans, Scott, Edlis-Matityahou, & Edwards, 2008), so these results were surprising and did not reflect previous experimental data with young adult victims of bullying (Watson, Rapee, & Todorov, in press). It could be the case that views of forgiveness and revenge differed in this sample of young boys, with respect to the strength or weakness of choosing each as a response. If views of these constructs varied, this may be the causal factor in the outcome of the null results. It is pertinent to look at the differences in age, gender, and type of bullying in the current sample in relation to previous findings, to consider whether these factors may have influenced results.

Regarding type of bullying, there was a relatively high frequency of physical bullying in this sample. Boys have been found to experience worse consequences from physical bullying than other forms of bullying given the severity of its nature (Annerback, Sahlqvist, & Wingren, 2014). It may be that revenge fantasies are better suited to physical rather than verbal bullying given this severity. In addition, the presence of physicality itself may also be more applicable for imagined vengeance, as it may shift the power imbalance more dramatically in one's mind than in verbal bullying dynamics. Given the relatively small sample and the fact that 80% of boys in the current study experienced

physical bullying, it was not possible to test this hypothesis with the current sample. This is an area that is unexplored in the literature, but one that is highlighted for more investigation by these data.

It is unlikely that the age or gender of the sample affected the ability of these participants to engage in forgiveness. In a meta-analytic review of influences on forgiveness, demographic factors were not found to impact on one's willingness or ability to forgive (Fehr, Gelfand, & Nag, 2010), therefore it appears that young boys are indeed capable of instilling a sense of forgiveness. Differences across demographics in willingness and desire to take revenge are less clear-cut. Boys and girls have been found to endorse the same amount of revenge goals and aggressive strategies in friendship transgressions (MacEvoy & Asher, 2012). A body of research supports this by showing that gender is less of a factor in predicting retaliatory attitudes in youth than trust beliefs in peers (Rotenberg, Betts, & Moore, 2013), implicit theories (Yeager, Trzesniewski, Tirri, Nokelainen, & Dweck, 2011), and perspectives of their parents' attitudes towards fighting (Copeland-Linder, Jones, Haynie, Simons-Morton, Wright, & Cheng, 2007).

However, while gender does not appear to impact one's capacity for vengeance, age potentially may. Preschoolers have been found to justify retaliatory and punitive aggression (Etchu, 2005), and youth often see violence as an acceptable response to problem solving (Ausbrooks, 2010). It could be the case then that the relatively positive effects of the imagery script describing revenge were partly a result of the age of this sample. In our previous study using slightly older participants, imagery scripts describing revenge showed less positive influences (Watson, Rapee, & Todorov, in press).

Revenge is less likely to be as effective when used as a long-term coping strategy (Copeland-Linder, Johnson, Haynir, Chung, & Cheng, 2011), but the results of this study

point to the ways in which the experience of revenge fantasies may lead to similar immediate emotional and cognitive benefits for young boys as does imagined forgiveness. This may lead these individuals to choose retaliation when victimised, potentially becoming perpetrators themselves (Hui, Tsang, & Law, 2011). Falling into both the bully and victim categories is correlated with lower self-esteem and higher delinquent behaviour (Dukes, Stein, & Zane, 2009), anxiety and antisocial personality disorder (Sourander et al., 2007), and higher levels of victimisation (Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004; Champion & Clay, 2006). These emotional and evaluative responses to the impact of revenge could therefore be a limiting factor in young people's ability to choose responses following bullying victimisation that are appropriate and effective in the long-term.

Incorporating forgiveness fantasies for short-term emotional relief may be an asset for effective bullying intervention programs for youth, which may be a crucial step enabling the perspective needed to move past the event. Bullying interventions that aim to teach forgiveness in youth may therefore yield more success by first allowing time to process these desires for vengeance or reconciliation. Given the emotional relief that results from imagined revenge, perhaps this demographic requires the most in-depth rationalisations for forgiveness in order to foster effective ongoing coping strategies. Interventions would therefore benefit from thoroughly defining what forgiveness means and how it manifests at an individual and cohort level, in order to better understand the full long-term impacts of this approach.

Limitations and Future Directions

Certain limitations were present in the design of this research. The short-term nature of the reactions tested in this study is clearly a limiting factor. These findings reveal only the immediate impact of forgiveness and revenge in participants, and clear clinical implications will only come from future research looking at the longer-term

impacts of these attitudes. However, looking at these immediate responses has yielded important information regarding potential motivations in youth for choosing revenge over forgiveness as a coping strategy, due to the similar immediate emotional and cognitive impacts they each incur. Future studies could build on this research, looking at the longer-term impacts of responses of forgiveness and revenge in bullying situations and ways in which those impacts can be incorporated into bullying intervention strategies, as well as ways that revenge fantasies can be utilised without incurring negative long-term effects.

Another limitation is that the sample was purely male and was drawn from private schools whose demographics were primarily Caucasian and Christian. However, as this sample experienced a significant level of bullying, it was a useful first exploration of the impacts of these imagery rescripting processes. Nonetheless, future research should look at extending these findings to a wider sample in order to enhance the generalisability of the results, specifically looking at female participants as well. The small sample size can also be seen as a limitation in this study. Perhaps a larger sample would yield a more reliable understanding of the ways in which revenge and forgiveness fantasies impact on the individual. This research was also derived purely from self-reports, which include inherent reporting biases. However, responses were provided in an online format, thereby minimising social desirability and as reported attitudes are a good predictor of behaviour in students (Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004), this is a valid method of indicating response patterns in this sample.

The single item measures of participants' evaluations of the event before and after rescripting was also a limitation as it is lacking in psychometric robustness. However, a valid and reliable measure of emotional reactions was used and these evaluative measures were merely aimed at providing an additional indication of the ways youth appraise past bullying situations when imagining forgiveness and revenge. Additionally, the scripts

used were pre-determined and lacked ecological validity. This was a necessary experimental requirement in order to standardise the experiences of participants. However, it may be the case that more individualized re-scripting sessions would have a different and greater therapeutic effect and future research should explore this possibility. There were also demand characteristics present in this experiment, in which cues from the research may potentially convey the hypothesis to participants (Orne, 1962). This has been shown to occur specifically within experimental manipulations using imagery (Intons-Peterson, 1983). Every effort was taken to minimise these, and the null results would suggest no bias, but it is possible that they had an effect. Finally, forgiveness may have different meanings across participants, and these differing definitions may have been a factor in the results of this paper. Future research should therefore investigate the differences in lay conceptualisations of forgiveness in relation to this topic.

Conclusions

The current results failed to demonstrate significant differences on emotional reactions or evaluations of the event to imagery scripts ending in either responses of forgiveness or revenge following a bullying transgression in boys aged 12-14. However, the results did show positive changes especially in emotional reactions following both scripts. These results are not consistent with the broader literature revealing that revenge results in poor mental health effects (Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004) whereas forgiveness leads to positive outcomes (Lawler-Row & Piferi, 2006). Hence the positive effects of imagery ending in revenge may reflect the tendency of youth to desire responses to bullying without heed to the long-term negative impacts. This highlights the importance that youth understand the longer-term consequences of their behaviours and attitudes, so that they are empowered to make decisions that are not guided solely by the desire to achieve short-term emotional relief. Interventions that build an understanding of the

positive impacts of forgiveness will therefore be of greater benefit in supporting youth experiencing bullying.

Table 1: *Relationship to Bully and Length of Bullying Experience*

Relationship to Bully	%	Length of Time of Bullying	%
Friend	23.3	One to two years	7.0
Teacher	2.3	Six months to one year	7.0
Parent or step-parent	11.6	One to six months	9.3
Acquaintance	48.8	One week to one month	11.6
Other	14.0	Less than one week	65.1

Table 2: *Affective Responses*

Variable	*Condition*	*Mean(SD) T1*	*Mean (SD) T2*
Positive Affect	Forgiveness	19.91 (7.05)	26.05 (9.36)
	Revenge	21.82 (8.52)	30.41 (10.55)
Negative Affect	Forgiveness	28.33 (10.71)	21.29 (9.12)
	Revenge	30.77 (10.96)	28.18 (9.40)

Table 3: *Evaluative Responses*

Variable	Condition	Mean(SD) T1	Mean(SD) T2
Serious*	Forgiveness	2.71 (1.27)	2.14 (1.20)
	Revenge	2.86 (1.15)	2.71 (1.189)
Rumination	Forgiveness	2.33 (1.32)	1.86 (0.96)
	Revenge	2.67 (1.39)	2.52 (1.29)
Self-Esteem*	Forgiveness	1.86 (1.15)	2.71 (1.15)
	Revenge	1.76 (1.04)	2.52 (1.33)
Coping	Forgiveness	3.05 (1.50)	3.57 (1.33)
	Revenge	3.29 (1.27)	2.95 (1.32)
Self-Blame	Forgiveness	1.62 (0.87)	1.71 (1.23)
	Revenge	1.29 (0.46)	1.76 (1.04)
Power*	Forgiveness	2.52 (1.50)	2.76 (1.22)
	Revenge	2.19 (1.17)	3.19 (1.08)
Empathy	Forgiveness	1.74 (1.15)	2.26 (1.28)
	Revenge	1.79 (1.03)	1.84 (0.96)
Control*	Forgiveness	2.38 (1.56)	2.90 (1.26)
	Revenge	1.95 (1.28)	2.67 (1.28)

*Note. *p < .05 Main Effect Increase over Time*

Direction of Dissertation Following Paper 3

This paper found that for boys aged 12 to 14 imagining revenge and forgiveness resulted in similar positive cognitive and emotional benefits. This stands in contrast with findings from Study 2, which found significant differences between imagined forgiveness and revenge. Findings from all three studies were then reviewed together, and a few summary points helped to indicate the following direction of the thesis. Firstly, there appeared to be an interplay between avoidance and forgiveness that was unexplained. Study 1 found a possible pathway of avoidance leading to forgiveness (given the increased empathy that resulted from avoidance advice). Study 2 found similar positive results from imagined avoidance and forgiveness of a bullying situation. Imagined forgiveness was also found to be more stressful than imagined revenge or avoidance for young adults. And finally, results of imagined revenge differed between the sample of young adults in Study 2 (aged 17 to 24, mostly females) and the sample of secondary school males in Study 3 (aged 12 to 14).

These points led to questions regarding the impacts of forgiveness across different demographics. Based on existing literature, one possibility was that individuals may conceive of forgiveness differently and in turn these differences may impact their processing of this concept. This raised the possibility that different conceptualisations of forgiveness might impact one's experiences of bullying. If this were the case, it would

provide meaningful implications for clinical applications of forgiveness in peer victimised youth. Study 4 therefore investigates lay conceptualisations of forgiveness across different populations using qualitative analyses to provide a depth of understanding about this construct in bullied youth. Data were used from all samples of the previous three studies in order to generate a broad scope of analysis to direct future research and clinical practice.

Paper 4: Watson, McIlwain, Rapee, Todorov, & Geeves, 2015

Conceptualisations of Forgiveness in Primary School, Secondary School, and University Students and their Impacts on Bullying Experiences

Hayley J. Watson, Doris McIlwain, Ronald M. Rapee, Natasha Todorov and Andrew Geeves

Abstract

This study examined personal conceptualisations of forgiveness in young people who have been bullied. 362 students participated in this study, across primary school students (aged 11), secondary school students (aged 12 to 15) and university students (aged 17 to 24). Conceptualisations of forgiveness were measured qualitatively through written answers of participants. A theoretical model was constructed from the data, where conceptualisations of forgiveness fell within four overarching constructs: circumstances, process, aim and residue. These included 16 axial codes: circumstances of evaluating the offender, actions of the offender, event characteristics, and evaluations of self; processes of engaging, avoiding, and view of forgiveness; aims of interpersonal, morals, distance, justice, and self-interest; and residues of self, relationship, offender, and a wider perspective of human error. Findings may support a developmental processing model of forgiveness (Enright, et al., 2014) as well as one that includes both internal and interpersonal processing and are discussed in relation to bullying intervention strategies.

Forgiveness has been found to play a key role in responses to interpersonal conflict. The use of forgiveness in a therapeutic context has been found to increase positive mental and physical health in victims of sexual abuse (Walton, 2005), victims of domestic violence (Reed & Enright, 2006), and adult children of alcoholics (Osterndorf, Enright, Holter, & Klatt, 2011). The benefits of forgiveness include a reduction in aggression (Copeland-Linder, Johnson, Haynie, Chung, & Cheng, 2011), rumination (Louden-Gerber, 2009), and depression/hopelessness (Toussant, Williams, Musick, & Everson-Rose, 2008). Negative emotions such as these result in prolonged cardiovascular activation which puts strain on the body (Brosschol & Thayer, 2003). There is therefore a strong theoretical link between forgiveness and health (Harris & Thoresen, 2005). Forgiveness also provides health benefits above and beyond a reduction in negative emotions such as anger (Lawler-Row, Karremans, Scott, Edlis-Matityahou, & Edwards, 2008). Higher trait forgiveness (one's disposition to forgive) is correlated with higher subjective wellbeing and lower levels of depression and stress (Lawler-Row & Piferi, 2006; Van Dyke & Elias, 2007) as well as better relationship quality (Berry &

Worthington, 2001). Forgiveness is theorised to help break the cycle of future trauma (Worthington & Aten, 2010) through its protective role in improving physical and mental health (Egan & Todorov, 2009).

Despite the important role it has been found to play in mitigating the negative effects of interpersonal conflict, a consensus has not been reached on an acceptable definition of forgiveness within extant psychology literature. Some researchers view forgiveness as an interpersonal phenomenon, either exploring the social-cognitive elements of the victim-offender dyad (Boon & Sulsky, 1997) or seeing forgiveness as part of a greater motivational system that governs responses to interpersonal conflict (McCullough et al., 1998). Conversely, forgiveness has been theorised as an intrapersonal process involving a replacement of negative with positive emotions (Harris & Thoresen, 2005). While many different models of forgiveness exist (McCullough & Worthington, 1994), it is commonly seen as an emotion-focused coping strategy used to deal with the stress caused by delayed negative emotions following a painful event (Strelan & Covic, 2006) that can manifest as attitudes and behaviours of avoidance or vengeance (Worthington & Scherer, 2004). Forgiveness is defined in this paper based on a widely used conceptualisation, as being a process by which one acknowledges that an act was unfair, and that one has a moral right to anger but subsequently relinquishes that anger or resentment and develops a positive attitude towards the offender. This process does not involve condoning, excusing, forgetting, justifying, or calming down (Enright, 2001).

While disagreement exists within academic circles about the definition of forgiveness, a discrepancy also exists between academic and lay understandings of forgiveness. Strong individual differences exist in the way people conceptualise forgiveness in every-day life (Mullet, Girard, & Bakhshi, 2004; Kadima, Kadiangandu, Gauche, Vinsonneau, & Mullet, 2007). Although some studies show that laypeople have

similar definitions as theorists (Kanz, 2000), many studies show that their uses of the term differ (Kearns & Fincham, 2004; Macaskill, 2005) and are often broader than researchers' conceptualisations (Lawler-Row, Scott, Raines, Edlis-Matityahou, & Moore, 2007). Differing from academic definitions, laypeople often include forgetting and reconciliation as necessary components of the construct of forgiveness (Kearns & Fincham, 2004; Macaskill, 2005). Laypeople also perceive negative aspects of forgiveness (Kearns & Fincham, 2004), and have described it as a difficult task that can lead to emotional problems if it is not fully processed (Mullet, Girard, & Bakhshi, 2004; Kanz, 2000). Identifying lay conceptualisations of forgiveness and measuring the emotional and cognitive impacts of these conceptualisations on the forgiver are imperative to determining the ecological validity of research into forgiveness.

In order to identify and measure lay conceptualisations of forgiveness, an understanding of the variations of these constructs across age-specific demographics is essential. Different levels of cognitive capacity have been found to underlie one's ability and willingness to forgive, suggesting a developmental stage model of forgiveness (Enright, 1994; Enright et. al, 2014). This model corresponds with Kohlberg's (1976) moral development stages in children, with definitions of forgiveness expanding with children's increased conceptual understanding and perspectives. Therefore, examining conceptualisations of forgiveness at different stages of development seems crucial to understanding this concept. However, there is a lack of empirical research into the ways in which children conceive of forgiveness (Denham, Neal, Wilson, Pickering, & Boyatzis, 2005). Within a cognitive-developmental framework, concepts of forgiveness would be expected to become more complex as children age (Flanagan, Loveall, & Carter, 2012), with younger adolescents placing more emphasis on sensitivity to circumstance than their older counterparts (Chiaramello, Mesnil, Munoz Sastre, & Mullet, 2008).

Conceptualisations of forgiveness with greater levels of complexity have been found to be related to higher reported state forgiveness, which is linked to positive socio-emotional adjustment in young people (Reich, 2009). Therefore, a better understanding of conceptualisations of forgiveness throughout youth development may have important implications for mental health interventions, specifically, in relation to interpersonal conflicts such as bullying that evoke strong negative emotions and can have undesirable consequences.

The impacts of forgiveness on bullying victimisation are only beginning to be explored. Forgiveness has been positively correlated with a greater sense of interpersonal power (Karremans & Smith, 2010), which may allow adolescents to exert control in situations when they have previously been unable to do so (Egan & Todorov, 2009). The most effective coping responses for bullied children involve harnessing this sense of control as well as adopting a non-aggressive approach such as forgiveness (Terranova, Harris, Kavetski, & Oates, 2011). Forgiveness has been correlated with positive coping strategies including conflict resolution and support seeking, higher self-esteem, and lower levels of social anxiety in instances of school bullying (Flanagan, Vanden Hoek, Ranter, & Reich, 2012). When tested experimentally, research has shown that providing children with advice to forgive after a bullying episode resulted in less anger than advice to avoid or exact revenge (Watson, Rapee, & Todorov, 2015a). In addition, young adults with higher trait forgiveness experience less emotional hurt when reflecting on past bullying experiences (Egan & Todorov, 2009) and it has been suggested that an attitude of forgiveness may prevent bully victims from becoming perpetrators themselves (Hui, Tsang, & Law, 2011).

Research with previously bullied university students (aged 17 to 24) has suggested that imagining forgiveness and avoidance both resulted in a similar reduction in negative

emotions which was not present with imagined revenge (Watson, Rapee, & Todorov, in press). However, a second study failed to replicate these findings in a sample of previously bullied males aged 12 to 14, and indicated that imagining revenge resulted in the same reduction in negative emotions as imaging forgiveness (Watson, Rapee, & Todorov, 2015b). It is possible that differences in these two findings reflect different conceptualisations of forgiveness based on developmental understandings of the construct (Enright et al., 2014). Different understandings could relate to differences in how forgiveness can be applied to instances of bullying. The aims of this study were therefore to explore conceptualisations of forgiveness across young populations who have been bullied. This study seeks to gain a deeper understanding of participants' conceptualisations of forgiveness and how these relate to the applicability and scope of forgiveness in bullying interventions. The aim of this study is therefore to investigate how primary school, secondary school, and university students who have been bullied conceptualise forgiveness.

Method

Participants

Participants were drawn across populations in order to derive breadth and generalisability of results. The sample included bullied primary school students (aged 11), secondary school students (aged 12 to 15), and university students (aged 17 to 24). Consent was obtained from all participants, and from parents when participants were under 16. This study was approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee.

Sample 1

Participants were selected from two Christian private schools in Sydney, one all-male school and one all-female school, with both catering to primary and secondary

students. Both schools agreed to make their Year 6 (Primary) and Year 8 (Secondary) classes available for participation. A total of 184 participants were granted parental consent to participate in the study, with the sample comprising 104 males (42 in Year 6, and 62 in Year 8) and 80 females (23 in Year 6, and 57 in Year 8). The total sample ranged in age from 11 to 15, with a mean age of 13.0 ($SD = 1.09$). Table 1 displays the means and standard deviations of age across gender and grade. 54% of participants were Caucasian ($n = 100$), 29% classified themselves as multiracial ($n = 52$), 8% were Asian ($n = 15$), and the remaining were from other ethnic origins. 80% of participants identified with a religion, 70% ($n = 126$) being Christian, 4% ($n = 7$) being Muslim, and the rest identifying with other religions. 75% reported being victims of verbal bullying at least once in the last school term ($n = 136$), while 50% reported physical victimisation at least once in the last school term ($n = 89$).

Sample 2

135 undergraduate psychology students (110 females and 25 males) who had been bullied in the past six months participated in this study. Students ranged in age from 17 to 24 (mean = 18.39 years, $SD = 1.22$) and were recruited through an official university online protocol for study participation that provided course credit for their involvement in the research. Table 1 displays the means and standard deviations of age across gender and university year. 87% (n = 118) of participants were in their first year of university, with the remainder being in their second to fourth year . 90% ($n = 121$) of participants had completed a Secondary School diploma as their highest level of education, while 9% (n = 12) had completed a previous undergraduate degree, and 2% (n = 2) had completed a post-graduate diploma. 90% of participants (n = 121) lived with their parents or family, while the remainder lived with a flatmate, partner, or alone. 49% (n = 66) of participants identified as being Caucasian, while 29% (n = 39) identified as being Asian, and the

remainder identified with other ethnicities. 51% of participants identified as being

Christian (n = 69), 21% (n = 28) identified with other religions, and 28% (n = 38)

identified as having no religion. 97% (n = 131) reported having been verbally bullied; and

44% (n = 34) reported being victims of physical bullying in the past year.

Sample 3

Forty-three males from school Year 7 (*n*=31) and Year 8 (*n*= 12) who had been

bullied in the past six months participated in this study. All participants were recruited

through a letter and/or an email sent to parents from two participating private all-male

schools in Sydney. Parents who believed their child had been bullied in the past six

months and who provided consent nominated their children for participation in the study.

Ages ranged from 12 to 14, with a mean age of 12.81 years (*SD* = .707). Table 1 displays

the means and standard deviations across ages. 86% (n = 37) of participants were

Australian born, while 14% (n = 7) were born overseas; 65% (n = 28) had a mother who

was born in Australia, while 35% (15) had a mother who was born overseas; 58% of

participants (n = 25) had a father who was born in Australia, while 42% (n = 18) had a

father who was born overseas; 77% of participants (n = 33) identified as Christian, 7% (n

= 3) identified with other religions, and 16% (n = 7) identified as having no religion. 79%

of participants (n = 34) reported having been physically bullied; and 86% (n = 37)

reported having experienced verbal bullying.

Procedure

Participants individually attended a private room or a computer room at their

school or university. Participants responded to questions on an online survey in written

form.

Measures

Conceptualisation of Forgiveness. Participants answered one open-ended question aimed at determining their conceptualisation of forgiveness. The question was phrased: "What does forgiveness mean to you?" and they were given as much space as they required for their answer. This question has been shown in previous research to activate working definitions of forgiveness in participants (Lawler-Row et al., 2007).

Data Analysis

Conceptualisations of forgiveness were explored through Grounded Theory techniques (Strauss & Corbin, 1996). Defined as a set of flexible yet systematic guidelines for analysis so that the results are derived from the data themselves (Charmaz, 2014), Grounded Theory was determined to be a suitable methodology to use in order to answer the first research question. In addition, Grounded Theory is particularly useful in areas where findings lack clarity (Jurgaityte-Aviziniene, 2012), which is the case regarding definitions and lay conceptualisations of forgiveness. Grounded Theory procedures identified and defined by Corbin and Strauss (2008) were used to analyse the information gathered from the first question, as they provide a clear method for working with qualitative data. The grounded theory techniques used were open coding and the categorisation of these codes into axial codes, which formed a theoretical model.

The data were first subjected to open coding by two co-researchers, which is a process of assigning a code to each word or phrase, linked as closely as possible to the language used so that the meaning is derived directly from the data (Elliott, Slatick & Urman, 2001). Each researcher independently derived codes, which entailed breaking the data apart and identifying concepts that represent aspects of the raw data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The data were consistently compared to each other and the resulting codes in order to refine the model the most accurately (Charmaz, 2014). This was a process of

moving back and forth between researchers' conceptualisations and the data, in order to generate consistent grounded coding structures (Fassinger, 2005).

This was followed by the categorisation of these codes into increasingly abstract forms, in order to understand the meaning of the phenomenon in question (Dourdouma & Mortl, 2012). All of the codes were then collaboratively captured into a model or coding scheme based on similarities between codes, which included clusters of open codes into higher-order categories. 16 axial coding structures were derived from these clusters, using a process in which coding categories are related to each other (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Each phenomenological account was then run through the coding model to "test" its inclusiveness, which extended the model and also enhanced its credibility (Morrow, 2005). After an exhaustive process, theoretical saturation, the point at which no new concepts or relationships between concepts emerge (Fassinger, 2005), was reached. This constructivist process meant that the theory that was ultimately produced was derived directly from the data itself (Charmaz, 2014). Appendix A shows the finished coding structure after each of these steps altered and refined the model.

Results

Conceptualisations of Forgiveness

A theoretical model was generated from these data on participants' conceptualisations of forgiveness. This model encompassed all conceptualisations of forgiveness used by participants in the three samples. Appendix A shows this coding structure and theoretical model. Higher order axial codes reveal that there were four main themes that ran through the sample of primary, secondary, and university students' definitions of forgiveness: circumstances, process, aim, and residue. The following is an explanation of each of these categories derived from the data.

Circumstances. Some participants stated that the circumstances of the event played a role in how they conceptualised forgiveness. Circumstances fell into five categories.

Evaluate Offender. Some participants stated that forgiveness involves an evaluation of the offender. This included whether or not the hurtful actions were part of the offender's character, whether or not the offender was aware of the harm they had caused, whether or not the offender was remorseful or regretful, whether the offender's actions were intentional or unintentional, whether or not the offender deserved to be forgiven, and whether or not the offender would do the hurtful action again. For example one participant wrote: "It means to let go of whatever the person has done, *but only if they deserve it*."

Offender Remorse. Some participants revealed that the reparative actions of the offender play a role in their conceptualisation of forgiveness. This included whether or not the offender had given a spoken apology, whether or not they were sincere in that apology, whether or not the offender gave a behavioural demonstration of remorse for their actions, and whether or not they admitted that they were wrong. For example, one student stated: "If I was to forgive someone they would have to give a meaningful apology."

Event Characteristics. Characteristics of the event shaped some participants' view of forgiveness. This included how much time had passed since the event, the type of transgression involved, and the degree or level of severity of the event. For instance, one participant wrote: "It depends on how bad the thing they did was."

Evaluation of Self. Some participants included an evaluation of themselves in their conceptualisation of forgiveness. This included whether or not they were deserving of the harm they experienced, whether or not they liked the person who hurt them, and

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whether or not they themselves were in the wrong. For example, one participant wrote: "I know what I put up with and I know I don't deserve that".

Process. The processes underlying forgiveness featured heavily in some participants' conceptualisation of the term. These were separated into three aspects of processing.

Engage. For some participants, engaging with the situation or the person who hurt them played a role in how they viewed forgiveness. This involved actively engaging with their emotions around the event, and their thoughts and cognitions about the event. It also included physical demonstrations that signified to the other person that they were forgiven, as well as accepting the situation or event. For instance, one participant wrote: "It means that you, in a way, show them that you have gotten over it."

Avoid. On the other hand, some participants thought that forgiveness entailed avoiding the event on different levels by not engaging with emotions related to the event, or thoughts and cognitions about the event. It also included physically avoiding the person or event that perpetrated the harm. For example, one participant specified: "To forgive someone you need to put anything they ever did to you behind yourself, forget about it and act like nothing happened."

View of Forgiveness. Some participants gave their views on their ability to forgive in their conceptualisation. This included statements that forgiveness was difficult or easy to grant, that forgiveness was important or not important, and whether or not participants actually knew how to forgive. For example, one participant stated: "It can be very hard to forgive someone."

Aim. Another element of participants' conceptualisations of forgiveness included their motivations behind why they would take this path. This category was comprised of five different axial codes.

Interpersonal. Some participants mentioned that the aim of forgiveness centred on the relationship with the person who hurt them, which included the aim of keeping the relationship as well as the aim of leaving the relationship behind. For instance, one participant stated that forgiveness means "to move on with them".

Morals. Some participants gave moral reasons as part of their conceptualisation of forgiveness, which included religious reasons as well as altruistic ones. For example, one participant wrote: "I believe God forgave me so I should do unto others and forgive them."

Distance. In their conceptualisations of forgiveness, some participants stated that forgiveness involves an aim of distance such as physically distancing oneself from the event itself, or distancing oneself from the emotions of the event. For example, one participant described: "Forgiving someone is the will to move on from this situation, leaving the wrong behind."

Justice. Some participants provided a conceptualisation that involved an aim of justice. This included forgiving as a way of making things fair or even, as well as forgiving as a way of letting the other person get away with what they have done, negating accountability. For instance, one participant stated that forgiveness means "to feel even with someone."

Self-Interest. Some participants' conceptualisations of forgiveness included aims of self-interest, which included the desire for self-soothing, as well as the desire for self-protection. For example, one participant described that with forgiveness "you have a guard up which protects you from being in that same situation again."

Residue. Some participants included in their definition of forgiveness the impact or residue that is left after one forgives. This was broken down into four types of residue.

Self. Some participants' conceptualisations of forgiveness included the impact that forgiveness would have on them. This included thoughts that it would be an empowering action to take resulting in positive outcomes such as learning and growth, as well as thoughts that it would be a disempowering action, resulting in negative outcomes for the individual. For example, one participant stated: "To forgive this person would mark a huge achievement."

Relationship. Some participants mentioned impacts on the nature of the relationship with the person who hurt them in their conceptualisation of forgiveness. This included feeling that forgiveness would mean the relationship was the same as before, that it would start over from a fresh place, or that it would never be the same. For instance, one participant stated that forgiveness meant "to continue with the relationship but not completely trust them as much as before."

Offender. Some participants discussed the impact on the offender in their conceptualisation of forgiveness. This included having empathy for the way the other person feels, understanding their perspective or why they did it, seeing the offender in a positive light, and thinking that the offender has moved past the event. It also included harbouring a grudge towards the offender, and seeing them differently than before. For example, one participant wrote that forgiveness means: "To understand their reasons and realise their problems."

Wider Perspective. Some participants discussed a wider perspective that is gained when defining forgiveness. This included understanding human error, understanding that they cannot change the past, and understanding that what happened to them was damaging or hurtful. For instance, one participant stated that forgiveness means to "recognise that everyone makes mistakes."

Discussion

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Results of this study identified four main conceptualisations of forgiveness used by young people who have been bullied: incorporating evaluations of the event (circumstances), aims of why one forgives (aims), styles of processing (process) and the resulting impacts of choosing forgiveness (residue). These conceptualisations include factors that affect forgiveness, as well as the effects of forgiving. The wide variety of responses reflects the strong individual differences that exist in the way people conceptualise forgiveness in every-day life (Mullet, Girard, & Bakhshi, 2004; Kadima Kadiangandu, Gauche, Vinsonneau, & Mullet, 2007). Ultimately these data reveal that bullied youth share similar definitional understandings of forgiveness to other lay populations, which are generally broader than academic definitions (Lawler-Row, et al., 2007).

The inclusion of a wide variety of circumstances is reflective of past research on lay conceptualisations of forgiveness. Previous studies have found the inclusion of variables such as the intent of the perpetrator, apology from the perpetrator, offender remorse and empathy, and a cancellation of consequences within lay conceptualisations of forgiveness (Girard, Mullet, & Callahan, 2002; Armour & Umbreit, 2006). Other research has found that the relationship status with the wrongdoer, the closeness of this relationship prior to the event, and the quality of the relationship arose in definitions of this construct (Karremans, Van Lange, Ouwerkerk, & Kluwer, 2003; Mead, 2008). Generous attributions and appraisals about the event and the perpetrator or rumination about the event have also been found to feature as a part of the definition in other studies (McCullough, 2001). Still other research suggests that forgetting and reconciliation are necessary components of the construct in some populations (Kearns & Fincham, 2004; Macaskill, 2005). And finally, time passing, avoidance behaviours, benevolence towards others, and spirituality have also been found in lay conceptualisations of forgiveness

(Recine, Werner, & Recine, 2007). Given that the current data includes all of the definitional components of these previous disparate studies, they reveal that bullied youth exhibit relatively broad individual differences in their definitions of forgiveness.

These differences may be due to the age differences present in the current sample. There appear to be discrepancies in conceptualisations of forgiveness across the lifespan, with youth holding more rigid views of the possibility of forgiveness than their older counterparts (Park & Enright, 1997; Younger, Piferi, Jobe, & Lawler, 2004). A developmental stage model of forgiveness has therefore been proposed, suggesting that different levels of cognitive capacity underlie the forgiveness process (Enright, 1994; Enright et. al, 2014). The current data may be reflective of this model, given the broad definitional scope in this sample, which is comprised of primary school, secondary school, and university students and therefore encompasses different levels of cognitive capacity.

One area of particular interest in lay conceptualisations of forgiveness is whether or not it is understood as an internal or an interpersonal process. In previous research there appears to be disagreement on the inclusion of an interpersonal element (Denton & Martin, 1998; Wohl, Kuiken, & Neols, 2006; Denton & Martin, 1998; Kadima et al., 2007), as well as whether or not avoidance of the transgressor is a part of the forgiveness process (Wohl, Kuiken, & Neols, 2006). The current data reveal that for bullied youth, the definition of forgiveness also varies across individuals in relation to this distinction.

Seeing forgiveness as a passive letting go process, as well as having an interpersonal conceptualisation of forgiveness have both been related to higher forgiveness levels (Lawler-Row, Scott, Raines, Edlis-Matityahou, & Moore, 2007; Hook et al., 2012). Therefore it appears that there is a need for both of these within the forgiveness process. Avoidance has been found to cause less immediate stress than

thoughts of forgiveness in bullying situations (Watson, Rapee, & Todorov, in press). A passive letting go of negative experiences is also related to more state forgiveness in young adults (Lawler-Row et al., 2007). Initial avoidance for the purpose of gaining perspective and passive processing followed by later engagement with the individual or situation is therefore potentially an adaptive response to bullying that differs from avoidance as a long term coping strategy, which can lead to negative consequences (Hutzell & Payne, 2012). The varied responses in these data reveal that some bullied youth may employ this strategy, but others may not. Therefore, there is a clear need for adults who intervene therapeutically to have an understanding of the subtleties of the forgiveness process as defined by their clients before they can determine how best to support them (Freedman et al., 1991).

Past research also shows that different definitions of forgiveness are related to varying forgiveness levels overall, which can lead to different outcomes for the individual (Tripathi & Mullet, 2010). When the circumstances of the event are incorporated into their conceptualisation, people are not able to access unconditional forgiveness, which is the highest conceptual level of this construct (Worthington & Wade, 1999). However, when one conceptualizes forgiveness as a broad process that involves positive feelings for the offender, higher levels of unconditional forgiveness are more possible (Ballester, Sastre, & Mullet, 2009). This is in line with a developmental framework, which states that a more sophisticated experience of forgiveness is achieved with increased cognitive capacity to understand the broadness of its definition (Enright et. al, 2014). Relating this to bullying, past research has found that forgiveness with an aim of restitution or compensation, which is an earlier stage of this definitional model, is related to higher levels of peer victimisation in 7th and 8th graders (Coleman & Byrd, 2003). The current data reveal that some participants had access to a more unconditional definition of

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forgiveness (those that conceptualised it to involve a wider perspective of human error) but most included situational characteristics that must be present in order for them to forgive. Therefore it may be the case that bullied youth are not accessing the broadest definition of forgiveness, which may play a role in their levels of victimisation.

Clinical Implications

These data reveal that bullied primary and secondary school students aged 11 to 15 and university students aged 17 to 24 hold many different conceptualisations of forgiveness. The decision to forgive is determined by the individual's understanding of this construct (Scobie & Scobie, 2006). Therefore therapeutic conceptualisations of forgiveness must be made clear to the client before suggesting it as a coping strategy (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). A model of forgiveness that involves both initial internal processing as well as later engagement with the individual or situation would be well suited to this population, as these data reveal the inclusion of both strategies in their conceptualisations of forgiveness, and both have been found to be beneficial in past research (Lawler-Row, Scott, Raines, Edlis-Matityahou, & Moore, 2007; Hook et al., 2012).

In addition, a developmental stage model of forgiveness would suggest that more developmentally advanced conceptualisations include a broader perspective on the situation (Enright et al., 2014). This perspective would inherently involve disengaging from a narrow victim-role mentality, a process that is related to coping self-efficacy and has been correlated with less social anxiety, depression, and externalising symptoms in bullied youth, and is related to less bullying victimisation (Singh & Bussey, 2009; Coleman & Byrd, 2003). These data reveal that many bullied youth do not employ such a conceptualisation. This would suggest that coaching young people who are victims of bullying towards more developmentally advanced definitions of forgiveness that include a

broader perspective of human error would be of benefit in coping with bullying victimisation. Taken together, these exploratory qualitative findings provide an ideal platform for expanding the knowledge on clinical practice in the application of forgiveness in bullying intervention programs for young populations.

Limitations and future directions

There are certain limitations that are inherent in the design of this study that must be addressed. Primarily, this study used only one written question to measure the perspectives of participants. However this was intentional in order to capture individuals' initial response reactions to the topic of forgiveness, giving insight into their primary associations with this concept. Future studies may build on this with more in-depth questioning strategies. In addition, samples were drawn from private schools and psychology undergraduate populations, limiting the generalisability of results. Future research should expand to look at more diverse populations in order to investigate the wider applicability of these findings. In addition, the samples were not balanced across age and gender (with a primarily female sample of university students, and a primarily male sample of secondary school students). This prevented the ability to analyze responses based on these demographic attributes. Future research should seek out balanced populations that allow for further developmental and gender-based analyses. However, this was a large sample that covered multiple age ranges and provided a useful first dataset for investigating the definitions of forgiveness in bullied youth.

Conclusion

The present study reveals valuable information about the wide variety of conceptual attributes that are involved in definitions of forgiveness processes in bullied youth, and can be used to inform research and practice in effectively promoting forgiveness in bullying.

Table 1: *Age and Gender Means and Standard Deviations*

	Sample 1	(School)	Sample 2	(University)			Sample 3	(School)
	Year 6	Year 8	1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year	4th Year	Year 7	Year 8
Males								
n	35	58	24	1	0	0	30	12
Mean	11.80	13.78	18.29	19	-	-	12.5	13.58
SD	.406	.406	1.160	-	-	-	.509	.515
Females								
n	38	49	94	13	2	1	-	-
Mean	11.63	13.59	18.14	19.77	20	22	-	-
SD	.489	.537	.957	1.641	.000	-	-	-

Appendix A: *Axial Coding Structure – Definitions of Forgiveness*

Circumstances	*Evaluate Offender*	Action is part of character	
		Awareness of harm caused	
		Remorse/regret	
		Action was unintentional	
		Deserve to be forgiven	
		Will not do again	
	Offender Remorse	Spoken apology	Sincere
			Insincere
		Physical demonstration	
		Admit they were wrong	
	Event Characteristics	Time passed	
		Type	
		Experienced severity	
	Evaluation of Self	Not deserving of harm	
		Depends if I like them	

		I was in the wrong		
Process	*Engage*	Process emotions		
		Process cognitions		
		Take action		
		Acceptance/transformation		
	Avoid	Decrease emotions		
		Block cognitions		
		Actions of avoidance		
	View of Forgiveness	Difficulty of forgiveness		
		Ease of forgiveness		
		Importance of forgiveness		
		Do not want to forgive		
		Do not know how to forgive		
Aim	*Interpersonal*	Keep relationship		
		Leave relationship		
	Morals	Religious reasons		
		Altruistic reasons		
	Distance	Distance from event		
		Distance from emotion		
	Justice	Get even		
		Do not hold accountable		
	Self Interest	Self soothing		
		Self protection		
Residue	*Self*	Benefit/empowering		
		Disempowering		
	Relationship	Relationship is same as before		
		Relationship is different	Loss of trust	
			Start fresh	

Offender	Empathy
	Understanding
	Resentment
	See them positively
	Think they learned
Wider Perspective	Understand human error
	See that cannot change past
	Know action was wrong
	Admit they were wrong

Forgiveness in School Bullying: Applicability and Implications for Intervention

Conclusion

Hayley J. Watson

The following discussion summarises and comments upon the key findings and implications of the four papers that form the body of the present dissertation. Suggestions for future research are also provided, in order to bring the dissertation to a conclusion.

Summary of Findings

This dissertation provided several key findings that have implications for the field of bullying interventions as well as the therapeutic application of forgiveness.

Paper 1. The first paper provided groundwork to investigate the applicability of forgiveness in a school bullying context. It was the first experimental study in this area and therefore laid an empirical foundation for utilising forgiveness within bullying interventions. This paper found that providing youth aged 11 to 15 with advice to forgive a bully resulted in less anger about the event than advice to avoid or take revenge on the bully. This paper also revealed that avoidance was the most likely advice to be followed by students, the most likely to result in ignoring the bully, and the most likely to result in appraisals of the situation as being serious. It was also found that advice to avoid the bully resulted in more empathy for the bully than advice to forgive or take revenge.

Results from this paper therefore revealed the potential benefit of forgiveness as a response to bullying, the need to further investigate the relationship between forgiveness and avoidance, and the potential use of avoidance on the pathway to forgiveness.

Paper 2. The second paper sought to examine the impacts of revenge, forgiveness, and avoidance in victims of bullying. A young adult (aged 17 to 24) sample was sought in order to understand these constructs clinically before testing them on vulnerable younger populations. This paper found that imagining either forgiveness or avoidance of a past bullying episode led to significant decreases in negative affect compared to imagining the event as it occurred, whereas imagining revenge did not. In addition, imagined revenge led to significantly fewer positive cognitive evaluations about one's ability to cope with

the situation, whereas imagined forgiveness and avoidance did not. This paper also found that imagining forgiveness was more stressful than imagining revenge or avoidance following a bullying episode. All three strategies led to decreased stress responses from imagining the event as it occurred, however forgiveness took significantly longer to achieve this outcome. This paper therefore led to further indications of the interplay between forgiveness and avoidance, and their benefit over thoughts of revenge.

Paper 3. The third study was designed to replicate the differences between revenge and forgiveness in a clinical youth population. The purpose of this study was to ensure that the differences found between forgiveness and revenge in Study 2 held across populations, and specifically with youth. However, findings indicated different results than those found in the previous study. This paper revealed that for males aged 12 to 14, forgiveness and revenge both resulted in similar positive cognitive and emotional benefits, with no significant differences between the two. This paper therefore pointed to the potential differences across demographics in conceptualisations of forgiveness and how these relate to experiences of bullying victimisation.

Paper 4. The final paper in this dissertation sought to answer questions raised by the first three. Namely, it was intended to address the issue of understanding the meaning of the construct of forgiveness in lay people who have been bullied. Results from this paper revealed a number of important findings that give more depth of understanding to the dissertation as a whole. Results from qualitative analyses showed that primary school students (aged 11), secondary school students (aged 12 to 15) and university students (aged 17 to 24) who have been bullied conceive of forgiveness to include four categories: the circumstances of the event, the process used to forgive, the aim of forgiveness, and the residue left after forgiveness occurs. This reflects the broad individual differences that exist within this population, and points to the need for clarifying and coaching on more advanced conceptualisations, as well as including internal as well as interpersonal processes, in order to yield the best outcomes for bullied youth. These results give depth to the experimental findings from Papers 1 to 3, and provide a platform for future research and clinical applications in this area.

Definitional Clarification

Several of the results from this thesis shed further light on academic definitions of forgiveness. They provide perspective on a model of forgiveness that is an internal process (Enright, 2001). They also indicate that a developmental stage model may be a useful definitional framework (Enright et al., 2014).

Internal processing model. Papers 1, 2, and 3 provide evidence regarding a model of forgiveness that is internal rather than interpersonal. Paper 1 provides evidence that hearing advice to forgive the bully decreases anger in victimisation scenarios. Papers 2 and 3 reveal the decreased negative emotions and increased evaluations of coping that occur from internally imagined forgiveness following bullying victimisation. These results point to the processes of forgiveness that occur within the individual, without an

interpersonal interaction component (Enright, 2001). They support the notion that

forgiveness is an internal pathway to decreasing *unforgiveness*, which is the presence of

delayed negative emotions following interpersonal hurt (Worthington & Scherer, 2004).

However, Paper 4 suggests that bullied youth incorporate both internal and interpersonal

elements into their definition of forgiveness. This could explain the discrepancies in

whether or not to include an interpersonal element in lay conceptualisations of

forgiveness (Wohl, Kuiken, & Neols, 2006; Denton & Martin, 1998; Kadima et al.,

2007). These data suggest that is it not one or the other, but potentially both that are

needed in the processing of forgiveness in school bullying dynamics. Perhaps this is due

to the inherently ongoing nature of this type of peer abuse (Olweus, 1999), which is

contextualized by the constant contact of the school climate. Therefore, forgiveness in

this context may require initially removing oneself from harm, but then engaging to fully

process the event with the individual who remains in one's broader peer group.

Developmental stage model. Evidence from this dissertation is also consistent

with an understanding of forgiveness that varies between individuals. While these

differences may be due to gender, past experiences, or some other variables, they may

also reflect definitional changes in the developmental stage model of forgiveness, and so

this warrants further discussion (Enright et al., 2014). In this dissertation there were

differences between the benefits of visualisations of avoidance and revenge in relation to

visualisations of forgiveness in Papers 2 and 3. With a sample of mostly female university

students aged 17 to 24, imagined revenge had negative impacts on the individual in

comparison to imagined forgiveness. However, with a sample of males aged 12 to 14,

imagined revenge had similar positive impacts as imagined forgiveness. This difference

in effects was surprising and may suggest that forgiveness and revenge have different

impacts according to the characteristics of the population. In a meta-analysis of

forgiveness, age and gender were not found to impact on one's ability or willingness to forgive (Fehr, Gelfand, & Nag, 2010). It is therefore unlikely that these variables alone were the cause of this difference. It is possible, however, that there is a difference in the applicability of revenge fantasies across populations. Previous research has found revenge fantasies to be more useful for traumatised youth than for non-clinical adults (Haen & Weber, 2009; Seebauer, Fros, Dubaschny, Schonberger, & Jacob, 2014). Given the higher levels of aggression due to increased social acceptability in males than in females, revenge fantasies may be more likely to generate positive responses in males (Eagly & Stefan, 1986). Hence, younger males who have been victimised may be more suited to benefit from therapeutic fantasies of revenge.

Another question this raised was whether there are individual differences in the way people conceive of forgiveness, which would change its impacts across populations. The developmental stage model of forgiveness suggests that early stage conceptualisations of forgiveness include an aim of vengeance (Enright et al., 2014). Therefore it could be the case that in the sample of young boys in Paper 3, forgiveness and revenge both had the same emotional impact because both strategies shared a characteristic of vengeance among these younger participants. Among the older participants in Paper 2 who may have been able to integrate a more nuanced concept of forgiveness, these strategies may have been more clearly distinguished. Hence these data may be consistent with the developmental stage model of forgiveness (Enright et al., 2014) although the results are confounded by different genders and by different types of bullying between the populations. Research that directly compares populations that differ only in age will be needed to more completely test the developmental stage model.

When investigating lay conceptualisations of forgiveness in Paper 4, the wide variation in definitional components also suggests support for a developmental stage

model. In this model, earlier stage conceptualisations of forgiveness are based on circumstantial variables and later definitions draw from a broader understanding of empathy for all humankind (Enright et al., 2014). Results from this paper suggest that many bullied youth employ earlier stage definitions, including a wide variety of circumstantial attributes. These earlier definitions have been found to relate to higher levels of victimisation, and more mature responses to bullying would be expected to result in less victimisation (Coleman & Byrd, 2003; Rigby, 2003; Rigby, 2005). These data may therefore extend the developmental model of forgiveness to include the potential benefits for youth of progressing up the developmental pathway in understandings of forgiveness.

Avoidance and Forgiveness in Bullying

This dissertation also provided insight into the interplay between avoidance and forgiveness and how this can manifest effectively in coping with bullying. Papers 1 and 2 point to the fact that avoiding the bully is another pathway to decreasing *unforgiveness*, or the ongoing negative emotions following an interpersonal hurt (Worthington & Scherer, 2004). This provides an explanation for the frequent use of avoidance strategies in youth victims of bullying even though its use can result in negative consequences (Dehue, Bolman, & Vollink, 2008; Hutzell & Payne, 2012). Further findings from Paper 1 provide more support for this, indicating that avoidance was the most likely advice to be followed by students, and the most likely to result in ignoring the bully, but that it also led to interpretations of the bullying as being more serious.

The specific benefits of short-term avoidance that were revealed across studies provide further insight into the relationship between avoidance and forgiveness. Paper 2 suggested that avoidance is less stressful than forgiveness in the short-term, and that it leads to the same decrease in negative emotions as well as increase in positive evaluations

of one's ability to cope with the situation. Paper 1 also found that avoidance led to the development of more empathy for the bully, which is a precursor to forgiveness (Davis & Gold, 2010). These findings raised questions about the usefulness and applicability of avoidance within the forgiveness process. Current literature on forgiveness proposes a pathway that involves uncovering the harm and processing the emotions, making a decision to forgive the perpetrator, gaining perspective and empathy for the offender, and finding meaning in the suffering (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). This paper therefore suggests that for youth, the initial steps of processing the emotions and deciding to forgive the bully may be best achieved while avoiding contact with the bully in order to effectively reach the third step of developing empathy. This supports literature suggesting that individuals prefer avoidance coping strategies early in the forgiveness process, and approach strategies later on (Strelan & Wojtysiac, 2009).

Findings from Paper 4 may also support this pathway of avoidance leading to forgiveness, given the inclusion of this component in conceptualisations of forgiveness in bullied youth. If many youth include avoidance as an aspect of their understanding of forgiveness, this could indicate that avoidance may be a crucial part of the forgiveness process for them. However, many also included engagement with the perpetrator in their definition, which suggests that this may also be an important element. Taken together with the findings from studies 1, 2 and 3, these data provide an understanding of the individual differences that exist for bullied youth regarding forgiveness. This may also suggest that avoidance is specifically useful immediately following the bullying incident in order to decrease negative affect and process feelings about the situation (as revealed in studies 1, 2 and 3), but that it can then be followed by engagement with the person or the event of victimisation in some cases (as shown in study 4).

Clinical Applications of Forgiveness in Bullying

Finally, this dissertation provided data to support the benefits of suggesting forgiveness as a response to bullying victimisation in youth, and provided important clinical directions in this area. These studies provide the first experimental manipulations of responses of forgiveness in a school bullying context, and therefore bring empirical strength to the literature supporting the value of this coping strategy. Paper 1 revealed that advice to forgive the bully decreases anger in youth bullying dynamics. This finding has significant implications for clinical practice, as it provides a novel pathway to effective anger management in bullied youth populations. It also suggests that the advice often given to victims of bullying to either fight back or ignore the bully may not adequately address their experiences of negative emotions such as anger.

Papers 2 and 3 showed that imagined forgiveness decreases negative emotions and increases positive evaluations about one's ability to cope across demographics of bullied youth. However, these results were similar for imagined avoidance in university students aged 17-14 and imagined revenge in males aged 12 to 14. This latter finding provided insight into what might lead young males to choose revenge as a behavioural response to bullying victimisation, which is correlated with many negative outcomes (Dukes, Stein, & Zane, 2009; Sourander et al., 2007; Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004; Champion & Clay, 2006). Equally, this led to an understanding of the reasons for university students to choose avoidance in response to bullying, which is also associated with negative long-term impacts (Hutzell & Payne, 2012). In addition, Paper 2 found that imagined forgiveness was initially more stressful than imagined avoidance or revenge. These findings were useful in indicating the importance of providing individuals with a clear rationale regarding the long-term benefits of forgiveness to maintain motivation despite the initial stress associated with this process, and understand the difference between immediate emotional relief and longer-term coping.

Data from Paper 4 also provides useful information that can inform and guide intervention strategies involving forgiveness in bullying. From this paper, it is clear that before individuals can be coached towards an attitude of forgiveness, their conceptualisations of the construct must first be understood in order to achieve the most meaningful results. Aiding youth in developing their definitions of forgiveness to be broad and developmentally advanced could be a vital part of bullying intervention strategies. In addition, including internal as well as interpersonal processes in this approach will reflect the diverse needs of this population in considering forgiveness as a response.

In all, these studies support a model of justice that is restorative rather than retributional for victims of bullying (Latimer, Dowden & Muise 2005). In applying forgiveness in a bullying context, this dissertation therefore also reflects more widely the benefit of intervention approaches that take a restorative pathway (eg Morrison, 2002; Rigby, 2003; Rigby, 2005). Restorative approaches aim to reintegrate all those affected by the wrongdoing back into the community, with increased resiliency and accountability (Morrison, 2002). This enables more coping self-efficacy in bullied youth, through a disengagement from psychological self-blame and the victim-role mentality, therefore resulting in less anxiety and depression following a bullying incident (Singh & Bussey, 2009). Forgiveness in the context of these wider restorative practices reflects a broader perspective of the construct, which is in turn related to less bullying victimisation (Coleman & Byrd, 2003). This thesis therefore contributes to the growing body of research that informs restorative approaches to bullying, and provides a unique contribution into the specific impacts of forgiveness on peer victimised youth.

Future Directions

This dissertation provided the first experimental research into the application of forgiveness in bullied youth. The combination of experimental designs to show causation as well as qualitative analysis for depth in understanding constructs revealed useful information that progresses the fields of research in both forgiveness and bullying. The broad range of clinical and non-clinical samples allowed for meaningful conclusions that may be applied across varying demographics.

This dissertation also opens up many avenues for future research. Now that immediate impacts have been empirically tested and analysed, further investigations into the longer-term implications of forgiveness, avoidance, and revenge in a school-bullying context are warranted. Literature on these three attitudes would suggest that forgiveness should have beneficial long-term outcomes (Harris & Thoresen, 2005). Conversely, although avoidance and revenge may be associated with short-term benefits, they could be detrimental in the long-term (Hutzell & Payne, 2012; Copeland-Linder, Johnson, Haynir, Chung, & Cheng, 2011). However, these suggestions have yet to be empirically tested in relation to school bullying. This dissertation provides the evidence needed to further explore these empirical relationships in longer-term longitudinal studies.

This dissertation also lays the platform for further exploration of the use of avoidance in the forgiveness process. It has been determined that avoidance may be a useful short-term emotion regulation strategy. More precise investigations into the type and duration of avoidance and how this relates to the forgiveness process would benefit the fields of research in forgiveness as well as bullying. In addition, the different conceptualisations of forgiveness uncovered in this dissertation give rise to empirical testing on the use of these lay definitions across populations. Finally, this dissertation used imagery rescripting as an intervention tool to test the way forgiveness, avoidance, and revenge impact on victims of bullying in a controlled environment, which yielded

important results. Future research can now build on these findings and develop clinical intervention trials of real rather than imagined forgiveness to further explore these findings in clinical practice.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the present dissertation has made a number of original contributions to the fields of both therapeutic applications of forgiveness and youth bullying interventions. Its constituent papers offer empirical discoveries that have implications for both research and clinical practice. A model of forgiveness is suggested that begins with internal processing and may end with engagement with the situation or perpetrator of harm in some situations. Data may also reflect a developmental stage model of forgiveness. In addition, a theoretical model for understanding lay conceptualisations of forgiveness has been proposed. Forgiveness has been shown as a potentially beneficial strategy for youth victims of bullying, and the ways that this can be applied have been explored. Evidence has also been displayed that may account for the reasons why youth choose the alternate strategies of revenge and avoidance as responses to bullying. The use of initial avoidance as a pathway to forgiveness has been developed as a framework for clinical practice, and the need for broad and developmentally advanced definitions of this construct is expressed. The present findings should inform future efforts to promote resiliency in victims of bullying, and to expand the therapeutic application of forgiveness.

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Appendix A

Example Questionnaire with Vignettes for Paper 1

Section A

Age:

Date of Birth - Month: Day: Year:

Gender: (Please circle)   Male   Female

Grade in School: (Please circle)   6   8

Were you at this same school last year?

Yes   No

What class are you in?

What ethnicity or ethnic origin do you consider yourself a part of? (Please circle)

Asian   Pacific Islander   African   Caucasian   Aboriginal/Torres Island Straight

Decline to respond

Other/multiracial – Please state:_____

What religion do you consider yourself a part of? (Please circle)

Christian   Muslim   Buddhist   Hindu   Jewish   Traditional Aboriginal Religions

Other – Please state:_____

How strongly do you agree with your religious beliefs? (Please circle)

I have no religious beliefs	Strongly disagree	Mildly disagree	Neutral	Mildly agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

Who do you live with at home? (Please list all people living in your home by their relation to you - eg mother, brother, grandma)

Section B

Below are some situations in which you might find yourself. Please read each situation and imagine that it <u>has happened to you</u>. After reading the situation you will be asked some questions about your response to it. Please circle one number for each question. There are no right or wrong answers.

Scenario 1:

You are walking down the hallway and a group of kids that are older than you pass by and one of them says: **"You're such a loser, get out of our way!"** and they all laugh.

They have called you mean names before, and you don't know how to make it stop.

At the end of the day, you talk to a friend that wasn't involved, and he tells you: "How mean! But it's their problem they can't be nice, so **if you can just forgive them and put it behind you, you'll be better off."**

	Not at all	Just a little	Somewhat	Quite a bit	Very much
1. How <u>serious</u> do you think this situation is?	1	2	3	4	5
2. How <u>sad</u> do you feel in this situation?	1	2	3	4	5
3. How <u>angry</u> do you feel in this situation?	1	2	3	4	5
4. How <u>anxious</u> or <u>worried</u> do you feel in this situation?	1	2	3	4	5
5. How <u>ashamed</u> do you feel in this situation?	1	2	3	4	5
6. How much do you feel like <u>getting even</u> or <u>getting back</u> at your friends?	1	2	3	4	5
7. How <u>well</u> do you think you could <u>handle</u> this situation?	1	2	3	4	5
8. How likely would you be to follow your friend's advice and (forgive/take revenge/avoid) your classmates?	1	2	3	4	5

9. If your classmates were to do something like this again, how likely would you be to do the following: (Please circle one number for each question)

	Not at all likely	Not very likely	Somewhat likely	Quite likely	Very likely

a) Think that there was something wrong with them or that they must be in pain themselves to act so mean	1	2	3	4	5
b) Think that it was my fault or that I deserve the treatment I am getting	1	2	3	4	5
c) Tell someone (a school counselor, teacher, parent, friend, or anyone else)	1	2	3	4	5
d) Wish that I was different	1	2	3	4	5
e) Ignore them and carry on with my day	1	2	3	4	5

Scenario 2:

After class, you are bending down to get something out of your bag and a classmate **knocks into you so that you fall face first on top of your bag**, and your things fall all over the ground. They laugh and walk off with their friends leaving you lying there.

They have been doing things like this for the past week, and you really wish they would stop.

You tell a friend that wasn't involved, and he says: "What an idiot! You should **stay as far away from them as possible** and try to leave class early so they can't find you to hurt you again."

	Not at all	Just a little	Somewhat	Quite a bit	Very much
1. How <u>serious</u> do you think this situation is?	1	2	3	4	5
2. How <u>sad</u> do you feel in this situation?	1	2	3	4	5
3. How <u>angry</u> do you feel in this situation?	1	2	3	4	5
4. How <u>anxious</u> or <u>worried</u> do you feel in this situation?	1	2	3	4	5
5. How <u>ashamed</u> do you feel in this situation?	1	2	3	4	5
6. How much do you feel like <u>getting even</u> or <u>getting back</u> at your friends?	1	2	3	4	5
7. How <u>well</u> do you think you could <u>handle</u> this situation?	1	2	3	4	5
8. How likely would you be to follow your friend's advice and (forgive/take revenge/avoid) your classmates?	1	2	3	4	5

9. If your classmates were to do something like this again, how likely would you be to do the following: (Please circle one number for each question)

	Not at all likely	Not very likely	Somewhat likely	Quite likely	Very likely

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a) Think that there was something wrong with them or that they must be in pain themselves to act so mean	1	2	3	4	5
b) Think that it was my fault or that I deserve the treatment I am getting	1	2	3	4	5
c) Tell someone (a school counselor, teacher, parent, friend, or anyone else)	1	2	3	4	5
d) Wish that I was different	1	2	3	4	5
e) Ignore them and carry on with my day	1	2	3	4	5

Scenario 3:

You arrive for class and as you enter the room, there is a group of your classmates standing in the corner. You begin to approach them, and overhear one of your classmates saying **how ugly and gross you look today.** The other people in the class all turn to you and laugh at the comment.

This has happened before, and you feel you don't know how to stop it.

At the end of class, you talk to a friend that wasn't involved, and he tells you: "That's awful! You should **think of a way to get even with them** and hurt their feelings as much as they hurt yours."

	Not at all	Just a little	Somewhat	Quite a bit	Very much
1. How <u>serious</u> do you think this situation is?	1	2	3	4	5
2. How <u>sad</u> do you feel in this situation?	1	2	3	4	5
3. How <u>angry</u> do you feel in this situation?	1	2	3	4	5
4. How <u>anxious </u>or <u>worried</u> do you feel in this situation?	1	2	3	4	5
5. How <u>ashamed</u> do you feel in this situation?	1	2	3	4	5
6. How much do you feel like <u>getting even</u> or <u>getting back</u> at your friends?	1	2	3	4	5
7. How <u>well</u> do you think you could <u>handle</u> this situation?	1	2	3	4	5
8. How likely would you be to follow your friend's advice and (forgive/take revenge/avoid) your classmates?	1	2	3	4	5

9. If your classmates were to do something like this again, how likely would you be to do the following: (Please circle one number for each question)

	Not at all likely	Not very likely	Somewhat likely	Quite likely	Very likely

a) Think that there was something wrong with them or that they must be in pain themselves to act so mean	1	2	3	4	5
b) Think that it was my fault or that I deserve the treatment I am getting	1	2	3	4	5
c) Tell someone (a school counselor, teacher, parent, friend, or anyone else)	1	2	3	4	5
d) Wish that I was different	1	2	3	4	5
e) Ignore them and carry on with my day	1	2	3	4	5

Scenario 4:

You are sitting in the playground eating your lunch and someone older than you walks past you and **pushes you, knocking you off your seat.**

He has done this at lunchtime for the past week, and you don't know how to get him to stop.

In the next class, you talk to a friend that wasn't involved, and he tells you **"**Sorry that happened! But it's their problem they are so nasty, so **if you can just forgive them and put it behind you, you'll be better off."**

	Not at all	Just a little	Somewhat	Quite a bit	Very much
1. How <u>serious</u> do you think this situation is?	1	2	3	4	5
2. How <u>sad</u> do you feel in this situation?	1	2	3	4	5
3. How <u>angry</u> do you feel in this situation?	1	2	3	4	5
4. How <u>anxious</u> or <u>worried</u> do you feel in this situation?	1	2	3	4	5
5. How <u>ashamed</u> do you feel in this situation?	1	2	3	4	5
6. How much do you feel like <u>getting even</u> or <u>getting back</u> at your friends?	1	2	3	4	5
7. How <u>well</u> do you think you could <u>handle</u> this situation?	1	2	3	4	5
8. How likely would you be to follow your friend's advice and (forgive/take revenge/avoid) your classmates?	1	2	3	4	5

9. If your classmates were to do something like this again, how likely would you be to do the following: (Please circle one number for each question)

	Not at all likely	Not very likely	Somewhat likely	Quite likely	Very likely

a) Think that there was something wrong with them or that they must be in pain themselves to act so mean	1	2	3	4	5
b) Think that it was my fault or that I deserve the treatment I am getting	1	2	3	4	5
c) Tell someone (a school counselor, teacher, parent, friend, or anyone else)	1	2	3	4	5
d) Wish that I was different	1	2	3	4	5
e) Ignore them and carry on with my day	1	2	3	4	5

Scenario 5:

You are sitting at the front of the classroom and just before class starts, the person sitting behind you says loudly: **"When was the last time you had a shower? You stink!"** The whole class hears and is looking at you and laughing.

This person has been making fun of you a lot this year, and you wish it would stop but you don't know how to make that happen.

You tell a friend that wasn't involved, and he says: "Sorry that happened! You should **stay as far away from them as possible** and try to get into a different class so they can't make fun of you ever again."

	Not at all	Just a little	Somewhat	Quite a bit	Very much
1. How <u>serious</u> do you think this situation is?	1	2	3	4	5
2. How <u>sad</u> do you feel in this situation?	1	2	3	4	5
3. How <u>angry</u> do you feel in this situation?	1	2	3	4	5
4. How <u>anxious</u> or <u>worried</u> do you feel in this situation?	1	2	3	4	5
5. How <u>ashamed</u> do you feel in this situation?	1	2	3	4	5
6. How much do you feel like <u>getting even</u> or <u>getting back</u> at your friends?	1	2	3	4	5
7. How <u>well</u> do you think you could <u>handle</u> this situation?	1	2	3	4	5
8. How likely would you be to follow your friend's advice and (forgive/take revenge/avoid) your classmates?	1	2	3	4	5

9. If your classmates were to do something like this again, how likely would you be to do the following: (Please circle one number for each question)

	Not at all likely	Not very likely	Somewhat likely	Quite likely	Very likely
a) Think that there was something wrong with them or that they must be in pain themselves to act so mean	1	2	3	4	5
b) Think that it was my fault or that I deserve the treatment I am getting	1	2	3	4	5
c) Tell someone (a school counselor, teacher, parent, friend, or anyone else)	1	2	3	4	5
d) Wish that I was different	1	2	3	4	5
e) Ignore them and carry on with my day	1	2	3	4	5

Scenario 6:

You are leaving school at the end of the day, and a classmate that is bigger than you **trips you and you fall to the ground on the pavement.**

He is doing this type of thing a lot and you hate it but don't know how to make him stop.

The next day, you talk to a friend that wasn't involved, and he tells you: "That's terrible! You should **figure out a way to get even with them** and hurt them as much as they hurt you."

	Not at all	Just a little	Somewhat	Quite a bit	Very much
1. How <u>serious</u> do you think this situation is?	1	2	3	4	5
2. How <u>sad</u> do you feel in this situation?	1	2	3	4	5
3. How <u>angry</u> do you feel in this situation?	1	2	3	4	5
4. How <u>anxious</u> or <u>worried</u> do you feel in this situation?	1	2	3	4	5
5. How <u>ashamed</u> do you feel in this situation?	1	2	3	4	5
6. How much do you feel like <u>getting even</u> or <u>getting back</u> at your friends?	1	2	3	4	5
7. How <u>well</u> do you think you could <u>handle</u> this situation?	1	2	3	4	5
8. How likely would you be to follow your friend's advice and (forgive/take revenge/avoid) your classmates?	1	2	3	4	5

9. If your classmates were to do something like this again, how likely would you be to do the following: (Please circle one number for each question)

	Not at all likely	Not very likely	Somewhat likely	Quite likely	Very likely

a) Think that there was something wrong with them or that they must be in pain themselves to act so mean	1	2	3	4	5
b) Think that it was my fault or that I deserve the treatment I am getting	1	2	3	4	5
c) Tell someone (a school counselor, teacher, parent, friend, or anyone else)	1	2	3	4	5
d) Wish that I was different	1	2	3	4	5
e) Ignore them and carry on with my day	1	2	3	4	5

10. What does forgiveness mean to you?

Section C

Please answer the following questions by circling the one number that is most true for each question:

	Strongly disagree	Mildly disagree	Neutral	Mildly agree	Strongly agree
1. People close to me probably think I hold a grudge too long.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I can forgive a friend for almost anything.	1	2	3	4	5
3. If someone treats me badly, I treat him or her the same.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I try to forgive others even when they don't feel guilty for what they did.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I can usually forgive and forget an insult.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I feel bitter about many of my relationships.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Even after I forgive someone, things often come back to me that I resent.	1	2	3	4	5
8. There are some things for which I could never forgive even a loved one.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I have always forgiven those who have hurt me.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I am a forgiving person.	1	2	3	4	5

For the following questions, please circle the one number that is most true.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
2. My attention is often focused on parts of myself I wish I'd stop thinking about	1	2	3	4	5
3. I always seem to be thinking about recent things I've said or done	1	2	3	4	5
4. Sometimes it is hard for me to shut off thoughts about myself	1	2	3	4	5
5. Long after an argument or disagreement is over with, my thoughts keep going back to what happened	1	2	3	4	5
6. I tend to worry about things that happen to me for a really long time afterward.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I don't waste time re-thinking things that are over and done with	1	2	3	4	5
8. Often I'm playing back over in my mind how I acted in a past situation	1	2	3	4	5
9. I often find myself thinking about whether not I've done something the right way	1	2	3	4	5

10. I never worry about myself for very long	1	2	3	4	5
11. It is easy for me to put unwanted thoughts out of my mind	1	2	3	4	5
12. I often reflect on things that happened in my life that I shouldn't be worried about	1	2	3	4	5
13. I spend a great deal of time thinking back over my embarrassing or upsetting moments	1	2	3	4	5

Section D
For the following questions, please circle the one number that is most true.

	Does not describe me at all	Does not describe me very well	Neutral	Somewhat describes me	Describes me very well
1. I often have concerned feelings for people who have less than I do	1	2	3	4	5
2. I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the "other guy's" point of view	1	2	3	4	5
3. When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards them	1	2	3	4	5
4. I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision	1	2	3	4	5
5. Sometimes I don't feel very sorry for other people when they are having problems	1	2	3	4	5
6. I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look to them	1	2	3	4	5
7. Bad things that happen to other people do not usually make me upset	1	2	3	4	5
8. If I'm sure I'm right about something, I don't waste much time listening to what other people think about it	1	2	3	4	5

9. When I see someone being treated badly, I sometimes don't feel very sorry for them	1	2	3	4	5
10. I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both	1	2	3	4	5

	Does not describe me at all	Does not describe me very well	Neutral	Somewhat describes me	Describes me very well
11. I often feel touched by things that I see happen	1	2	3	4	5
12. When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to "put myself in his shoes" for a while	1	2	3	4	5
13. I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person	1	2	3	4	5
14. Before getting mad at somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place	1	2	3	4	5

Section E

Bullying is when a person or group of people underlined repeatedly does mean and hurtful things to you that make you feel bad (hurt, sad, angry, etc) and powerless to stop it.

1. How often have you experienced the following types of bullying in <u>this school term</u>: (Please circle one number for each question)

	Not at all in the past term	About once in the past term	A couple of times in the past term	Many times in the past term	Every week of the past term	Many times a week in the past term
a) <u>Physical</u> (any form of touching, pushing, shoving, hitting etc)	1	2	3	4	5	6
b) <u>Verbal</u> (any words spoken to you or to others about you)	1	2	3	4	5	6

2. How <u>hurtful</u> are these experiences for you? (Please circle one number for each question)

	Not at all hurtful	Not very hurtful	Somewhat hurtful	Quite hurtful	Very hurtful	This type of bullying didn't happen to me
a) <u>Physical</u> (any form of touching, pushing, shoving, hitting etc)	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
b) <u>Verbal</u> (any words spoken to you or to others about you)	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

3. How often have you had the following reactions to people who have bullied you in this school term: (Please circle one number for each question)

	Not at all often	Not very often	Somewhat often	Quite often	Very often
a) Think that there was something wrong with them or that they must be in pain themselves to act so mean	1	2	3	4	5
b) Think that it was my fault or that I deserve the treatment I am getting	1	2	3	4	5
c) Tell someone (a school counselor, teacher, parent, friend, or anyone else)	1	2	3	4	5
d) Wish that I was different	1	2	3	4	5
e) Ignore them and carry on with my day	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix B

Questionnaire for Paper 2

Section A

Age:

Gender: (Please circle)   Male   Female

What year of University are you in?

What ethnicity or ethnic origin do you consider yourself a part of? (Please circle)

Asian   Aboriginal/Torres Island Straight   Arabic   African   Pacific Islands
Caucasian

Other – Please state:_____

Who do you live with at home? (Please select all that apply)
Parents
Partner
Alone
Roommate
Sibling
Other family member
Other –please state_____

What is the highest level of education you have achieved so far?

What religion do you consider yourself a part of? (Please circle)

Christian   Muslim   Buddhist   Hindu   Jewish   Traditional
Aboriginal/Islander? Religions

Other – Please state:_____

How strongly do you agree with your religious beliefs? (Please circle)

	Strongly disagree	Mildly disagree	Neutral	Mildly agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5

Section B

Please answer the following questions by circling the one number that is most true for each question:

	Strongly disagree	Mildly disagree	Neutral	Mildly agree	Strongly agree

1. People close to me probably think I hold a grudge too long.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I can forgive a friend for almost anything.	1	2	3	4	5
3. If someone treats me badly, I treat him or her the same.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I try to forgive others even when they don't feel guilty for what they did.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I can usually forgive and forget an insult.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I feel bitter about many of my relationships.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Even after I forgive someone, things often come back to me that I resent.	1	2	3	4	5
8. There are some things for which I could never forgive even a loved one.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I have always forgiven those who have hurt me.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I am a forgiving person.	1	2	3	4	5

Section C

Please read each question and select the number which indicates how much the statement applied to you *over the past week.* There are no right or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time on any statement.

	Did not apply to me at all	Applied to me to some degree, or some of the time	Applied to me a considerable degree, or a good part of the time	Applied to me very much, or most of the time
1. I found it hard to wind down	1	2	3	4
2. I was aware of dryness in my mouth	1	2	3	4
3. I couldn't seem to experience any positive feeling at all	1	2	3	4
4. I experienced breathing difficulty (eg excessively rapid breathing, breathlessness in the absence of physical exertion)	1	2	3	4
5. I found it difficult to work up the initiative to do things	1	2	3	4
6. I tended to over-react to situations	1	2	3	4
7. I experienced trembling (eg in the hands)	1	2	3	4
8. I felt I was using a lot of nervous energy	1	2	3	4
9. I was worried about situations in which I might panic and make a fool of myself	1	2	3	4
10. I felt that I had nothing to look forward to	1	2	3	4

11. I found myself getting agitated	1	2	3	4
12. I found it difficult to relax	1	2	3	4
13. I felt down-hearted and blue	1	2	3	4
14. I was intolerant of anything that kept me from getting on with what I was doing	1	2	3	4
15. I felt I was close to panic	1	2	3	4
16. I was unable to become enthusiastic about anything	1	2	3	4
17. I felt I wasn't worth much as a person	1	2	3	4
18. I felt I was rather touchy	1	2	3	4
19. I was aware of the action of my heart in the absence of physical exertion (eg sense of heart rate increase, heart missing a beat)	1	2	3	4
20. I felt scared without any good reason	1	2	3	4
21. I felt that life was meaningless	1	2	3	4

Section D

Bullying is when a person or group of people <u>repeatedly</u> does mean and hurtful things to you that make you feel bad (hurt, sad, angry, etc) and powerless to stop it.

1. How often have you experienced the following types of bullying in the past year:
(Please circle one number for each question)

	Never	Once or twice	Once or twice per week	More days than not	Nearly every day
a) Physical (any form of touching, pushing, shoving, hitting etc)	1	2	3	4	5
b) Verbal (any words spoken to you or to others about you)	1	2	3	4	5
c) Cyber (saying things about you or to you on the internet, facebook, twitter, and other websites)	1	2	3	4	5

2. How hurtful are these experiences for you? (Please circle one number for each question)

	Not at all hurtful	Not really hurtful	Neutral	Somewhat hurtful	Very hurtful	Not applicable
a) Physical (any form of touching, pushing, shoving, hitting etc)	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
b) Verbal (any words spoken to you or to others about you)	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

c) <u>Cyber</u> (saying things about you or to you on the internet, facebook, twitter, and other websites)	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

3. Has there been a previous time in your life when you experienced bullying, as defined above? (Please circle)

Yes   No

If yes:

4. During that time, how often did you experience each type of bullying? (Please circle one number for each question)

	Never	Once or twice	Once or twice per week	More days than not	Nearly every day
a) <u>Physical</u> (any form of touching, pushing, shoving, hitting etc)	1	2	3	4	5
b) <u>Verbal</u> (any words spoken to you or to others about you)	1	2	3	4	5
c) <u>Cyber</u> (saying things about you or to you on the internet, facebook, twitter, and other websites)	1	2	3	4	5

5. How <u>hurtful</u> were these experiences for you? (Please circle one number for each question)

	Not at all hurtful	Not really hurtful	Neutral	Somewhat hurtful	Very hurtful	Not applicable

a) <u>Physical</u> (any form of touching, pushing, shoving, hitting etc)	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
b) <u>Verbal</u> (any words spoken to you or to others about you)	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
c) <u>Cyber</u> (saying things about you or to you on the internet, facebook, twitter, and other websites)	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

Imaginal Script Part 1 (instructions on audio tape)

Questionnaire – Part 2

1. This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item and then list the number from the scale below next to each word. **Indicate to what extent you feel this way right now, that is, at the present moment**

	Very slightly or not at all	A little	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely
Interested	1	2	3	4	5
Distressed	1	2	3	4	5
Excited	1	2	3	4	5
Upset	1	2	3	4	5
Strong	1	2	3	4	5
Guilty	1	2	3	4	5
Scared	1	2	3	4	5
Hostile	1	2	3	4	5
Enthusiastic	1	2	3	4	5
Proud	1	2	3	4	5
Irritable	1	2	3	4	5
Alert	1	2	3	4	5
Ashamed	1	2	3	4	5
Inspired	1	2	3	4	5

Nervous	1	2	3	4	5
Determined	1	2	3	4	5
Attentive	1	2	3	4	5
Jittery	1	2	3	4	5
Active	1	2	3	4	5
Afraid	1	2	3	4	5

2. Please state the <u>nature</u> of the problem/issue in which you are being hurt by someone and you don't know how to make it stop: (What is happening/has happened)?

3. Please answer the following questions about the problem and the person who is hurting you: (don't spend too long on each question, jut write the first thing that comes to your mind)

a) This person is hurting me because_____
b) I lack the power to stop/change this situation because_____
c) I want this situation to change because_____
d) Being in this situation means that_____
e) This situation will only change if_____
f) If the situation were reversed, I would_____
g) If the situation were reversed, the other person would_____
h) This situation is affecting my_____
i) This situation is affecting me in this way because_____
j) If this situation changed, my life would be more_____
k) If I had the power to punish the other person, I would_____
l) If I could make the other person do anything, I would make them_____

m) The perfect resolution to this situation would be_____

n) The thoughts I think of when reflecting on this problem are_____

4. Please answer the following questions by selecting the most appropriate answer for each question:

	Not at all	A little	Neutral	Quite a bit	Very
This situation is affecting me <u>emotionally</u>	1	2	3	4	5
This situation is affecting me <u>physically</u>	1	2	3	4	5
This situation is affecting me <u>economically</u>	1	2	3	4	5
This situation is affecting me in a <u>practical way</u>	1	2	3	4	5
This situation is impacting me <u>overall</u>	1	2	3	4	5
I believe I have the <u>ability to make this situation stop</u>	1	2	3	4	5
I have <u>support</u> from people in my life to make this situation stop	1	2	3	4	5
My thoughts about <u>how this situation is affecting me</u> are overpowering	1	2	3	4	5
I feel <u>good about myself</u> in relation to this problem	1	2	3	4	5
I <u>understand </u>how this situation is affecting the other person	1	2	3	4	5

I care about how this situation is affecting the other person	1	2	3	4	5
My thoughts about why this situation is occurring are overpowering	1	2	3	4	5
I feel I can cope with this situation	1	2	3	4	5
I believe this situation is my fault	1	2	3	4	5
I believe I have control over this situation	1	2	3	4	5
I feel I have power in this situation	1	2	3	4	5
I think about this problem	1	2	3	4	5
This person/relationship is important to me	1	2	3	4	5
This person is close to me	1	2	3	4	5
My relationship with this person will continue	1	2	3	4	5
This person/relationship is replaceable to me	1	2	3	4	5
I have forgiven this person	1	2	3	4	5
I have told other people about this problem	1	2	3	4	5

5. If yes, please state the reaction of the people who you told about this problem:

	Not at all	A little	Neutral	Quite a bit	Very
They were <u>supportive</u>	1	2	3	4	5
They provided <u>advice</u> on how to deal with it	1	2	3	4	5
They did <u>not understand</u>	1	2	3	4	5
They made me <u>feel better</u>	1	2	3	4	5
They made me feel like <u>it was my fault</u>	1	2	3	4	5
They gave me <u>hope</u>	1	2	3	4	5

6. Please state the nature of the response given by the people you told about this problem:

7. This situation has been affecting me for:	Less than a week	Between one week and one month	One to 6 months	6 months to a year	1-2 years Over 2 years
	1	2	3	4	5 6

8. What relation does this person have to you?

Parent   Sibling   Step-parent   Step/half sibling   Extended family   Friend
Acquaintance   Boyfriend/girlfriend   Ex boyfriend/girlfriend   Teacher   Stranger -
Please state_____
Other _____

Imaginal Script Part 2 – Re-scripting (instructions on audio tape)

Questionnaire – Part 3

1. This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Please read each item and then list the number from the scale below next to each word. **Indicate to what extent you feel this way right now, that is, at the present moment:**

	Very slightly or not at all	A little	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely
Interested	1	2	3	4	5
Distressed	1	2	3	4	5
Excited	1	2	3	4	5
Upset	1	2	3	4	5
Strong	1	2	3	4	5
Guilty	1	2	3	4	5
Scared	1	2	3	4	5
Hostile	1	2	3	4	5
Enthusiastic	1	2	3	4	5
Proud	1	2	3	4	5
Irritable	1	2	3	4	5
Alert	1	2	3	4	5
Ashamed	1	2	3	4	5
Inspired	1	2	3	4	5
Nervous	1	2	3	4	5

Determined	1	2	3	4	5
Attentive	1	2	3	4	5
Jittery	1	2	3	4	5
Active	1	2	3	4	5
Afraid	1	2	3	4	5

2. Please answer the following questions about how you feel about the situation NOW selecting the most appropriate answer for each question:

	Not at all	A little	Neutral	Quite a bit	Very
This situation is affecting me emotionally	1	2	3	4	5
I feel angry about this situation	1	2	3	4	5
I feel this situation is the other person's fault	1	2	3	4	5
This situation is impacting me overall	1	2	3	4	5
I believe I have the ability to make this situation stop	1	2	3	4	5
My thoughts about how this situation is affecting me are overpowering	1	2	3	4	5
I feel good about myself in relation to this problem	1	2	3	4	5
I understand how this situation is affecting the other person	1	2	3	4	5

I <u>care about</u> how this situation is affecting the other person	1	2	3	4	5
My thoughts about <u>why this situation is occurring</u> are overpowering	1	2	3	4	5
I feel I can <u>cope</u> with this situation	1	2	3	4	5
I believe this situation is <u>my fault</u>	1	2	3	4	5
I believe I have <u>control</u> over this situation	1	2	3	4	5
I feel I have <u>power</u> in this situation	1	2	3	4	5

3. What does forgiveness mean to you?

4. How much did you believe that what you were imagining was actually happening during the last exercise?

	Very slightly or not at all	A little	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely
	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix C

Questionnaire for Paper 3

Section A

Age:

What Year are you in?

Where were you born? (Please circle)

Asia   Australia   Pacific Islands   North America   South/Central America
Europe

Africa   India   Other – Please state:_____

Where was you mother born? (Please circle)

Asia   Australia   Pacific Islands   North America   South/Central America
Europe

Africa   India   Other – Please state:_____

Where was your father born? (Please circle)

Asia   Australia   Pacific Islands   North America   South/Central America
Europe

Africa   India   Other – Please state:_____

What religion do you consider yourself a part of? (Please circle)

Christian   Muslim Traditional Aboriginal/Islander Religions   Buddhist   Hindu

Jewish   None   Other – Please state:_____

How strongly do you agree with your religious beliefs? (Please circle)

	Strongly disagree	Mildly disagree	Neutral	Mildly agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5

What does forgiveness mean to you?

Section B

Please read each question and select the number which indicates how much the statement applied to you *over the past week.* There are no right or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time on any statement.

	Did not apply to me at all	Applied to me to some degree, or some of the time	Applied to me a considerable degree, or a good part of the time	Applied to me very much, or most of the time
1. I found it hard to wind down	1	2	3	4
2. I was aware of dryness in my mouth	1	2	3	4
3. I couldn't seem to experience any positive feeling at all	1	2	3	4
4. I experienced breathing difficulty (eg excessively rapid breathing, breathlessness in the absence of physical exertion)	1	2	3	4
5. I found it difficult to work up the initiative to do things	1	2	3	4
6. I tended to over-react to situations	1	2	3	4
7. I experienced trembling (eg in the hands)	1	2	3	4
8. I felt I was using a lot of nervous energy	1	2	3	4
9. I was worried about situations in which I might panic and make a fool of myself	1	2	3	4

10. I felt that I had nothing to look forward to	1	2	3	4
11. I found myself getting agitated	1	2	3	4
12. I found it difficult to relax	1	2	3	4
13. I felt down-hearted and blue	1	2	3	4
14. I was intolerant of anything that kept me from getting on with what I was doing	1	2	3	4
15. I felt I was close to panic	1	2	3	4
16. I was unable to become enthusiastic about anything	1	2	3	4
17. I felt I wasn't worth much as a person	1	2	3	4
18. I felt I was rather touchy	1	2	3	4
19. I was aware of the action of my heart in the absence of physical exertion (eg sense of heart rate increase, heart missing a beat)	1	2	3	4
20. I felt scared without any good reason	1	2	3	4
21. I felt that life was meaningless	1	2	3	4

Section C

Bullying is when a person or group of people <u>repeatedly</u> does mean and hurtful things to you that make you feel bad (hurt, sad, angry, etc) and powerless to stop it.

How often have you experienced the following types of bullying in the past year: (Please circle one number for each question)

	Never	Once or twice	Once or twice per month	Once or twice per week	More days than not	Nearly every day
a) <u>Physical</u> (any form of touching, pushing, shoving, hitting etc)	1	2	3	4	5	6
b) <u>Verbal</u> (any words spoken to you or to others about you)	1	2	3	4	5	6
c) <u>Cyber</u> (saying things about you or to you on the internet, facebook, twitter, and other websites)	1	2	3	4	5	6

How <u>hurtful</u> are these experiences for you? (Please circle one number for each question)

	Not at all hurtful	Not really hurtful	Neutral	Somewhat hurtful	Very hurtful	Not applicable
a) <u>Physical</u> (any form of touching, pushing, shoving, hitting etc)	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

b) <u>Verbal</u> (any words spoken to you or to others about you)	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
c) <u>Cyber</u> (saying things about you or to you on the internet, facebook, twitter, and other websites)	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

Section D

You will now be asked questions about a **specific bullying incident**, which we will talk about for the rest of the session. Try to think of a situation that was really hard for you, that you can remember quite clearly.

This situation affected me for:	Less than a week	Between one week and one month	One to 6 months	6 months to a year	1-2 years Over 2 years
	1	2	3	4	5 6

What relation does this person have to you? (Circle all that apply)

Parent Sibling Step-parent Step/half sibling Extended family   Friend
Acquaintance Boyfriend/girlfriend   Ex boyfriend/girlfriend Teacher Stranger -
Please state_____
Other _____

Imaginal Script Part 1 (Spoken by Researcher)

Questionnaire Part 2

This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions.
Read each item and then list the number from the scale below next to each word. **Indicate to what extent you feel this way right now, that is, at the present moment**

	Very slightly or not at all	A little	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely
Interested	1	2	3	4	5
Sad	1	2	3	4	5
Frightened	1	2	3	4	5
Excited	1	2	3	4	5
Ashamed	1	2	3	4	5
Upset	1	2	3	4	5
Happy	1	2	3	4	5
Strong	1	2	3	4	5
Nervous	1	2	3	4	5
Guilty	1	2	3	4	5
Energetic	1	2	3	4	5
Scared	1	2	3	4	5
Calm	1	2	3	4	5
Miserable	1	2	3	4	5
Jittery	1	2	3	4	5
Cheerful	1	2	3	4	5

Active	1	2	3	4	5
Proud	1	2	3	4	5

Please also indicate **to what extent you feel this way right now, that is, at the present moment:**

	Very slightly or not at all	A little	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely
Afraid	1	2	3	4	5
Joyful	1	2	3	4	5
Lonely	1	2	3	4	5
Mad	1	2	3	4	5
Disgusted	1	2	3	4	5
Delighted	1	2	3	4	5
Blue	1	2	3	4	5
Gloomy	1	2	3	4	5
Lively	1	2	3	4	5

Please answer the following questions by selecting the most appropriate answer for each question:

	Not at all	A little	Neutral	Quite a bit	Very
This situation is <u>serious</u>	1	2	3	4	5
My thoughts about this situation are <u>overpowering</u>	1	2	3	4	5
I feel <u>good</u> about myself in relation to this problem	1	2	3	4	5
I feel I can <u>cope</u> with this situation	1	2	3	4	5
I believe this situation is <u>my fault</u>	1	2	3	4	5
I feel I have <u>power</u> in this situation	1	2	3	4	5
I think the other <u>person must be in a lot of pain</u> to act this way	1	2	3	4	5
I feel I have <u>control</u> in this situation	1	2	3	4	5
I have forgiven this person	1	2	3	4	5
This relationship/person is important to me	1	2	3	4	5
I want my relationship with this person to continue	1	2	3	4	5

Imaginal Script Part 2 (Spoken by Researcher)

Questionnaire – Part 3

This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Please read each item and then list the number from the scale below next to each word. **Indicate to what extent you feel this way right now, that is, at the present moment:**

	Very slightly or not at all	A little	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely
Interested	1	2	3	4	5
Sad	1	2	3	4	5
Frightened	1	2	3	4	5
Excited	1	2	3	4	5
Ashamed	1	2	3	4	5
Upset	1	2	3	4	5
Happy	1	2	3	4	5
Strong	1	2	3	4	5
Nervous	1	2	3	4	5
Guilty	1	2	3	4	5
Energetic	1	2	3	4	5
Scared	1	2	3	4	5
Calm	1	2	3	4	5
Miserable	1	2	3	4	5
Jittery	1	2	3	4	5

Cheerful	1	2	3	4	5
Active	1	2	3	4	5
Proud	1	2	3	4	5

Please also indicate **to what extent you feel this way right now, that is, at the present moment:**

	Very slightly or not at all	A little	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely
Afraid	1	2	3	4	5
Joyful	1	2	3	4	5
Lonely	1	2	3	4	5
Mad	1	2	3	4	5
Disgusted	1	2	3	4	5
Delighted	1	2	3	4	5
Blue	1	2	3	4	5
Gloomy	1	2	3	4	5
Lively	1	2	3	4	5

Please answer the following questions about how you feel about the situation <u>NOW</u> selecting the most appropriate answer for each question:

	Not at all	A little	Neutral	Quite a bit	Very
This situation is <u>serious</u>	1	2	3	4	5
My thoughts about this situation are <u>overpowering</u>	1	2	3	4	5
I feel <u>good</u> about myself in relation to this problem	1	2	3	4	5
I feel I can <u>cope</u> with this situation	1	2	3	4	5
I believe this situation is <u>my fault</u>	1	2	3	4	5
I think the other <u>person must be in a lot of pain</u> to act this way	1	2	3	4	5
I feel I have power in this situation	1	2	3	4	5
I feel I have <u>control</u> in this situation	1	2	3	4	5
I have <u>forgiven</u> this person	1	2	3	4	5

How much did you believe that what you were imagining was actually happening during these exercises? (How real did it seem in your mind?)

	Very slightly or not at all	A little	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely
	1	2	3	4	5

Imagery Rescripting Script for Papers 2 and 3

Imaginal Script Part 1 (Papers 2 and 3):

Please close your eyes and take a moment to just rest in your seat, noticing your breath moving in and out of your body.

Now bring to mind the person who has wronged you or is hurting you. Imagine their face, their voice, the way they move, and smell, and sound.

And now bring to mind the situation that you are in with this person that you want to make stop but you don't know how. Think of how it is affecting you, and how your life is impacted by what this person is doing or has done.

Now bring to mind a specific incident with this person that particularly hurt you. Take a moment to imagine the setting – Where were you? Who were you with? What had happened just previous to this incident? What happened just after?

Now replay this situation in your mind, going over exactly what happened, step by step…

Imagine the way they looked, they things they said, the way they sounded, and any other details about the event and the other person in the situation that you can remember.

And now recall in your mind what it was like for you to be in that situation. What emotions did you feel? What thoughts were in your mind? What sensations were in your body?

Imaginal Script Part 2 (Papers 2 and 3):

Please close your eyes again and bring yourself back to the situation that you were thinking about a few minutes ago, the specific incident with the person that hurt you. Put yourself back in that situation, just before it happened.

Now imagine that there are people in your life that are supporting you in this situation. Things are being done in this situation to try to change it, but even with all the support and effort, it seems that this person is not going to change.

Forgiveness Condition (Papers 2 and 3):
Allow yourself to fully experience your pain in this situation. Feel the hurt caused by this person, and the impact that it is having on your life. Allow yourself to acknowledge fully all of the feelings that are associated with this for you.

Take a moment to articulate in your mind exactly what about this situation is not ok. What is it that has caused you pain that this person must be held accountable for?

Now I would like to ask you to make a commitment to yourself to do what you have to do to feel better. Your well-being is very important, and worthy of your time and attention. The next steps you take are for your own benefit, not for anyone else's.

Holding onto the feelings of resentment or anger are actually making the situation more painful for you. What you are truly seeking is to find peace, a way of relating to this situation that benefits you now and for the rest of your life. That peace can be gained by developing an attitude of forgiveness within yourself for what has happened. You are not condoning the actions of the other person, or necessarily wanting to reconcile with them. You are only letting go of the anger and resentment towards them that is holding you back and causing you more hurt. Your primary distress at the moment is coming from your hurt feelings, thoughts, and the physical upset you are suffering now, not the actual event that occurred minutes, days, months, or years ago.

Take a moment to reflect back on situations where you may have hurt another, whether it was intentional or unintentional. Think about what caused you to act that way. Were you in pain yourself? Scared? Protecting yourself or someone else? Confused? Recognize that in those situations you were only trying to do your best with the circumstances that you had.

Now think of all the people that you love in your life, and recall times when they have hurt people, whether they meant to or not. Reflect on the imperfection of human nature, the ways that we act when we are in pain, and how that affects other people.

Now recall again this person that hurt you, and reflect on the fact that they too are human and imperfect. Could they have acted from a place of fear or pain? Notice that we are all capable of hurting others, and that none of us has lived a life where we have caused no pain. But that we all act in the way that we think is best with the information that we have, even though sometimes those actions can be very hurtful to others.

Can you now see any deeper meaning that you can gain from this experience? Can you make sense of it in a way that helps you move on with your life? Can you incorporate your learning into your overall life purpose?

Now imagine you are back in that same situation that you thought of before. Imagine again how the situation unfolded, step by step, except this time imagine that the outcome is different. Imagine that you forgive this person. What do you do? What do you say? How do you act? What feelings do you experience? And when those feelings subside, what feelings are underneath them? What sensations do you feel in your body? What does the whole situation look like now that you have forgiven this person?

Now go through the situation again, step-by-step, imagining again the different ending where you forgive this person who wronged you. Imagine your actions, your words, your feelings, and your bodily sensations. Does the situation feels different to the way it did before?

Revenge Condition (Papers 2 and 3):

The experience that you are going through is unfair. The feelings that you are experiencing were brought on by this person, and it is not right that you have to feel the consequences of their actions.

Take a moment to articulate in your mind exactly what is so unfair about this situation. What is it that caused you pain that this person is responsible for?

Now I would like you to make a commitment to yourself to do what you have to do to feel better. Your well-being is very important, and worthy of your time and attention. The next steps you take are for your own benefit, not for anyone else's.

Being in this position of inferiority is making the situation more painful for you. What you are seeking is to find a way to make things equal, to even the score. That sense of equality can be gained by seeking revenge on this person, and causing them as much pain as they have caused you. You cannot condone the actions of the other person, or allow them to get away with the way they have treated you. You need to teach them a lesson in order to protect yourself from experiencing the pain of this situation any longer. Your primary distress at the moment is coming from this person's actions, and you need to find a way to get back at them in order to move forward with your life.

Take a moment to reflect back on other situations that have been unjust in your life. Think about whether justice was eventually served in those situations. Were others held accountable for their actions? Did they learn about the way their actions hurt others? Were those unable to protect themselves able to take control and punish their oppressors? Recognize that those situations led to negative outcomes if people were not made to learn a harsh lesson about their actions and left unpunished.

Think of all the people that you love in your life, and recall times when they have been hurt by others unfairly. Reflect on the injustice of this, and the outcome of their hurt when the person who hurt them was never made to suffer.

Now recall again this person that hurt you, and reflect on the fact that they have not been held accountable for their actions. Will they do it again if they are not taught a lesson? Notice that they have not learned their lesson yet because they do not truly understand the pain you are in, having never felt it themselves. They acted in a way that was unfair and they must be punished for their actions, so that they will learn the appropriate way of treating people.

Can you now see this situation from a different perspective? Can you make sense of it in a way that helps you move on with your life? Can you incorporate your learning into your overall life purpose?

Now imagine you are back in that same situation that you thought of before. Imagine again how the situation unfolded, step by step, except this time imagine that the outcome is different. Imagine that you take revenge on this person. What do you do? What do you say? How do you act? What feelings do you experience? And when those feelings subside, what feelings are underneath them? What sensations do you feel in

your body? What does the whole situation look like now that you have taken revenge on this person?

Now go through the situation again, step-by-step, imagining again the different ending where you take revenge on this person who wronged you. Imagine your actions, your words, your feelings, and your bodily sensations. Does the situation feels different to the way it did before?

Avoidance Condition (Paper 2 only):
Now try not to think of this situation or this person. Push those thoughts out of your head, and focus on a positive image in your mind instead. Imagine a scene where you are far away from this person. This could be a place in nature, like a beach or a field, or any place you have been or would like to be that brings you peace.

Take a moment to articulate in your mind exactly what this place looks like, feels like, sounds like, smells like.

Now I would like to ask you to make a commitment to yourself to avoid thoughts of this person who wronged you. Your well-being is very important, and worthy of your time and attention. The next steps you take are for your own benefit, not for anyone else's.

What you are truly seeking is to find safety, a way of living your life away from this person and this situation so that they can't hurt you any longer. That safety can be gained by avoiding interactions with this person as much as possible. This person is capable of causing you pain, and by removing the possibility of facing them, you are protecting yourself from this happening again in the future. Your primary distress at the moment is coming from your contact with this person in the past or present, and that is therefore the most important thing to change in order to effectively deal with this situation.

Take a moment to reflect back on situations when this person was not in your life, or not involved with what you were doing. Think about what it was like when they weren't there. Was it better? Did you feel the pain you are feeling now? Recognize that in those situations you were protected from this person and any harm they could cause you.

Think of all the people that you love in your life, and recall times when you were with them and this other person was not there. Reflect on how avoiding this person could lead to more positive outcomes for you.

Think of the ways you could avoid having any contact with this person in the future. Could you change the places you go, who you see, what you do? Could you arrange your life so that this person can never be a part of it? Try to imagine what it would be like to live your life in this way.

Can you now see any deeper meaning that you can gain from this experience? Can you make sense of it in a way that helps you move on with your life? Can you incorporate your learning into your overall life purpose?

Now imagine you are back in that same situation that you thought of before. Only this time imagine that instead of this situation occurring, you have escaped to your place of peace, the place that bring you happiness and is away from this person. What do you do in this place? What do you say? How do you act? What feelings do you experience? And when those feelings subside, what feelings are underneath them? What sensations do you feel in your body? What does the whole situation look like without this person there?

Now go back to the original situation again, imagining again that you escape to your place of peace, away from this person. Imagine your actions, your words, your feelings, and your bodily sensations. Does this original situation feel differently to the way it did before?

Appendix E

Final Ethics Approval

Dear Prof Rapee

Re: "Using forgiveness to empower youth peer interactions" (Ethics Ref: 5201200458)

Thank you for your recent correspondence. Your response has addressed the issues raised by the Human Research Ethics Committee and you may now commence your research.

This research meets the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). The National Statement is available at the following web site:

http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/publications/attachments/e72.pdf.

The following personnel are authorised to conduct this research:

Dr Natasha Todorov
Ms Hayley Watson
Ms Nicole Sokol
Prof Ron Rapee

NB. STUDENTS: IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO KEEP A COPY OF THIS APPROVAL EMAIL TO SUBMIT WITH YOUR THESIS.

Please note the following standard requirements of approval:

1.   The approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).

2.   Approval will be for a period of five (5) years subject to the provision of annual reports.

Progress Report 1 Due: 15 August 2013
Progress Report 2 Due: 15 August 2014
Progress Report 3 Due: 15 August 2015
Progress Report 4 Due: 15 August 2016
Final Report Due: 15 August 2017

NB. If you complete the work earlier than you had planned you must submit a Final Report as soon as the work is completed. If the project has been discontinued or not commenced for any reason, you are also required to submit a Final Report for the project.

Progress reports and Final Reports are available at the following website:

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics/forms

3.   If the project has run for more than five (5) years you cannot renew approval for the project. You will need to complete and submit a Final Report and submit a new application for the project. (The five year limit on renewal of approvals allows the Committee to fully re-review research in an environment where legislation, guidelines and requirements are continually changing, for example, new child protection and privacy laws).

4.   All amendments to the project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee before implementation. Please complete and submit a Request for Amendment Form available at the following website:

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/ human_research_ethics/forms

5.   Please notify the Committee immediately in the event of any adverse effects on participants or of any unforeseen events that affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project.

6.   At all times you are responsible for the ethical conduct of your research in accordance with the guidelines established by the University. This information is available at the following websites:

http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/ human_research_ethics/policy

If you will be applying for or have applied for internal or external funding for the above project it is your responsibility to provide the Macquarie University's Research Grants Management Assistant with a copy of this email as soon as possible. Internal and External funding agencies will not be informed that you have final approval for your project and funds will not be released until the Research Grants Management Assistant has received a copy of this email.

Please retain a copy of this email as this is your official notification of final ethics approval.

Yours sincerely
Dr Karolyn White
Director of Research Ethics
Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee