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**MEDIA INTERACTION ON RELATIONALLY AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIORS OF
MIDDLE SCHOOL GIRLS**

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at the

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December, 2008

Signature sheet scanned by Wanda

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, Steve and Lily. They patiently tolerated my “late nights” and absences during the doctoral program. I particularly am proud of my daughter’s ability to recognize relational aggression as a result of helping to identify the behavior in the many hours of television programming we watched as part of the data collection. Moreover, I am proud that she is unafraid to bring it to the attention of adults when her own intervention methods do not work.

If this important work goes no further than the hallowed halls of Cleveland State University, I know that it has positively impacted one female child and have confidence that she will model behavior that is tolerant of and compassionate toward other girls’ differences and intolerant of girls who prey on these differences.

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I would like to express appreciation to my committee chair, Dr. Joanne E. Goodell, who kept my feet to the fire during times when my energy lagged, and to the rest of my committee: Dr. Kimberly Mason for her expertise in the area of cyber bullying, relational aggression and computer support; Dr. Graham Stead for serving as my methodologist and patiently guiding me through statistical processes for which I have little natural aptitude; Dr. Catherine Ross-Stroud for her thoughtful input, helpful resources and unique perspective; and Dr. Cheryl Bracken for providing insights into the world of electronic communication outside of the K-12 educational community.

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**MEDIA INTERACTION ON RELATIONALLY AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIORS OF
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ABSTRACT

Using a quantitative approach, this study investigates media interaction on relationally aggressive behaviors of middle-school girls by examining television consumption and an individual's proclivity to engage in relational aggression. It also investigates whether participation in a workshop explaining relational aggression assisted participants in recognizing the behavior and its consequences on aggressors and victims in the Disney Channel's *Suite Life of Zach & Cody*. Results indicate that the amount of television watched does not correlate with participation in the behavior generally, but that the use of sarcasm to hurt a friend decreases as television viewing increases. Results also indicate that knowledge about the behavior is associated with awareness of occurrences and consequences to the aggressor, but not with consequences to the victim. Together, these results should have implications for regulations regarding television violence and mediation of relational aggression.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The crisis of female adolescence knows no racial boundaries and has been described mostly in individual terms, its interpersonal consequences largely ignored (Pipher, 1995). But as girls grow, chained to cultural rules that silence them from expressing their true feelings, their self-esteems shrink as such behaviors as socially excluding others, gossiping, ignoring and generally hurting or manipulating other people's feelings are condoned as acceptable social rites of passage. Seeing these behaviors reflected on the screen of a television or computer monitor can reinforce the need to continue to engage in the behavior or face the consequences of either being alone, devoid of acceptance and connection, or worse—a target (Simmons, 2002). Moreover, relationship violence learned in adolescence can keep girls from choosing healthy relationships (Coyne & Archer, 2005). Simmons stated,

When abusive dynamics are without a language, and when anger cannot be properly voiced, girls may not develop the ability to name what is happening or extract themselves from destructive situations. As a result, girls may be learning submissive behavior they will import into adult relationships (p. 13).

Termed relational aggression (Coyne & Archer, 2005; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995;

Underwood, 2003), this manipulative and nonphysical form of bullying is most often engaged in by girls, peaks between the ages of 11 – 14, and is conducted covertly and maliciously as a way of harming others by using the social structure to exclude and ostracize. A form of indirect aggression, identified by Olweus (1993) as verbal aggression involving a third party, relational aggression takes both verbal and nonverbal forms including gossiping, destroying friendships, spreading rumors, and breaking confidences, and it has the capacity to adversely affect learning, destroy self-esteem, create psychological disorders, and, in extreme cases, incite retaliatory behaviors (Coyne & Archer). It differs from direct aggression because it does not include physical injury (Olweus), yet it is similar in that the intention behind the act is malicious. Relational aggression often is rewarded and justified, and subsequently reinforced, in a girl's environment, spurred on by a culture that not only denies girls access to constructive conflict resolution but also seems to endorse relational aggression as acceptable behavior.

Compounding these societal and environmental influences is the prevalence of the mass media in the lives of adolescents. An analysis of British, American and Australian television programming indicated that non-physical relationship violence occurred, on average, 18.46 times per hour and that, when doled out by attractive aggressors, the behavior was justified by adolescent viewers due to the positive image adolescents associate with attractiveness (Coyne & Archer, 2005). Even short-term exposure to media violence is detrimental to interpretational schema (Cline, Croft, & Courier, 1973; Huesmann, 1988). It has been suggested that cruelty and destructiveness portrayed in televised programming increases violent behavior "...by priming existing aggressive scripts and cognitions, increasing physiological arousal, and triggering an automatic

tendency to imitate observed behaviors” (Anderson et al., 2003, p. 81).

Despite an understanding of the psychologically damaging affects of bullying and agreement that no one is wholly immune to the effects of media violence (Anderson et al. 2003), there is little extant research on the nonphysical forms of aggression meted out by girls and the role that popular television programming plays in reinforcing these actions. Failure to recognize the impact of the more subtle varieties of televised violence can hinder efforts to provide appropriate interventions and/or reduce exposure and, therefore, perpetuate this behavior from classroom to boardroom—and beyond.

Problem Statement

By the time a child is 18 years old, he or she will have spent more time with the television than with any other activity except sleep. A report by the Kaiser Family Foundation (1999), in which a national sample of 3,000 children gave information about media use patterns, stated that one out of six children aged 8 – 13 watch television for five hours a day, with 1-year-olds watching an average of six hours a week. Given these statistics, an average American child will have observed 108,000 acts of violence by the time he or she graduates from high school simply by sitting in front of the television (Coyne & Archer, 2004).

So what is television consumption doing to America’s children? In a longitudinal study, Eron, Huesmann, Lefkowitz and Walder (1972) found that an early preference for aggressive television shows accurately predicted a subject’s aggressive behavior at ages 18 and 30. This can be explained, in part, by Huesmann’s (1988) theory that individuals form situational cognitive scripts that are stored and then accessed for later use. Thus, scripts that are formed early from watching televised physical violence are susceptible to

more rehearsal as time passes and subsequently activated at a later date when the individual encounters a similar situation in “real life” (Coyne & Archer, 2004).

However television violence, as identified by the Federal Communications Commission (n.d.), does not include relationally aggressive behavior which therefore goes unmonitored in television programming. The high rate at which relationally aggressive behaviors proliferate unchecked in the mass media, combined with the abundance of television watched by the average American child, suggests antisocial acts are written into children’s early cognitive scripts, allowing for these skills to be honed over time (Huesmann, 1988). It is therefore unsurprising that children come to school primed to engage in relational aggression. In fact, an estimated 30% of students nationwide, more than half girls, report being either perpetrators or victims of relational aggression, but nearly 40% of teachers report the behavior is difficult to detect and, of those who recognize it, 25% do not think it necessary to intervene (Feinberg, 2003). This lack of intervention creates an unsafe environment for learning.

Additionally, a plethora of evidence exists indicating that aggressive behaviors adversely influence an individual’s ability to learn and lead to low self-efficacy, social anxiety, poor academic performance, early dropout and violent acts of retaliation for both aggressor and victim (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Lodge & Frydenberg, 2005; Pace, Lowery & Lamme, 2004; Roberts & Coursol, 1996). Additionally, excessive teasing has been related to depression, decreased self-esteem, anger and sadness, eating disorders, and suicide (Mills, Guerin, Lynch, Daly, & Fitzpatrick, 2004; Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, Osterman, & Kaukiainen, 1996).

Yet, there is a dearth of extant research on the effects of television viewing on the relational behavior of adolescent girls. The media often is blamed for occurrences of violence and children's issues with social skills, yet very little effort is made to integrate media literacy into state mandated curricula so that media can be used as a tool to teach rather than as a scapegoat. Therefore, it is imperative for parents, educators and school administrators to recognize bullying behaviors and the reinforcers behind genderized differences in aggression so that they can provide the appropriate support for female adolescent bullies and victims (Espelage, Mebane, & Adams, 2004; Maccoby, 1990). The prevalence of electronic media in our lives demands that its power is harnessed for productive, rather than destructive, use.

Purpose of the Study

Hence the purpose of this research is to investigate whether there is significant interaction between relationally aggressive behavior portrayed by television characters in popular shows watched by adolescent girls, girls' engagement in relationally aggressive behaviors, and whether viewers who are informed about the behavior are better able to recognize it in the context of popular programming. Research in this domain is new, therefore this exploratory work is not designed to resolve the issue of relational aggression but merely bring it to the fore.

There is widespread belief that the relationally aggressive behavior utilized by girls against girls is the most dangerous to self-esteem, as social self-perceptions are derived largely from an adolescent's subjective interpretation of how she is treated within her peer group (Goodwin, 2002; Lunde, Frisen, & Hwang, 2006; Simmons, 2002; Vaillancourt, Hymel, & McDougall, 2003). Because people often view relational

aggression between girls as a developmental phase and because there are so many incidents of girl-to-girl bullying, stereotypes form and young women are viewed as being naturally predisposed to the behavior. This view perpetuates the argument that indirect aggression is a normal and typical behavior that all girls display as part of the maturing process.

Likewise, bullying often is viewed as necessary and positive by those people who think that girls need to relate in this manner to transition to adults (Simmons, 2002). In other words, bullying is acceptable because it teaches a lesson about what girls should expect from relationships later in life. Furthermore, Simmons contends that a strategy of noninterference “trivializes the role of peers in children’s development” (p. 34), creating policies that uphold the myth that childhood is a time during which children train for life.

Frighteningly, these adult assumptions make it possible for legislators, teachers, parents and school administrators to conclude that aggressive behavior among girls is, in fact, not abuse, but a learning and growing experience. Because of the complexity involved and the absence of the tools needed to recognize, understand and mediate relational aggression, girls continue the behavior and adults have further justification to ignore these relational issues. This failure to stop the behavior implies tacit approval. Clearly, the prevalence and surreptitiousness of the action demand that teachers and other adults become more aware of how the behavior is learned, perpetuated, and legitimized. This study attempts to deliver such evidence.

Significance of the Study

Ohio House Bill 276 (the “Safe Schools Bill”), legislation derived from attempting to meet the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act, presents Ohio

school districts with a major challenge: Creating “physically safe and emotionally secure environments for all students and staff” (Stump, n.d.). To comply, school personnel must rely on the rigors of parenting and other legislative mandates to help counter the various attitudes shaped by mass culture and transferred to the classroom via individual students. Yet the increase of dual income households and the subsequent unsupervised after-school access to television hinder efforts to reduce children’s exposure to commercial messages and physical and relational violence in children’s programming that goes unresolved.

Children’s advocacy groups have fought questionable programming, prompting the passage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which shifted policy intervention from a sender-based to a receiver-based restriction by asking stations to categorize programming with ratings and mandating that manufacturers install V-chips, devices that facilitate program-blocking capabilities, into television sets. This removed the government from the “constitutionally disfavored position of having to decide what its citizens are allowed to see and hear” (Dowd, Singer & Fretwell-Wilson, 2006, p. 214), and put the onus on the networks and parents to regulate children’s programming.

Yet another legislative provision in 1997 allowed the FCC to institute a voluntary rating system and the “Three-Hour Rule,” which mandated that broadcasters air a minimum of three hours per week of educational television for children to be guaranteed an expedited renewal of their license (Jordan, 2004). By 2000, the V-chip device was included in all new television sets sold in the U.S. with a 13-inch or larger screen, making the screening technology available for all families owning a set of this size (Dowd et al., 2006).

However, still in contention are the ratings and how these ratings are derived. If

ratings only consider physical violence and do not recognize the less obtrusive acts of relational aggression, then parents cannot make choices about programming that might eliminate exposure and the subsequent creation of aggressive scripts in children. Teachers and school personnel, then, are stymied when it comes to effectively creating a relational aggression-free learning environment unless they can undo mental scripts, which distracts from time spent on learning.

Unfortunately, concerns about the constitutionality and practicality of the ratings system imposed by the 1996 Telecommunications Act, its 1997 revision, and ever-changing technology suggest that the issues of children's television appropriateness will be debated for many years. Thus the future remains unpredictable for children's television programming. Some experts contend that legislated efforts to protect children in the U.S. may be in vain as the emergence of a new media paradigm—global commercial media—further deregulates the industry and allows for massive expansion in the commercial media market directed at children (Carlsson & von Feilitzen, 2002).

So what is in store for children now? What sort of media policies will ensure that children are exposed to positive electronic messages? Without evidence to support the existence of relationally aggressive behaviors in television programming, and proof that these subsequent learned behaviors inhibit positive emotional growth particularly for girls, there is no guarantee that children will come to the classroom with the healthy mental scripts needed to eliminate some of the roadblocks faced by educators who are attempting to create a safe learning environment.

This study provides legislators, parents, advocacy groups and school districts with evidence to support the investment of funds to promote research into uncovering non-

physical forms of aggression in children's television, magnifying the negative consequences of the behavior, and persuading television producers to include real and relevant conflict resolution for these behaviors in the context of children's programming. It also serves to encourage school districts and parents to adopt interventions for relational aggression so children can be both better prepared to interpret the myriad messages they receive from popular electronic media and develop the skills needed to recognize and mediate the behavior.

Limitations of this study are discussed in greater detail in Chapter V, however it should be noted that interpretation of results should consider that the sample population used was one of convenience, therefore yielding results not necessarily generalizable to the total population. Time constraints imposed by school personnel, as well as the structure of the school day, prohibited the researcher from spending optimal time with students. The survey instrument was created solely for this study and initiated during the data collection process. Despite face- and content-validity testing, refinements to the instrument will enhance future usefulness. The statistical analyses used were correlational in nature and therefore highlight only relationships, not cause. Finally, the influence of other media, such as video games, movies, and social networking sites, were not examined in this study potentially confounding the results.

Research Questions

1. Does a relationship exist between the number of hours of television watched and participation in relationally aggressive behavior?
2. Does a relationship exist between the number of hours of television watched and the type of relationally aggressive behavior engaged in by

girls?

- 3a. Does a difference exist between workshop participants and nonparticipants in the number of respondents recognizing relational aggression when they view it on a popular television program?
- 3b. Does a difference exist between workshop participants and nonparticipants in the number of respondents recognizing the consequences of relationally aggressive behavior on the aggressor when they view it on a popular television program?
- 3c. Does a difference exist between workshop participants and nonparticipants in the number of respondents recognizing the consequences of relationally aggressive behavior on the victim when they view it on a popular television program?

Organization of Thesis

Chapter I delineates the statement of problem and the purpose of this study. Included in the chapter is an explanation of the relative importance of the study. The research questions explored through the study are introduced, followed by a description of the limitations of the study. Definitions of terms used can be found in Appendix A.

Chapter II provides a literature review about the topic of this study. Included in the review are studies, research, government reports and other writings dealing with relational aggression, a definition of the behavior, the need for an increased understanding of its psychosocial impact on adolescent girls in a learning environment, and the payoff for eradicating the behavior.

Chapter III describes the methodology, data collection procedures, and a

description of the variables considered in the study. Descriptive and inferential statistics are used to analyze data and explore the extent to which educational information about relational aggression helped adolescent viewers recognize such behaviors. Also included is a description of the pilot study used to test a methodological design, along with details of the main study, creation of the final data collection instrument, description of the setting and participants, and aims and hypotheses of the study. Included also is a rationale for the study design and methodology and an explanation of Pearson's r and chi-square, the statistical analyses used. The data collection procedures are examined, including the processes of ensuring reliability of the coding procedure used to determine the occurrences of relationally aggressive behaviors by characters in the television program used in the study. The relational aggression workshop presented to participants in the experimental group is described, as are the participant recruitment procedures. Finally, this chapter contains a list and description of the variables used in the study.

Chapter IV provides the descriptive statistics about the student sample and their behaviors, as well as the findings related to the research questions. The quantitative results are discussed in terms of the following aims: 1) the relationship between girls' engagement in relational aggression and the amount of television watched; 2) the relationship between the type of relational aggression engaged in by girls and the amount of television they consume; 3) the extent to which girls differ in their ability to recognize relationally aggressive behaviors when viewed on television following participation in an instructional workshop designed to help them understand relational aggression; 4) the extent to which girls differ in their ability to recognize if a consequence occurred for the aggressor after participation in the relational aggression workshop; and 5) the extent to

which girls differ in their ability to recognize if the target of the relationally aggressive behavior was hurt after participation in the relational aggression workshop.

In Chapter V, a summary and discussion of the results of each aim are included and reflect upon implications for school anti-bullying policy and FCC considerations. Also included in this chapter are limitations of the study and recommendations for future research of this topic.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Bullying was originally defined as an overt act carried out by physically advantaged male individuals against their weaker counterparts (Olweus, 1978). This conventional view has been portrayed in fiction and nonfiction as a historically pervasive societal issue—as evidenced, for example, in Dickens’ ability to weave the exploitation of predominantly male children in a variety of settings into the rich tapestry of his socially prescient works. Subsequently, the definition was reframed by Rigby (2005) as “...a purposeful and frequent activity, incorporating power and intent to harm and causing physical, psychological and emotional pain” (p. 147).

Even more recently, however, the scope of the phenomenon has widened to include an array of behaviors and attitudes that transcends the original and more myopic views—a move that has spotlighted females as well as males and victims as well as perpetrators. Bullying now is considered to encompass behaviors that are “...deliberately unfriendly and designed to hurt another person through words or other nonphysical means” (Merrell, Buchanan, & Tran, 2006, p. 345). Termed relational aggression (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995), this new vocabulary explaining bullying dissects the behavior and

allows researchers to further ferret out nonphysical interpersonal actions that impede psychosocial functioning.

Understanding what prompts these actions, who commits them and why, and their impact on development are major steps in the quest to detect and ultimately eliminate the behavior. To best address the dynamics of relational aggression, this chapter is divided into four sections: The first provides an overview of the behavior's sociological and psychological basis from a genderized perspective; the second highlights the impact of relational aggression on cognitive functioning; the third includes a discussion of the influence of the mass media on how children engage in social information processing; and the fourth provides ideas for intervention.

The Psychology and Sociology of Bullying

Rigby and Slee (1993) report that children who repeatedly engage in bullying have been identified as relatively psychotic based on personality inventory test scores. Other studies have emphasized low empathy and still others indicate that social influences, such as parenting or peer-group involvement, contribute to the formation of bullying characteristics (Cairns & Cairns, 1994; Endresen & Olweus, 2001). While there is no firm agreement on how children develop bullying tendencies, it is important to place the phenomenon of bullying in context—to understand how and why it occurs before devising strategies to combat the behavior.

In a study by Pepler, Craig, Yuile, and Connolly (2004), it is suggested that children who bully are at risk for difficulties in relationships contemporaneously and in the future, and that the risks for girls who bully may be substantial because relationships are of central importance in the lives of girls and women. Contemplating bullying from a

developmental perspective, the authors studied whether patterns of bullying established in childhood and adolescence become consolidated as a foundation for future relationships. In considering the nature of bullying, they posed three questions: (a) is bullying only a childhood behavior problem? (b) do children who bully experience problems in their peer relationships? and (c) are relationship problems related to the extent of bullying? They then examined data from cross-sectional samples of students to determine quality of relationships. Using scales assessing the variables of trust, commitment, alienation, intimacy, activities, conflict and aggression during conflict, the researchers found a high level of alienation reported by both bullies and victims, which they felt represented the cognitive dissonance between placing a high value on friendships and being marginalized in the peer group without positive friendships. Trust, affection, intimacy and commitment were affected regardless if children were bullies or victims, and victims experienced the greatest conflicts with friends and more aggression during conflicts. Overall, they discovered that frequency of bullying was not associated with different levels of difficulties with closeness in peer relationships. In other words, individuals reported less trust, more alienation and less commitment regardless of how often they were bullied.

Similarly, according to Salmivalli (1998), self-concepts of adolescent boys and girls are related to social behaviors in situations of bullying. Clustering students by behavior, she observed the frequency of group members bullying others, assisting the bully, reinforcing the bully, and withdrawing from bullying situations. She discovered that children who tended to bully others typically had high social and physical self concepts although they possessed a negative self view in other domains, such as

cognition. Adolescents who assisted or reinforced the bully displayed self concepts similar to that of the bully or they scored low in all domains. Finally, withdrawing from bullying situations was most typical of adolescents who had at least average scores on behavioral- and family-related self concepts, although they had negative self perceptions about their competence in other areas.

Bullying characteristics extend also to how an individual assesses and responds to social situations and interactions. In other words, deficiencies in social information processing (SIP) often contribute to bullying (Sutton, Smith & Swettenham, 1999). Due to an inability to accurately process social information, bullies often misperceive other peoples' intentions, lack empathy, and have little or no concept of what other children think of them. Camodeca and Goossens (2005) applied the SIP approach to ascertain a link between aggression and social cognitions, and to investigate emotions—such as anger and sadness—to determine how bullies and victims read social information and react to it. Simply put, some children interpret ambiguous situations as hostile which erodes trust and increases the perception of threat. This triggers reactive aggression—which can be interpreted as bullying.

Interestingly while data support that bully behavior is a result of a processing bias and deficits in social information processing, data also indicate that victims display more deficits in processing social information than other children in the study, and that they responded more emotionally to adverse conditions (Camodeca & Goossens, 2005). So, there appears to be a relationship between information processing styles of victim and bully, but the physical reaction differs in that bullies lash out at others whereas victims withdraw leaving them prime targets for bullies.

Dellagesa and Nixon (2003) studied the impact of relational aggression on girls' senses of security and self esteem. In their work, they found that a girl's self confidence increases when she is kind and decreases when she acts mean-spiritedly toward other girls. Coining the term confident kindness, the researchers concluded that the "ability to be caring and supportive of others is only meaningful if it comes from an inner sense of security and self-esteem" (p. 3). They conclude that empathy and the formation of self-identity are closely tied, taught by adult women who model the behaviors, and that positive self-identities perpetuate more supportive relationships with others.

Studies on self-estimated behavior in bullying situations show that adolescents are well aware of their own relationally aggressive behaviors and can identify the roles they play in group bullying activities (Salmivalli et al., 1996). The children in this study were labeled bullies, reinforcers, assistants, defenders and outsiders. They were cognizant of their own distinct behaviors. When asked to explain their behaviors, children used descriptors indicating passivity or helping, but always deemphasized aggressive behaviors while overestimating pro-social or withdrawing behaviors. The results indicated that in many cases group members can recognize destructive behaviors and make conscious choices about group role.

Despite the many theories of bullying that have been studied using both genders, the alternative aggressions utilized by girls against girls are considered by some theorists as the most dangerous to self-esteem as a girl's social self-perceptions are derived largely from her subjective interpretation of how she is treated within the peer group (Goodwin, 2002; Lunde et al., 2006; Simmons, 2002; Vaillancourt et al., 2003).

One theory suggests that high-status female students engage in and pull off

relationally aggressive behavior successfully in school settings, in part, because their status and other personal traits recognized as positive may partially account for the difficulty in identifying them (Vaillancourt et al., 2003). If high status bullies display a number of positive characteristics, it is easy for teachers, administrators, parents and peers to give them the “benefit of the doubt” regarding their negative social behaviors. Additionally, because all bullies do not have low esteem, identification is further complicated.

Rivers and Smith (1994) posit that the use of indirect methods of aggression is dependent upon maturation and manipulation of a fully developed social infrastructure, appearing in girls as young as eight and peaking when they reach 11 years. Also there are indications that girls might not only possess socially advanced skills, but also verbal prowess allows them to choose their words and amuse others by verbally attacking their victims either directly or indirectly. The social sophistication displayed at a younger age by more and more females enables them to go beyond physical aggressiveness and manipulate people with whom they are in relationship (Salmivalli et al., 1996; Vaillancourt et al., 2003).

Underwood (2003) posits that the “two cultures theory” is a relevant framework for understanding why relational aggression, rather than physical aggression, may be more common in girls. She theorizes that boys’ and girls’ peer groups are so different that they essentially are separate cultures that invariably lead to different developmental trajectories. In essence, the forms and functions of girls’ peer groups, which are typically smaller, more intimate, and more relationship focused, provide a unique environment in which relational aggression is likely to be effective and to flourish. Peer groups are

microcosms of the larger society and, as such, mirror social mores that perpetuate environments. While the innate side of gender may be universal and not culturally specific, how it gets manifested in any given society depends on the norms, traditions and conventions of that culture. Thus while the two-culture theory is useful in understanding what motivates alternative aggression, its social and cultural construction might create room for unnecessary stereotyping. Ultimately, culture, as well as gender, should be considered when identifying or examining bullying behavior—as the aggressive actions could be different.

Another developmental explanation for girls reporting higher levels of relational victimization is that they tend to invest a tremendous amount of energy into social comparisons and peer acceptance (Casey-Cannon, Hayward, & Gowen, 2001; Dellasega & Nixon, 2003; Gilligan, 1982). Relying more heavily on peer feedback to inform their self-worth, adolescent girls may be particularly susceptible to both the impressions of others regarding physical appearance or attractiveness and to being accepted as part of a social network (Eder & Kinney, 1995). Like the high-status student being given the “benefit of the doubt,” these bullies are often seen as displaying typical adolescent behavior by adults. When perceived victimization goes unnoticed, students are less likely to feel safe in their schools. Making adult intervention even more difficult is that the negative consequences associated with being bullied, on a single occasion or repeatedly, may not be evident until long after the incident has occurred.

In conclusion, this body of research indicates that bullying behaviors manifest from both social and psychological constructs and differs between males and females. With peer influence a significant variable in the development of female self concept, the

psychological underpinnings of self can be undermined in the victim—subsequently affecting beliefs about efficacy in all domains.

Impact of Aggression on Cognition and Achievement

Learning is the facet of school life to which least attention has been paid in the discourse of bullying (Yoneyama & Naito, 2003). However, much has been written about the intellectual development of children that is grounded in certain developmental milestones including the capacity to inhibit and sublimate aggressive impulse, abstract, symbolize and self reflect (Twemlow et al., 2001). Likewise, a plethora of evidence exists indicating that aggressive behaviors adversely influence an individual's ability to learn and that pedagogical factors and individual personal traits, such as inappropriate subject content, poorly motivated teachers, inadequate teaching methods and academic competition, low self-efficacy and social anxiety, also impede achievement (Rigby, 2005).

Moreover, research indicates that self-efficacious students participate more readily, work harder, persist longer, and have fewer adverse emotional reactions when they encounter difficulties than do those who doubt their capabilities (Bandura, 1971; Zimmerman, 2000). In fact, schools that promote healthy student-teacher relationships, including appropriate verbal expressions, absence of favoritism and student labeling, a willingness to listen to students, tolerance of individual differences, and a learner-centered approach, are more apt to be healthy environments where, in the absence of a bully culture, learning can take place (Yoneyama & Naito, 2003).

In a study measuring the connection of learning difficulties to bully-victim problems, Kaukiainen et al. (2002) found that low self-concept and social intelligence

were positively correlated with learning difficulties. They suggested that low-self concept caused children to be targeted as victims while at the same time creating learning frustrations that caused students to behave more aggressively, hyperactively, and to bully others in the classroom. Additionally, lower social intelligence, measured by a child's inability to relate to peers due to difficulty interpreting verbal and nonverbal communication, ranked high on the victim profile.

In a Norwegian study, associations between victimization and psychosomatic health were examined in a sample of 856 adolescents (Natvig, Albrektsen, & Qvarnstrom, 2001). Multivariate analysis showed that students being bullied had significantly higher incidences of every psychosomatic symptom, including irritability, headache, backache, nervousness and sleeplessness. While the researchers made no correlation between absences and illness, it can be deduced that poor health is related to higher absenteeism and high absenteeism correlates with low scholastic performance. Similarly, brain research shows that teens need 9.25 hours of sleep for optimum performance (Jensen, 2005). If a bully victim's sleep is disrupted due to psychosomatic symptoms, it can be concluded that cognition, and therefore performance, will suffer, creating conditions that lead to low self-esteem and a proclivity toward victimization.

Yoon, Barton and Taiariol (2004) substantiate the efficacy research with their meta-analysis indicating that social and emotional maladjustment of bully victims is linked to a number of concurrent and future academic problems. They suggest that there is a robust association between feeling safe in a school environment and academic performance; that aggression is associated with short- and long-term adjustment difficulties and should be studied in the larger picture of adolescent development; and

bullying stems from a manifestation of relationship between individual characteristics of victims and perpetrators and contexts of family, peer and school.

In other research exploring pre-school language development, it was found that children whose language skills develop more slowly may be at risk for victimization—but also are less likely to be bullies (Bonica, Arnold, Fisher, Zeljo, & Yershova, 2003). Because 3- to 5-years is the age at which the relation between physical aggression and language development has been documented, the researchers assessed language development and relational aggression of 145 preschoolers on the Preschool Social Behavior Scale, Preschool Peer Victimization Measure, the Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test and the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test. They found that relational aggression was positively related to language scores on all tests and, while controlling for socioeconomic status and age, that language development remained a substantial predictor of relational aggression. They conclude that children with such verbal strengths should be directed, via intervention, toward positive interactions with other children as they are at risk for future social maladjustments. Alternately, teachers working with students with weaker verbal skills should be aware of the possibility that deficiencies could be exacerbated by the aggressive actions of more verbally advanced students in the class.

A study conducted by Owens, Slee and Shute (2000) examined the connection between aggression and its impact on scholastic achievement on 15-year-old female bullies/victims. They suggest that confusion is the first effect of relational aggression for a victim, which often leads to denying and covering up the aggressive act. This is followed by psychological pain, such as hurt, loss of self-confidence, and fear that they

will experience this in future relationships. Finally, to escape from the bullying and/or to alleviate the psychological pain it is likely that victims will either change schools or drop out. Clearly either transience or leaving school altogether can adversely affect an individual's scholastic career.

In a unique study measuring the success of an anti-bullying program using academic test scores, Twemlow et al. (2001) conducted a four-year, manual-based antiviolence program on the learning climate in an elementary school compared with the outcome in a control school. The program consisted of four parts: 1) zero tolerance for behavioral disturbances such as bullying, victimization, and being a bystander during violent acts, 2) a discipline plan for modeling appropriate behavior, 3) a physical education plan designed to teach self-regulation skills, and 4) a mentoring program for children to help them escape becoming a victim, bully, bystander or a combination of these roles. There was a dramatic reduction in disciplinary referrals in the experimental group while the control group showed little change in the rate of reported infractions. Differences in suspension rates were calculated using the Fisher exact test and were significantly lower, decreasing from 9% to 4% while suspension rates for the control school did not vary significantly, ranging between 14% and 19%. An ANOVA of the Metropolitan Achievement Test composite reading and math scores yielded a significant year-by-school interaction, confirming improvement of student performance in the experimental school (an increase from 40th to 58th percentile), as well as significant improvement in individual student performance. Additionally, there were significant improvements in academic achievement and reduction in out-of-school suspensions and other serious infractions in the experimental school but not the control school. Reports

from teachers in the experimental school suggested that many previously passive and withdrawn victimized children became more verbal and outspoken as the program progressed. They also reported that the children shifted to a less anxiety-provoking, more relational mode of functioning, while becoming more reflective and less reactive. They also developed response options that did not include bullying, coercion, or anxious-depressed retreat. This development indicated that, in this case, the intervention program influenced psychosocial health and therefore improved academic outcome.

These studies demonstrate that healthy psychological development is a necessary precursor for intellectual learning, and it is therefore reasonable to hypothesize that actions, such as relational aggression, that erode students' beliefs about their ability to manage academic demands can inhibit both cognition and achievement.

How Media Influence Behavior

While the absence of a body of research specific to the impact of viewing relationally aggressive behavior on television inhibits a thorough literature review in this realm, parallels can be drawn to indicate a relationship between what a child views on television and how it shapes subsequent actions and reactions to a variety of behaviors.

A study conducted by the American Heart Association (2008) indicates that television still accounts for the most screen time for adolescents, with 97% of the respondents watching television between 20 – 50 hours per week compared to 85% of respondents using the Internet for 10 or fewer hours per week. Further findings from this year-long study of 1,293 seventh-graders from 10 Montreal schools revealed that girls living in the lowest socioeconomic conditions were five times more likely to be in the high television screen-time group (40-50 hours per week). Girls living in more moderate

or higher socioeconomic strata typically were in the low- to average-screen-time group (18 – 23 hours per week). These associations were more pronounced for television than Internet use, indicating that perhaps girls in the lower income areas lacked accessibility to computers.

In another study on the social interactions of adolescent television viewing, Fletcher (2006) suggests that social interactions within schools influence the hours of television that adolescents report viewing. A sample of 4,532 students in grades 7 – 12 in 132 American public and private schools participated in this survey. The outcomes indicated that the number of hours of television watched, as reported by the adolescent respondents, was associated with their peers' reported hours of television viewing. The researchers suggest that if social interactions effect the rate of consumption, interventions that affect the social norms of television viewing could be used to reduce the number of hours of television watched, thereby positively influencing a variety of adolescent issues including emotional problems.

Since 1971, researchers have been studying the impact of television viewing on children. In 1973, Cline et al. studied the histories of children with high and low exposure to violent television programming. They measured the physiological responses of children before and after they viewed a violent film and, to test validity, replicated the procedure. They found that children who had high levels of television viewing were significantly less aroused by the violent episodes than children who were exposed with less frequency. These results suggested a desensitizing effect of media on a child's ability to develop empathy for the victim and asserted that prolonged exposure would continue to erode sensitivity toward victims of televised violence.

In a multi-pronged study analyzing the influence of televised programming content, Anderson, Huston, Schmitt, Linebarger, and Wright (2001) examined the associations between television viewing in early childhood and adolescent characteristics that are most often alleged to be initiated, determined, or enhanced by exposure to television, including creativity, self-image, and aggressiveness. The authors contrasted predictions based on media content viewed when the subjects were preschoolers and adolescents, with predictions based on time spent with the medium. The results showed that heavy viewers of educational or informative children's programming were less aggressive in adolescence than those who rarely watched educational programs during their preschool years. Both boys and girls who watched a steady diet of entertainment or sports programs were less satisfied with their physical appearance than infrequent viewers. Overall, these results suggest that content is an important element of television's relation to an individual's proclivity toward aggressive behaviors and feelings of self-worth, and that time spent with the medium is related more heavily to what was watched rather than how much was watched.

Krosnick, Anand, and Hartl (2003) described three theoretical orientations regarding the psychosocial determinants of children's television viewing habits. They tested a series of hypotheses-based questions on data from 23 large-scale representative sample surveys to argue that people watch television to satisfy personal needs. According to the authors, one predictor of viewing habits was social integration with peers, particularly for socially-isolated individuals. They suggested that such children may turn to television to learn how to behave in social situations while individuals with few friends may turn to television for pseudo social contact. The researchers also hypothesized that

pre-adolescent children who spend less time interacting with parents or who experience a great deal of family conflict may compensate by watching more television. Finally, they proposed that children with less developed cognitive skills may prefer passive forms of entertainment to demanding ones. Not surprisingly, the study results showed that parent-child contact and parental-values associated with television viewing were important determinants of viewing habits. Peer contact was negatively associated with television exposure in all cases, asserting that adolescents who have more peer contact will watch less television. No significant association was found between television viewing and idea conflict with parents and adolescents. Furthermore, they found that adolescents who perceived themselves as having lower intelligence and who demonstrated lower school achievement watched more television. As predicted, more optional book reading was associated with less television viewing.

The delivery of a message, or the tone and inflection used by the speaker, is as important as the content of the message, according to a 2004 study by Van Evra. She posits that a child's ability to understand the emotional components of a message is linked to developmental stages. Until a child is 11, she or he cannot grasp the humor in verbal irony, or sarcasm, and looks at it as meanness or niceness. The children she studied responded to visually obvious humor, such as slapstick, messiness or falling down, far more readily than they did to sarcasm. She suggests that because sarcasm is such a mainstay of television programming, younger children may miss the humor and interpret it as meanness because they are able recognize the emotional reactions of the character but not understand the subtleties of sarcasm. Her research corroborates a study conducted by Harris and Pexman (2003) in which the effects of aggression, humor and

sarcasm on young children were considered. The results indicate that an ability to infer the ironic speaker's belief is a prerequisite to understanding the speaker's intent and that this ability does not emerge until at least the age of 8, and sometimes much later.

In their groundbreaking work on the portrayal of indirect aggression on British television, Coyne and Archer (2004) note that: "...Television portrayals of indirect aggression show distinct similarities to its occurrence in real life" (p. 265). The study indicated that 92% of the episodes analyzed contained some form of indirect aggression, that indirect aggression was portrayed more frequently than other types of aggressive acts, and that the behavior was justified and rewarded most by peers. Citing the work of Bandura (1971) and Berkowitz and Rawlings (1963) suggesting that viewing justified and rewarded physical aggression has a greater impact on a viewer than watching unjustified or unrewarded behavior, Coyne and Archer theorized that if aggressors have no knowledge of how indirect aggression plays out in groups, it is "difficult for them to successfully manipulate the social fabric enough to truly hurt the victim" (p. 267). However, considering their findings that, on average, adolescents watch nearly 34 hours of television a week and that one act of indirect aggression occurs each hour, it is likely that television is influencing individuals to believe that it is acceptable to use aggression when the cause seems justified and that, in the future, it may be important to acknowledge other types of violence—in addition to physicality—when judging the suitability of programming for certain age groups and genders.

As part of a study to assess violence in television programs targeted toward children, Wilson et al. (2002) investigated the effects of a prolonged diet of violence-heavy viewing on children's perceptions of behaviors. The study found that a more

realistic portrayal of anti-social behavior on television contributed more heavily to acceptance of that behavior than did a more fantastical portrayal. Both children and adults were more likely to find a behavior permissible as long as it was conducted in a realistic manner. They also found the form or type of character behaving in violence to be important, suggesting that the more real the character the more realistic the behavior. Moreover, only 5% of children's programming included any type of negative consequence for either the aggressor or the victim and most of the anti-social behavior was glamorized or justified. Their work supports other research suggesting that "the portrayal of violence, by character, in humor, or as realistic, has a desensitizing effect on a viewer" (p. 11).

While much research exists on physical bullying, there are a number of notable gaps that need to be closed before the research can be converted to best practices that will shape academics and policy. For example, very little work has been done on the achievement levels of students who bully and are bullied. Only one study revealed an association between school performance as measured by test scores and victimization (Twemlow et al., 2001) —none provided a view of academic achievement of the bully, although some studies indicate that bullies might be high-achievers and therefore their behavior goes undetected or is dismissed by teachers (Bonica et al., 2003; Simmons, 2002). The absence of research in this area implies to educators and administrators that relational aggression is not a significant deterrent to learning and provides further impetus for tolerance of the behavior. Likewise, a single study explored the prevalence of relationally aggressive acts in television programming aimed at adolescents. While Coyne and Archer (2004) thoroughly analyzed television programs for relationally

aggressive content and concluded that it is far more prevalent than physical aggression, they did not examine programs identified by female adolescents as popular nor did they measure whether the behavior was recognized by viewers.

Additionally, an absence of bodies of longitudinal work fails to present the long-term effects of the behavior on individuals—perhaps perpetuating the theory that bullying is a rite of passage (Simmons, 2002). Very few resiliency studies have been conducted on victims of bullying, however much research exists pertaining to the resiliency of victims of other abuses, such as sexual, substance and physical. These works can be used to guide studies on bullying and encourage researchers to go beyond the use of static, one-time research measures—which will gain credibility for the problem.

Although researchers have addressed the psychological roots of bullying behavior, very little investigation has been conducted on the cultural influences that may contribute to the specific variations of relationally aggressive behavior. How bullying is learned and why it is tolerated as a social component of growing up needs to be explored to understand why bystanders seem desensitized by the behavior, why victims are reluctant to accept a proactive role in stopping the behavior, and why bullies find the behavior acceptable. A child's media-heavy diet has prompted the study of the influence of media on youth violence (Anderson et al., 2003); however researchers have neglected to define violence in terms of the psychological and emotional trauma experienced by bully victims. As a result, ratings are assigned to physically violent media programs without regard to the less overt violence of relationally aggressive behaviors. Without research, there is no way to measure the impact of this area of culture. Likewise, social networking tools, such as text messaging, blogging, cell phone photography, to name a

few, have yet to be examined fully for their role in covert aggression.

Finally, Woolard (2004) contends that, for maximum validity, research must investigate the common and unique predictors for multiple policy-relevant outcomes; pay attention to the number of children involved in aggressive behavior; investigate intervention pathways to understand patterns of system involvement and their impact on treatment efficacy; and, finally, address methodological concerns such as varying definitions of bullying, sampling issues, and data source differences that affect the strength of researchers' conclusions and relevance to policy. The scientific, news, public policy, education and entertainment communities can meet the larger societal challenge of providing children and youth with the constructs to self-mediate behaviors that emotionally torment others only if they have sound and valid tools with which to measure and evaluate practices that can mitigate the behaviors.

Interventions

Ultimately, recognizing relational aggression as a form of bullying is an important consideration for school-based efforts to reduce the behavior. Not surprisingly, researchers agree that, while providing girls, the school community and parents with information about relational aggression generates thoughtful discourse and awareness of the behavior, successful anti-bullying programs are typically holistic and long-term, requiring the support of all facets of a child's world. Thus, interventions are necessary to help school faculty and staff, parents and students to understand and recognize relationally aggressive behaviors as destructive as well as providing a mechanism with which to diffuse the behavior.

Many successful programs are based, in part, on Olweus' (1997) work that targets

the context in which bullying occurs and the behavior of both bully and victim. While Olweus' programs do not differentiate between gender or physical and relational aggression, they provide a solid underpinning for creating an anti-bullying culture that promotes learned positive behavior for both students and adults, zero-tolerance of adult bullying, and meeting the needs of individuals. School counselors and other trained mental health professionals are critical to making this process work. Olweus' approach has been shown to reduce bullying by 50% and includes (a) early interventions that target specific risk factors and teach positive behavior and critical-thinking skills at the classroom level, including lessons, discussion and parent meetings, (b) intensive individual interventions that provide bullies and victims with individual support through meetings with students and parents, counseling, and sustained child and family supports, and (c) a school wide foundation that offers universal interventions; a value system based on caring, respect, and personal responsibility; positive discipline and supports; clear behavioral expectations and consequences; skills development; and increased adult supervision and parental involvement.

Likewise, Simmons (2002) provides strategies for policy making and teaching geared toward parents and educators. She focuses her attention on relational aggression and contends that active listening is the most vital contribution from parents. While she contends that there is not much a parent can do to alleviate the problem at school, offering a refuge at home can help a victim survive. Working with a child and allowing her some autonomy in strategizing provides her the power she needs, but believes she is lacking, as a victim. Getting the facts, making sure the classroom teacher knows, asking for a seating change, and encouraging the formation of protective social bonds with other

students are effective parental interventions. Also, helping a child choose activities in which she will make a contribution, rather than be judged by what she is wearing or her appearance, can alleviate popularity contests. Passion for a sport, hobby, or volunteering can move a child out of the social misfortune in which she finds herself at school and vault her to a position in which she is making a difference. Outside of the family, Simmons advocates an infrastructure with two main components: regulation and education.

At the time of Simmons' (2002) writings, the regulatory approach to relational aggression was virtually nonexistent. School districts set broad guidelines for students, allowing some schools to be strict about specific antibullying policies while others hoped the issue would disappear by avoiding it. Recently, as a byproduct of the Safe Schools initiative in the No Child Left Behind legislation, most states have mandated that schools create policies that include anti-bullying language regarding relational aggression (National Institutes of Health Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2006). Simmons suggests further that instituting reasonable rules that can be applied consistently without regard to family, social status, race, or gender should prohibit specific behaviors, such as rumor spreading, alliance building, secret telling, and severe episodes of nonverbal aggression. She also recommends that classroom teachers ban behaviors such as sighing, snorting, eye-rolling, or back-turning, and socialize girls away from these actions. A teacher can integrate lessons with stories about children who experience relational aggression or openly discuss his or her own history with bullying.

In a study conducted by Bosworth, Espelage, DuBay, Dahlberg and Daytner

(1996), students participated in a multimedia violence-prevention intervention called SMART Talk (Students Managing Anger Resolution Together). The program was grounded in Bandura's (1971) social learning theory and included role-model theory. Also it contained an educational intervention program designed to help middle-school students practice social skills. The program's goal was to decrease the number and intensity of aggressive and violent incidents by engaging students in computer-based games, simulations, graphics, cartoons and interactive interviews that imparted nonviolent conflict-resolution skills. The researchers concluded that, as an intervention strategy, SMART Talk was appealing to students due to its interactive, multi-media approach and that, when used to enhance an organization's conflict-management program, provided an additional resource that successfully met the learning needs of students in the middle grades.

DeRosier and Marcus (2005) tested the long-term effectiveness of a social-skills program for peer-rejected, victimized, and socially anxious children. Third-graders with peer problems from 11 public elementary schools in North Carolina were randomly assigned to treatment or control groups using S.S.GRIN, a social-skills training intervention considered most effective due to its general applicability as well as its efficiency in reducing multiple problem areas after single interventions. In S.S.GRIN, both cognitive and behavioral methods were used to teach and practice each skill, including didactic instruction combined with active practice. Positive reinforcement, corrective feedback, and cognitive reframing were integral teaching methods. The findings from this study supported S.S.GRIN's long-term efficacy for enhancing children's functioning across social, emotional, and behavioral domains. Participation

appeared to help children with different types of peer problems and treatment effects built over the year following the intervention. Interestingly, the improvements were found largely for measures of self-reported social competence—children who left the program felt better about themselves and their ability to be successful in social situations.

The Expect Respect project, administered by Rosenbluth, Whitaker, Sanchez and Valle (2004), targeted the involvement of all members of the Austin Independent School District in recognizing and responding to bullying and sexual harassment among students. To achieve reductions in bullying and improvement in school climate, the program utilized five components: classroom curriculum, staff training, policy development, parent education and support services. The curriculum focused on increasing the ability and willingness of bystanders to intervene, and thus was hypothesized to reduce the social acceptance of bullying. Lessons included writing assignments, role plays, and class discussions designed to help students distinguish playful teasing and joking from hurtful teasing and bullying, to enhance students' knowledge about bullying, and to develop skills for responding as a target or bystander. In addition, there was staff training, policy development, parent education and counselors available to assist school psychologists. The study indicated that the project positively impacted children's awareness of bullying and their intentions to intercede when witnessing bullying.

Salmivalli, Kaukiainen, and Voeten (2005) hypothesized mixed success of bully intervention programs that fail to approach the issue from a participant perspective—a group process in which bystanders often encourage or silently witness bullying while offering little or no support to the victim. Therefore, the aim of their study was to evaluate the effects of an anti-bullying intervention program utilizing a cohort

longitudinal design augmented by extensive teacher training. The researchers evaluated the overall effects of an anti-bullying intervention using multi-level modeling and the degree of implementation of the program. They looked for intervention effects for several outcome variables, including the degree of bully-victim problems in the class, students' beliefs related to bullying and intervening in it, and self- and peer-reported participant role behaviors. Each teacher in the study attended a one-year training course covering three systemic levels that had been considered important in earlier bullying literature—school, class and individual student level. The main emphasis was, however, on the group mechanisms of bullying and, therefore, on intervening at the class level. This aspect is particularly important in looking at interventions for relational aggression, as girls tend to bully other individual girls in cohorts of at least two (Simmons, 2002). Salmivalli et al. (2005) found that the participant role approach provided a common framework for teachers to use in curriculum-based, class-level work. Teachers discussed bullying with the whole class stressing group mechanisms and participant roles. For interventions at the student level, individual discussion methods, such as shared concern and a no-blame approach, were introduced to the teachers. Regardless of the method used, the role of systematic follow-ups after the intervention discussions was strongly emphasized. At the school level, the role of whole-school policy against bullying was emphasized, and printed guidelines were given for developing policies. From this study, Salmivalli et al. found that training teachers in anti-bullying work was not sufficient if they lacked either the motivation or resources to implement the program and that support from school management and colleagues is critical for success.

Summary of Literature

It can be determined from this overview of extant literature that there exists an absence of common and widespread understanding of relational aggression, its prevalence and destructiveness on the psyche and cognitive functioning of female adolescents and how the mass media influences the behavior. This lack of evidenced-based information hinders the ability of advocacy groups and legislators to effectively guide and inform parents about the harmful consequences that nonphysical televised violence can have on children. Likewise, it prohibits the development of interventions that can help educators create media literate students who will become discerning consumers of television programming.

To maximize awareness of relational aggression, a complete definition must include all aspects of bullying (e.g. covert and overt), identify it as a pattern of relationship behaviors, recognize that it involves a spectrum of behaviors, delineate the contexts in which it plays out, and stress that the behavior differs between genders. It also must incorporate the social-emotional consequences of the behavior on the aggressor and victim. The current inconsistencies with national and international perspectives and research will be perpetuated unless there is collective understanding and accepted language (Furlong, Morrison, & Greif, 2003).

Thus, the research aims that guided this study are:

1. The relationship between girls' engagement in relational aggression and the amount of television watched;
2. The relationship between the type of relational aggression engaged in by girls and the amount of television they consume;

3. The extent to which girls differ in their ability to recognize relationally aggressive behaviors when viewed on television following participation in an instructional workshop designed to help them understand relational aggression;
4. The extent to which girls differ in their ability to recognize if a consequence occurred for the aggressor after participation in the relational aggression workshop;
5. The extent to which girls differ in their ability to recognize if the target of the relationally aggressive behavior was hurt after participation in the relational aggression workshop.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The literature review chapter provides evidence that much research has been conducted on bullying when it is typified as a physical altercation between individuals. Some research has been conducted on relational aggression, or bullying specific to female adolescents, however limited research exists on how media influences the relationally aggressive behaviors of girls. In an attempt to add to the body of research, this study examined the interaction between relationally aggressive behavior portrayed by television characters in popular shows watched by adolescent girls and girls' engagement in and recognition of relational aggression.

After determining a methodological direction based on results from a pilot study conducted in 2006 and 2007 (see description below), descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized to analyze data and to explore the extent to which educational information about relational aggression helped adolescent viewers recognize such behaviors.

Pilot Study

In fall 2006 and spring 2007, pilot studies were conducted to determine the television viewing habits and participation in relationally aggressive behavior of sixth, seventh and eighth-grade girls at a Midwestern middle school in the same community in

which the main study was conducted. The purpose of the pilot research was to test a methodological design that would best identify significant relationships between relationally aggressive behaviors, demographics, and number of hours of television viewing. Girls also were asked about their favorite programs for use in the main study.

It was surmised that relational aggression would increase with the number of television hours watched, supporting extant research indicating that an increase in violent physical behavior occurs when consumption of violent television programming increases (Bandura, 1971) and that the behavior peaks as the individual ages (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). Therefore, the following research questions were posed:

1. Is there a correlation between the number of television hours watched and participation in relational aggression?
2. Is there a difference in how girls interpret violent television programming according to grade level?

The sample included 106 sixth, seventh, and eighth-grade female adolescents from a Midwestern middle school who completed a survey to determine number of hours of television watched, programs watched, engagement in bullying behavior, types of bullying behavior engaged in, and demographic information. Girls were singled out as participants because relational aggression is widely engaged in by female adolescents (Coyne & Archer, 2004; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). Data were collected during the school day, as girls were administered a survey during a workshop and during their “home-base” time.

The results of the pilot study support existing research linking television watching, interpretation of content and participation in relational aggression. The

Cronbach alpha for the survey instrument was .91. A Pearson correlation coefficient indicated a statistically significant relationship between age and engagement in the relationally aggressive behavior $r(73) = .73, p < .01$ (Hammel, 2007). In other words, middle-school age students were more likely to bully than elementary students, upholding Crick's and Grotmeter's (1995) findings that bullying behavior peaks between the ages of 11 – 14. Additionally, the study found that while physical aggression did not statistically significantly correlate with the number of television hours watched, contrary to a plethora of research in this area (Federal Communications Commission, n.d.; Huesmann, Moise, Podolski & Eron, 2003; Olweus, 1997), relational aggression was statistically significantly correlated to television watching $r(67) = .58, p < .01$ (Hammel). These findings are consistent with the literature (e.g., Casey-Cannon et al., 2001; Coyne & Archer, 2004; Crick & Grotmeter, 1995; Simmons, 2002) positing that girls engage more in relationally aggressive behaviors than physically aggressive behaviors and, therefore, when bullying occurs in a female population the actions tend to be relationally aggressive.

Main Study

The findings from the pilot study provided the impetus to further investigate the phenomenon of television's impact on relationally aggressive behaviors between female adolescents. As such, it was necessary to include general aims and specific hypotheses to guide the research. The general aims provided descriptive data of the engagement in relational aggression, and the specific aims (i.e., research postulates and null hypotheses) examined, via inferential statistics, the extent to which recognition of the behavior and its consequences differed when the respondent was more informed about the behavior.

Aims and Hypotheses

1. The first aim is descriptive in nature and explores the relationship between the amount of television watched and participation in relational aggression.

Research Postulate 1: The number of television hours watched correlates with participation in relationally aggressive behavior.

Null Hypothesis 1: The number of television hours watched does not correlate with participation in relationally aggressive behavior.

2. The second aim is descriptive in nature and explores the relationship between the amount of television watched and participation in a type of relationally aggressive behavior.

Research Postulate 2: The number of television hours watched correlates with participation in specific types of relationally aggressive behavior.

Null Hypothesis 2: The number of television hours watched does not correlate with participation in specific types of relationally aggressive behavior.

3. The third aim was to determine the extent to which an educational intervention explaining relational aggression enhanced a respondent's ability to recognize relationally aggressive behaviors in the context of a popular television program and consequences to either the victim or aggressor or both.

Research Postulate 3a: Workshop participants will differ significantly from nonparticipants in their ability to recognize relationally aggressive behaviors when engaged in by characters on a popular television program.

Null Hypothesis 3a: Workshop participants will not differ significantly from nonparticipants in their ability to recognize relationally aggressive behaviors when engaged in by characters on a popular television program.

Research Postulate 3b: Workshop participants will differ significantly from nonparticipants in their ability to recognize if a consequence occurred for the aggressor as a result of engagement in relationally aggressive behaviors.

Null Hypothesis 3b: Workshop participants will not differ significantly from nonparticipants in their ability to recognize if a consequence occurred for the aggressor as a result of engagement in relationally aggressive behaviors.

Research Postulate 3c: Workshop participants will differ significantly from nonparticipants in their ability to recognize if the victim of relationally aggressive behavior suffered a consequence.

Null Hypothesis 3c: Workshop participants will not differ significantly from nonparticipants in their ability to recognize if the victim of relationally aggressive behavior suffered a consequence.

Setting and Participants

The setting for this study was a traditional middle school in a first-ring, suburb outside of Cleveland, Ohio, with various special academic programs for its diverse

student population. Opened in August 2007, the new building and campus were created to consolidate middle schools from three schools to two. To date, there have been no school-wide anti-bullying programs initiated at the school which made it ideal for the research (District Initiatives, 2006-2007).

Additionally, the district was selected due to its proximity to Cleveland (9 miles), its growing population of urban and immigrant students, and a population that reflects the community in which the school is situated (82% white; 18% nonwhite). The city has incurred an influx of families from Cleveland due to its high-performing schools, top-rated city services, large number of affordable rental properties, and distance from Cleveland, which consistently ranks in the top five poorest urban areas in the nation. However, the overall population has declined and existing building infrastructure has deteriorated, compelling the school district to consolidate 14 of its buildings to 10 through a combination of renovation, new construction, or the adaptive reuse of buildings.

When the main study was conducted, the city's population was 56,646 and median household income was \$48,311. Forty percent of the students in the district qualified for free/reduced price lunch in 2006-2007 (Ohio Department of Education, 2008; United States Bureau of the Census, 2000). The school district faced challenges similar to other inner ring suburbs, particularly an increasing number of students qualifying for low income relief and aging infrastructure (the buildings being replaced were built in the early 1900s). In addition, the Ohio Department of Education reported that nearly 10% of the total student population had limited English proficiency, with 42 different languages spoken in the district. Additionally, 15% of students were categorized

as disabled. In the 2006-2007 academic year, the school system met 25 out of 30 state indicators and received a continuous improvement designation from the state with a performance score of 95.8 out of a possible 120 points.

In spite of these challenges, the district has remained dedicated to neighborhood schools that are within walking distance and that provide reasonable and safe access to students. Enrollment is open and school leadership maintains positive relationships with other service providers in the community, such as recreation, health and safety. Keeping with this dedication to maximizing partnerships, the district continues to provide opportunities for families and residents to form intimate relationships with the schools in their vicinity by tailoring programs and community classes that align with the demographics. Like most inner-ring suburbs of rust-belt cities, the district has encountered an increase in crime and other socioeconomic issues that impact all residents—including children. Thus, an ongoing district initiative for the middle schools and high school is to improve student conduct and school climate which encompasses bullying and relationally aggressive behaviors (Ohio Department of Education, 2007).

Target Population

The target population consisted of a convenience sample of 258 female adolescents in sixth, seventh and eighth grade. Of the original 258 students solicited for inclusion in the study, 27 (8.9%) were eliminated for the following reasons: six students were denied permission by caregivers; four permission packets were returned by the United States Postal Service as undeliverable; and 17 students completed a portion of the survey but were absent on subsequent days and unable to complete the entire instrument, so their surveys were eliminated. Therefore, the population of student participants was

finalized to include 110 students in the control group and 121 students in the experimental group ($N = 231$). Respondents represented five different age groups (11 – 15 years) and nine different ethnic groups (Native American, Hispanic, Asian Indian, Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, Black, White, Asian and Biracial).

Research Design

The study was descriptive, quasi-experimental, and utilized a non-equivalent groups design (NEGD). Statistical methods employed included Pearson's correlation coefficient and chi-square analysis.

The design was two pronged. First, it sought information from all participants ($N = 231$) about television viewing habits and participation in relationally aggressive behaviors in order to determine a correlation between media consumption, behavior recognition and participation. Next, it provided information about relational aggression in the form of a specially designed workshop to an experimental group ($n = 121$) to ascertain whether an understanding of the behavior would increase recognition of incidents of relational aggression and consequences between characters on a popular television program.

Rationale for Research Design

A quantitative approach was selected for this study for a variety of reasons. First, the framework used mirrored successful and useful studies conducted by Coyne and Archer (2004; 2005), prolific and respected researchers in the area of relational aggression and media consumption. Secondly, the aim was to collect generalizable data and to determine relationships among variables of interest—a hallmark of quantitative methodology. Equally important was access to participants. A relatively large sample size

was available, which could be accommodated more practically with a quantitative approach given existing resources. Lastly, the sensitive nature of the topic might have prohibited parental consent and participant candidness if qualitative methods such as focus groups or one-on-one interviews were employed.

According to Mouton and Marais (1991), descriptive studies are designed to provide an accurate portrayal of a particular individual, group, situation or event. This approach does not identify causal relationships, but identifies and describes variables and the relationship between these variables. The frequency with which specific variables occur in a sample may be explored as well. Treece and Treece (1982) suggested that the advantages of this approach are objectivity, specificity, and accuracy.

The advantages for using quasi-experimental design in this instance were that randomization was impractical when dealing with a limited sample in one school building and that students were already naturally organized within the school setting. Because relational aggression occurs in instances outside of school environments and this study explores the phenomenon in context of the media, a quasi-experimental design also allowed the findings to be applied to other subjects and settings and for generalizations to be made about the population (Gribbons & Herman, 1997).

The NEGD design is probably the most frequently used design in social research (Trochim, 2006). Because it is structured like a pretest-posttest randomized experiment, it was chosen due to the pretest-posttest design of the study. Additionally, students in a school environment are grouped similarly and can therefore be utilized as treatment and control groups for fair comparison. Although it is unlikely that the two groups would be

as similar if participants were assigned through random lottery, a NEGD design is accepted for educational research.

Instrument

No published instrument existed to collect data necessary to answer the research questions in this study. Therefore, two instruments were adapted, with permission from Randall and Bowen (2007) and Coyne and Archer (2005), into a survey comprising sections to capture television viewing habits, measure engagement in relational aggression, determine respondent recognition of the behavior in a popular television program, and ascertain prior knowledge of relational aggression. The instrument is called the Relational Aggression and Television Programming Inventory (RATPI) (See Appendix B).

The Relational Aggression Survey (RAS), developed by Randall and Bowen (2007) for teachers to use in the classroom, was designed to measure the dynamics of relational aggression between children and adolescents, where it takes place, who is involved and the tactics used. To assess the behavior, the RAS consists of a set of seven forced-choice answers (e.g. a long time ago, last year, last month; I have never experienced relational aggression, name calling, excluding or leaving out others, teasing). No normative data existed to validate this instrument, however it has been utilized in classroom settings in North Carolina where the authors practice.

The Television Content Analysis Inventory (TCAI) was developed by Coyne and Archer (2005). They asked 429 adolescents (aged 11 – 14) from two schools in northwest England to identify the top five television programs they view. Subsequently, independent adult coders examined the programs using an aggression inventory to

capture each act and assess it to determine justification, realism, level of reward or punishment, type of reward or punishment, attractiveness levels, relationship of aggressor and victim, program type, character analysis and types of aggression. A total of 228 hours of programming was analyzed, yielding 4,209 acts of aggression as determined by the adult coders. Inter-coder reliabilities were assessed using Krippendorff's coefficient of agreement (Artstein & Poesio, 2008) which corrected for chance. The instrument was deemed reliable, with minimum reliabilities meeting or exceeding .80.

Components of the RAS and TCAI were combined to create the RATPI. The document consisted of a behavior inventory, demographic information and a chart on which students could record their observations while watching the television program. The independent variable studied was a participant's placement in the experimental group. The dependent variables were rate of television watching per week; participant engagement in relationally aggressive behavior(s); engagement in behavior type; recognition of a television character engaging in a prescribed behavior; recognition of the consequences for the aggressor; and recognition of consequences for the victim.

As reliability measures were unavailable for this new instrument, it was sent for face validity to a three-person sample representative of the population who were studied. Feedback from these girls was used to clarify language, shorten the instrument and adapt the format for easier use. In addition, the instrument was sent to a panel of two content experts and one survey expert to determine content validity. Content experts included a representative of the *Ophelia Project* in northeast Ohio, and the retired founding director of the Interfaith Center for Peace who currently works with male inmates at the Marion Correctional Institution in Ohio and conducts training for the Olweus Program and *Don't*

Laugh at Me. She also designs curriculum for training staff and officers in county juvenile detention centers. The survey expert held the position of statistician and mathematics manager for the Cleveland Metropolitan School District for 15 years before becoming a mathematics curriculum specialist and trainer for the Cleveland Heights/University Heights School District. She teaches college-level mathematics and has completed the coursework for the degree of doctor of philosophy in urban education at Cleveland State University.

These individuals evaluated each item in the survey for representativeness on a Likert-type scale of 1 – 4 (with 1 being “not representative” and 4 being “representative”). Representativeness was defined as the extent to which individual questions depicted the concept being measured. Clarity also was examined by the experts on a Likert-type scale of 1 – 4 (with 1 being “unclear” and 4 being “clear”) and was defined by the understandability of each question. Finally, the experts examined the comprehensiveness of the entire measure by indicating items that should be deleted or added.

The raters found three items that were not aligned with relational aggression: yelling at a friend; arguing with a friend; and storming out of a room to let a friend know she was mad. These observations concurred with the literature on relational aggression that posits that activities must demonstrate repeated covert behavior with malicious intent, which is the definition of relational aggression (Coyne & Archer, 2005; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Olweus, 1997; Underwood, 2003). Therefore, these items were eliminated from the inventory. “Yelling” was clarified as “yelling mean words at a friend.” It also was suggested that the term “friend” be used in place of “another girl I

know,” as a girl’s friends are defined as the targets of relationally aggressive behavior. These adjustments were made to the instrument.

Instrument Coding

Prior to data collection, the study author and a second trained independent coder analyzed a sample of six television programs rated as most frequently watched by the respondents of the pilot study. The author of the study was a candidate for PhD, has 23 years of experience in the communications and market research industries, and currently teaches media and communications courses at an Ohio college. The second coder, also a PhD candidate, had a background in the arts industry and taught at a college in Ohio. She was trained to use the data collection tool and worked with the author to learn about relational aggression.

Two episodes of each of the six shows identified as favorites by pilot study respondents (12 episodes/48 hours) were analyzed to ascertain occurrences of relationally aggressive behaviors. The programs included *Suite Life of Zach & Cody*, *That’s So Raven*, *Full House*, *Hannah Montana*, *Gilmore Girls* and *America’s Top Model*. With the exception of *Gilmore Girls* and *America’s Top Model*, which were rated for an older audience, the programs were rated TVG, suitable for general audiences as determined by the FCC, and broadcast on the Disney Channel. The shows’ central characters included girls ranging in age from 5 - 25 years. Male characters were peripheral, even in the case of *Suite Life of Zach & Cody*, a show that focused on the lives of adolescent male twins. The male action in this show is overshadowed by the presence of stereotyped females, such as an overprotective mother, a spoiled heiress, and several female hotel employees, between whom the relational aggression occurs most frequently.

Constant comparison analysis (Patton, 1990) was used to code and assess each act of aggression, including type of behavior and consequences for the aggressor and victim. This analytical method groups and compares incidents to each applicable category allowing events to be constantly compared with previous events so that new topological evidence, as well as new relationships, can be discovered (Goetz & LeCompte, 1981). In this case, the coders concurred on 10 behaviors identified in separate analyses. In addition, the age and gender of each aggressor was noted as well as the type of program, the age range to which it was directed, and episode length. Like observations between the raters were combined and then all observations were counted to determine a rate of aggression for each program (See Appendix E).

Of the 12 episodes, a single episode of *The Suite Life of Zach & Cody* contained the highest number of relationally aggressive acts as coded by the experts. It was selected for viewing by study participants for a variety of factors, including its rank in the top six of the most-frequently watched programs selected by the sample population in the pilot study (Hammel, 2007), its suitability for the age group, a running time of 22 minutes which is typical of programming geared toward the age group and an appropriate length to show during a school period, and consistency of content (after comparing this episode with other episodes there was no more or less relational aggression portrayed, indicating that it is typical of the program and not an anomaly).

Variables

This study considered a single level of variables. Data on the following variables were retrieved for this study:

- *BRKUP* – Intentionally breaking up a friend’s relationship (Coded as: 0 = No, 1 =

Yes)

- *CON* – Identified student as member of control group (Coded as: 0 = No, 1 = Yes)
- *EXP* – Identified student as member of experimental group (Coded as: 0 = No, 1 = Yes)
- *FACE* – Face-to-face unwarranted criticism (Coded as: 0 = No, 1 = Yes)
- *HRSTVW* – Rate of TV watching per week (Coded as: Mean number per week)
- *HRTBRKUP* - Character victim was hurt after aggressor intentionally attempted to breakup her relationship with someone else (Coded as: 0 = No, 1 = Yes)
- *HRTFACE* - Character victim was hurt after receiving face-to-face unwarranted criticism (Coded as: 0 = No, 1 = Yes)
- *HRTHURT* - Character victim felt bad when a friend pretended to be hurt (to intentionally cause reaction) (Coded as: 0 = No, 1 = Yes)
- *HRTINSUL* - Character victim was hurt after being insulted by a friend (Coded as: 0 = No, 1 = Yes)
- *HRTIROLL* - Character victim was hurt by noticing a friend rolling her eyes at another person about something she was doing or saying (Coded as: 0 = No, 1 = Yes)
- *HRTMNAM* – Character victim was hurt after being called a mean name (Coded as: 0 = No, 1 = Yes)
- *HRTOTH* - Open-ended so student could add other behaviors she witnessed (Coded as: 0 = No, 1 = Yes)
- *H RTPRI* - Character victim was hurt after a friend divulged information provided in confidence (Coded as: 0 = No, 1 = Yes)

- *HRTSARC* - Character victim was hurt by sarcastic insults (Coded as: 0 = No, 1 = Yes)
- *HRTYELL* - Character victim was hurt after friend yelled mean words (Coded as: 0 = No, 1 = Yes)
- *HURT* – Pretending to be hurt to cause a friend else to feel bad (Coded as: 0 = No, 1 = Yes)
- *INSUL* – Insulting a friend without using mean names (Coded as: 0 = No, 1 = Yes)
- *IROLL* – Rolling eyes (Coded as: 0 = No, 1 = Yes)
- *MNNAME* – Calling a friend a mean name (Coded as: 0 = No, 1 = Yes)
- *OTH* – Open-ended so student could add other behaviors she witnessed (Coded as: 0 = No, 1 = Yes)
- *PRI* – Telling a friend’s private information (Coded as: 0 = No, 1 = Yes)
- *RAPART* – Participant in relational aggression (Coded as: 0 = No, 1 = Yes)
- *SARC* – Using sarcasm to insult a friend (Coded as: 0 = No, 1 = Yes)
- *TRBRKUP* - Character aggressor received a consequence for intentionally trying to breakup a friend’s relationship (Coded as: 0 = No, 1 = Yes)
- *TRFACE* - Character aggressor received a consequence for face-to-face unwarranted criticism (Coded as: 0 = No, 1 = Yes)
- *TRHURT* - Character aggressor received a consequence for pretending to be hurt to make a friend feel bad (Coded as: 0 = No, 1 = Yes)
- *TRINSUL* - Character aggressor received a consequence for insulting a friend without using mean names (Coded as: 0 = No, 1 = Yes)

- *TRIROLL* - Character aggressor received a consequence for rolling eyes about something a friend was doing or saying (Coded as: 0 = No, 1 = Yes)
- *TRMNAM* – Character aggressor received a consequence for calling a friend a mean name (Coded as: 0 = No, 1 = Yes)
- *TROTH* - Open-ended so student could add other behaviors she witnessed (Coded as: 0 = No, 1 = Yes)
- *TRPRI* - Character aggressor received a consequence for telling a friend’s private information (Coded as: 0 = No, 1 = Yes)
- *TRSARC* - Character aggressor received a consequence for using sarcasm to insult a friend (Coded as: 0 = No, 1 = Yes)
- *TRYELL* - Character aggressor received a consequence for yelling mean words at a friend (Coded as: 0 = No, 1 = Yes)
- *YELL* – Yelling mean words (Coded as: 0 = No, 1 = Yes)

Procedures

Workshop Design

The relational aggression workshop was created to explain the difference between traditional bullying behaviors, such as negative antisocial physical and verbal acts, and those that combine social, indirect and psychological methods designed to harm or manipulate relationships, otherwise known as relational aggression. It included an age-appropriate power-point presentation (See Appendix F) using material from the *Ophelia Project* (2007) and video-taped excerpts of girls exhibiting the behavior (Flahive & Glazier, 2004). The workshop was designed to be administered to an experimental group comprised of half of the sixth ($n = 42$), seventh ($n = 39$), and eighth ($n = 40$) grade

female population ($N = 121$) during home base periods. To prevent recall bias, workshop participants were asked to refrain from discussing the content with other students and no handouts were distributed until the study was concluded.

Recruitment

Permission to collect data was obtained from the Cleveland State University Human Subjects Review Board. Permission was granted to the researcher by the school principal and Board of Education to gain access to students during the school day. At the recommendation of the school principal, a denial of consent to participate was sought from participant caregivers as the inability to retrieve paperwork in previous IRB-approved studies jeopardized data collection.

The parents or guardians of the students received a letter explaining the purpose of the study, informing them of their right not to participate, confidentiality issues of participating in the study, a parent denial of consent to participate form, and an addressed, postage-paid envelope (See Appendices C & D). Additionally, parents were informed of the title and FCC rating of the program that students watched during the data collection process.

To abide by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (Family Compliance Policy Office, n.d.), school personnel addressed the pre-stamped and stuffed envelopes and mailed them through the United States Post Office to student homes. The mailing was sent five weeks prior to the week of data collection to provide parents with adequate time to return the form. Parents were asked to respond within 10 days of receiving the information.

Implementation

To control for diffusion or imitation of treatment and exposure bias, control and experimental participants were chosen based on groupings that occurred naturally within the school. The fact that students traveled together in designated groups throughout the school day prohibited interaction between students who received the intervention. Each grade level was divided by lunch time and home base (home room) time for a natural division between groups. This was important to prevent the control group from learning about the workshop discussion from program participants and, thus, threatening the reliability of the study by equalizing the outcomes between the groups.

On Day One, the experimental group comprised of fifteen home-bases of sixth, seventh and eighth graders participated in the relational aggression workshop ($n = 121$). On Day Two, participants from both the experimental and control groups ($n = 231$) viewed the *Suite Life of Zach & Cody* and completed the television inventory portion of the survey (See Appendix B). On Day Three, all participants completed the demographic and behavior inventory portions of the instrument. To preserve respondent anonymity, students completed assent forms that were collected separately from the survey (See Appendix D). Additionally, no names or codes were included on the survey.

Statistical Analyses

The goal of exploratory studies is to investigate a relatively unknown research area and gain additional and new insights into the phenomena, explicate the main concepts and constructs, develop hypotheses about an existing behavior as a result of the research and determine considerations for future research (Mouton & Marais, 1991).

Therefore, descriptive statistics were used in this study to summarize

demographic data. Due to the dichotomous nature of the data, the Pearson product moment correlation (e.g. r_{pb}) (Howell, 2002) was used to examine the relationships between the number of television hours watched by participants, subsequent participation in relationally aggressive behavior and to determine if hours spent watching TV impacted the type of relationally aggressive behaviors in which respondents engaged. The advantage of correlational methods is that predictions can be made about observations. In other words, if two variables are correlated a prediction about one can be based on the other.

Pearson's r_{pb}

The Pearson correlation coefficient, or Pearson r , examines the strength of relationship between two variables (Salkind, 2005). Typically, the Pearson product-moment interprets variables that are relatively continuous on both measures, however it can be employed to examine the relationship between dichotomous and continuous sets of variables thus, $r_{pb} = r$ (Howell, 2002). Because research questions one and two in this study required an analysis of relationships between dichotomous and continuous variables, Pearson's r was applied.

Nonparametric Statistics

While demonstrating slightly less power, nonparametric testing offers wider applicability, increased robustness and more flexible parameters than parametric statistics (Salkind, 2005). Justification for using nonparametric statistics in this study was as follows: First, the behavior inventory had no clear numerical interpretations but instead assessed either the personal actions of the respondent or her perceived assumption of a behavior. Secondly, no assumptions were made about the probability distributions of the

variables that were assessed in the study which lead to choosing nonparametric analysis. Finally, the use of convenience sampling suggested the employment of non-parametric statistics.

Chi-Square

To address whether participation in an educational program about relational aggression allowed individuals to more readily identify the behavior, the data were analyzed using chi square (Howell, 2002) to determine if one variable (participation in the educational program) was contingent on separate variables (recognition of the behavior, recognition of consequences to aggressor, and recognition of consequences to victim). Chi-square is used to test the degree of agreement between the data actually obtained and the data expected under a particular hypothesis (e. g., the null hypothesis). The advantage of using chi-square is that it is general and can be applied for both discrete and continuous distribution of data. With only a small sample size, a chi-square relationship must be large for statistical significance. Further impetus to use chi-square in this study was influenced by the work of Coyne and Archer (2004; 2005) in relational aggression research.

Each response item on the RATPI was classified as either recognized/did not recognize (e. g., yes/no). Responses were compared with the respondents' participation in the educational workshop (e.g., participation/did not participate) to avoid an imbalanced response structure. A more powerful experiment is one in which the null hypothesis is correctly rejected to avoid error (Howell, 2002). Therefore for this study, a priori tests were run on each question to compute the required sample size and additional post-hoc tests were conducted to compute achieved power. An alpha level of .10 was set which

ensured that the power coefficient was at least .80. In all cases, the number of respondents ($n = 121$) was large enough at a .10 level to produce power coefficients of greater than .80 (Henkel, 1976; Howell).

Subsequently, the alpha level ($\alpha = .10$) was adjusted using the Bonferroni Correction until fewer than 20 percent of the cells had expected frequencies of less than 5, and no cell had an expected frequency of less than 1.0, also minimizing the experimentwise error rate (Siegel & Castellan, 1988). The Bonferroni Correction resulted in the alpha level of .10 being divided by the number of questions in a particular group, e.g. since there were 10 items reflecting a particular construct, for a final alpha level of $.10/10 = .01$ ($p = .01$). Additionally, effect size was calculated for the study and resulted in .55, indicating that a workshop participant would score higher than 71% of the non-participants when identifying relationally aggressive behaviors on the inventory.

Summary

Chapter III described the methodology, data collection procedures, and a description of the variables considered in the study. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze data and explore the extent to which educational information about relational aggression helped adolescent viewers recognize such behaviors. Also described in the chapter was the pilot studied conducted to test the methodological design, along with details of the main study, creation of the final data collection instrument, description of the setting and participants, and aims and hypotheses of the study. The rationale for using Pearson's r_{pb} and chi-square was included. The data collection procedures were examined, including the processes of ensuring reliability of the coding procedure used to determine the occurrences of relationally aggressive behaviors by characters in the

television program used in the study. The relational aggression workshop presented to participants in the experimental group was described, as were the participant recruitment procedures.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Chapter IV provides the descriptive statistics about the student sample and their behaviors, as well as the findings related to the research questions. The quantitative results are discussed in terms of the following aims: 1) the relationship between girls' engagement in relational aggression and the amount of television watched; 2) the relationship between the type of relational aggression engaged in by girls and the amount of television they consume; 3) the extent to which girls differ in their ability to recognize relationally aggressive behaviors when viewed on television following participation in an instructional workshop designed to help them understand relational aggression; 4) the extent to which girls differ in their ability to recognize if a consequence occurred for the aggressor after participation in the relational aggression workshop; and 5) the extent to which girls differ in their ability to recognize if the target of the relationally aggressive behavior was hurt after participation in the relational aggression workshop.

Engagement in Relational Aggression and Amount of Television Watched

Research Aim 1 is descriptive in nature and explores the relationship between amount of television watched, expressed by a continuous variable of hours-per-day, and participation in relational aggression, expressed as a dichotomous variable of engagement

in relational aggression, to determine if television watching is an indicator of an adolescent girl's proclivity to engage in relationally aggressive behavior. To examine the relationship between Q6i (I would never use bullying behavior) and Q4 (hours of TV watched each day), a Pearson correlation was conducted. The Pearson correlation examining this relationship, $r(212) = 0.07$, $p < 0.05$, $r^2 = 0.5\%$, was not statistically significant. In other words, the number of hours of television watched did not indicate a tendency to engage in relationally aggressive behaviors for these respondents. The results of this Pearson correlation are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Pearson's Correlation Coefficient for Q6i and Q4: I Would Never Use Bullying Behavior; and How Many Hours of TV Do You Watch Daily?

Percent of Total Population Reporting		
Participation in Relational Aggression	Pearson's Correlation	Significance
63%	.069	.317

$p < .05$

Research Aim 2 is descriptive in nature and explores the relationship between the amount of television watched and participation in a type of relationally aggressive behavior. To examine the relationship among the 34 factors (Q6ii through Q6xxxiv as presented in Table 2) and Q4 (hours of TV watched each day), 34 Pearson correlations were conducted. The Pearson correlation examining the relationship between Q4 (hours of TV watched each day) and Q6xxxv (use sarcasm to insult), $r(212) = -0.17$, $p < 0.05$, $r^2 = 2.9\%$, indicated that Q6xxxv (use sarcasm to insult) accounted for 2.9% of the variance in the dependent variable Q4 (hours of TV watched each day). The direction of the

correlation is negative, indicating that as Q4 (hours of TV watched each day) scores increase, Q6xxxii (use sarcasm to insult) scores decrease. In other words, these findings suggest that the use of sarcasm decreases as the number of hours of TV watched increases. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not accepted for this item. The null hypothesis was not rejected for items Q6ii through Q6xxx and Q6xxxii, xxxiii and xxxiv, suggesting that the amount of television viewing was not related to participation in these specific types of relationally aggressive behaviors for these respondents. The results of the Pearson correlations on Q4 (hours of TV watched each day) and the 34 factors (Q6ii through Q6xxxiv) are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Pearson's Correlation Coefficient for Q 4: Hours of TV Watched, and Q6ii and Q6xxxiv: If You are Mad at Other Girls Who are Your Friends, What Do You Do?

	Pearson's	
	Correlation	Significance
6ii: Call mean names	0.07	0.33
6iii: Leave out on purpose	0.01	0.86
6iv: Tease to hurt	0.05	0.47
6v: Said mean things behind back	0.05	0.47
6vi: Threaten not to be friends	-0.01	0.88
6vii: Make fun of looks to face	0.07	0.29
6viii: Make fun of looks behind back	-0.02	0.77
6ix: Pick on race	0.02	0.76
6x: Text mean message about friend	0.06	0.40

	Pearson's	
	Correlation	Significance
6xi: Spread rumors	0.07	0.30
6xii: Ignore friend on purpose	0.02	0.81
6xiii: Storm out of room to show mad	0.05	0.46
6xiv: Pass mean notes about friend	0.08	0.26
6xv: Gang up on friend with others	0.09	0.21
6xvi: Whisper in huddle so friend can't hear	0.06	0.40
6xvii: Give dirty looks	0.04	0.58
6xviii: Roll eyes indicating friend is dumb	0.10	0.16
6ixx: Not invite to party on purpose	0.00	1.00
6xx: Laugh at joke made about friend	-0.05	0.45
6xxi: Say embarrassing things about friend to others	-0.02	0.77
6xxii: Tell private information about friend	-0.04	0.54
6xxiii: Drop friend to make her feel left out	0.02	0.75
6xxiv: Destroy property behind back	0.06	0.35
6xxv: Break up friends friendship	-0.01	0.88
6xxvi: Try to get others to dislike friend	-0.02	0.78
6xxvii: Make friend feel guilty	-0.06	0.40
6xxviii: Yell insults at friend	0.07	0.32
6xxix: Pretend to be hurt so friend feels bad	-0.07	0.33
6xxx: Insult with mean name calling	0.02	0.80
6xxxi: Use sarcasm to insult	-0.17*	0.01

	Pearson's	
	Correlation	Significance
6xxxii: Pick on religion	-0.01	0.87
6xxxiii: Use internet to send mean messages	-0.10	0.16
6xxxiv: Other	-0.04	0.60

* $p < .05$

Recognition of Specific Behaviors

The following section refers to Research Aim 3a which states that workshop participants will differ significantly in their ability to recognize relationally aggressive behaviors when engaged in by characters on a popular television program. Pearson chi-squares were conducted to test if the ability of both participants and non-participants who identified relationally aggressive behaviors of TV characters was independent of the specific behavior, thereby identifying if participation affected the ability to identify relationally aggressive behaviors of TV characters exhibiting specific behaviors.

Ten Pearson chi-squares were conducted on the behavior variables. The Pearson chi-squares for “insulting someone without calling names”, $\chi^2(1, N = 153) = 7.44, p = 0.01$, and “pretending to be hurt to make someone feel bad”, $\chi^2(1, N = 152) = 6.45, p = 0.01$, were statistically significant, indicating the existence of difference between participants and non-participants who identified relationally aggressive behaviors of TV characters on these two variables. There was a pattern of relationship such that non-participants were significantly better than participants at recognizing relationally aggressive behaviors of TV characters based on the behavior “insulting someone without

calling names.” The same pattern of relationship exists for the behavior variable “pretending to be hurt to make someone feel bad.” Therefore, null hypothesis Q3a was rejected for these items but not for the others, indicating that the intervention did not help participants recognize certain relationally aggressive behaviors, such as pretending to be hurt to make someone feel bad and insulting someone without using mean names. The results of the Pearson chi-squares are presented in Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 3

Frequency Counts on Behavior Variables by Recognition (Participant vs. Non-participant)

	Non- participant Recognition	Participant Recognition	Participant Total
Behavior			
Intentionally Calling Mean Names	51	61	112
Criticizing a Friend to her Face	48	58	106
Deliberately Damaging a Relationship	37	49	86
Yelling Mean Words	40	51	91
Insulting Someone without Calling	38	33	71
Names			
Sarcasm	31	33	64
Telling Private Information	39	52	91
Rolling Eyes	26	24	50
Pretending to be hurt to make someone	21	14	35

feel bad			
Other	20	17	37

Table 4

Chi-Square Analyses for Workshop Participants Q7 a-j: Behavior Recognition by Character

Behavior	χ^2	df	p
Intentionally Calling Mean Names	1.86	1	0.17
Criticizing a Friend to her Face	2.91	1	0.09
Deliberately Damaging a Relationship	0.05	1	0.82
Yelling Mean Words	0.42	1	0.52
Insulting Someone without Calling Names	7.44	1	0.01*
Sarcasm	1.97	1	0.16
Telling Private Information	0.19	1	0.67
Rolling Eyes	3.42	1	0.05
Pretending to be hurt to make someone feel bad	6.45	1	0.01*
Other	3.00	1	0.08

*Note. For all tables, * is the adjusted .10 probability level according to the Bonferroni test of significance.*

* $p < .01$

Recognition of Consequences to Aggressor

This section refers to Research Aim 3b that suggests workshop participants will differ significantly in their ability to recognize a consequence occurring for the aggressor as a result of engagement in relationally aggressive behaviors. Pearson chi-squares were

conducted to test if the ability of both workshop participants and non-participants who identified relationally aggressive behaviors of TV characters was independent of the specific behavior, thereby identifying if participation in an intervention affects the ability to identify relationally aggressive behaviors of TV characters.

Ten Pearson chi-squares were conducted on the behavior variables. The results of the Pearson chi-squares are presented in Tables 5 and 6. The Pearson chi-squares for “insulting someone without calling names,” $\chi^2(1, N = 153) = 7.19, p = 0.01$, and “pretending to be hurt to make someone feel bad,” $\chi^2(1, N = 153) = 8.68, p < 0.01$, were statistically significant, indicating the existence of difference between participants and non-participants who identified relationally aggressive behaviors of TV characters on these two variables. There was a pattern of relationship such that non-participants were significantly better than participants at recognizing relationally aggressive behaviors of TV characters based on the behaviors “insulting someone without calling names” and “pretending to be hurt to make someone feel bad.” Therefore, null hypothesis 3b was rejected for “pretending to be hurt to make someone feel bad” and “insulting someone without using mean names.” Null hypothesis 3b was not rejected for mean name calling, face-to-face criticism, yelling mean words, eye rolling, divulging private information, sarcasm, and deliberately breaking up a relationship. Again, these findings indicate that the intervention did not help participants recognize certain relationally aggressive behaviors, such as pretending to be hurt to make someone feel bad and insulting someone without using mean names.

Table 5

Frequency Counts on Behavior Variables by Recognition (Participant vs. Non-participant)

	Non- participant Recognition	Participant Recognition	Participant Total
Behavior			
Intentionally Calling Mean Names	17	19	36
Criticizing a Friend to her Face	11	14	25
Deliberately Damaging a Relationship	8	8	16
Yelling Mean Words	9	11	20
Insulting Someone without Calling Names	10	3	13
Sarcasm	6	6	12
Telling Private Information	8	6	14
Rolling Eyes	3	2	5
Pretending to be hurt to make someone feel bad	6	0	6
Other	4	5	9

Table 6

Chi-Square Analyses for Workshop Participants (TR): Behavior Recognition by Character

Behavior	χ^2	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Intentionally Calling Mean Names	0.48	1	0.49
Criticizing a Friend to her Face	0.04	1	0.84
Deliberately Damaging a Relationship	0.44	1	0.50
Yelling Mean Words	0.01	1	0.76
Insulting Someone without Calling Names	7.19	1	0.01*
Sarcasm	0.36	1	0.55
Telling Private Information	1.48	1	0.22
Rolling Eyes	0.68	1	0.41
Pretending to be hurt to make someone feel bad	8.68	1	0.00**
Other	0.03	1	0.87

Note. For all tables, * is the adjusted .10 probability level according to the Bonferroni test of significance.

**p* < .01

** Unable to perform chi-square analysis as 50% of the cells have an expected count of less than five.

Recognition of Consequences to Victim

Tables 7 and 8, corresponding to Research Aim 3c, show a comparison of workshop participants and non-participants on items 9a – j, which required respondents to identify if the victim, or target, was hurt by the relationally aggressive behavior. Pearson chi-squares were conducted to test if the ability of both participants and non-participants who identified relationally aggressive behaviors of TV characters was

independent of the specific behavior, thereby identifying if workshop participation affected the ability to identify relationally aggressive behaviors of TV characters exhibiting specific behaviors. Ten Pearson chi-squares were conducted on the behavior variables, and no relationships were found to be statistically significant indicating that the intervention did not help participants recognize consequences of relationally aggressive behaviors for a victim when they saw them happen. The results of the Pearson chi-squares are presented in Table 7 and 8.

Table 7

Frequency Counts on Behavior Variables by Recognition (Participant vs. Non-participant)

Behavior	Non-		
	participant Recognition	Participant Recognition	Participant Total
Intentionally Calling Mean Names	25	29	54
Criticizing a Friend to her Face	20	24	44
Deliberately Damaging a Relationship	15	18	33
Yelling Mean Words	14	18	32
Insulting Someone without Calling Names	13	9	22
Sarcasm	12	9	21
Telling Private Information	13	22	35
Rolling Eyes	5	7	12
Pretending to be hurt to make someone	6	6	12

feel bad			
Other	7	13	20

Table 8

Chi-Square Analyses for Workshop Participants (HRT): Behavior Recognition by Character

Behavior	χ^2	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Intentionally Calling Mean Names	0.57	1	0.45
Criticizing a Friend to her Face	0.27	1	0.61
Deliberately Damaging a Relationship	0.44	1	0.50
Yelling Mean Words	0.06	1	0.80
Insulting Someone without Calling Names	3.15	1	0.08
Sarcasm	2.35	1	0.13
Telling Private Information	0.41	1	0.52
Rolling Eyes	0.00	1	0.99
Pretending to be hurt to make someone feel bad	0.89	1	0.64
Other	0.44	1	0.51

Summary

This chapter served to outline the empirical investigation and included how respondents interpreted perceived behaviors depending on their participation in a workshop explaining relational aggression. Some unexpected findings emerged that deserve attention.

It was expected that workshop participation would be associated with a respondent's ability to recognize certain relationally aggressive behaviors when portrayed by characters in a television program. Based on the survey questions studied, the chi-square analyses showed the opposite: That, across the board, no statistical significance was found for workshop participants, however non-participants recognized "pretending to be hurt to make someone feel bad" and "insulting someone without calling names" with statistical significance in two of the three chi-square analyses. Contradicting existing research, the Pearson correlation coefficient indicated that the frequency of the specific behavior, "using sarcasm to insult," decreased as television watching increased. To address these trends, descriptive statistics and control group responses to other survey questions were investigated.

First, analyses were performed on responses to survey questions. It was important to determine if control group respondents identifying these behaviors had positively identified a definition of relational aggression or had received an explanation prior to taking the survey. Analysis determined that more girls in the experimental group reported having had a prior explanation of relational aggression and also identified the definition of relational aggression with more frequency, so it was concluded that these findings were not factors for the discrepancy.

Next, age and grade level factors were studied. Research indicates that an increase in age within a middle school environment accounts for an increase in relationally aggressive behaviors as well as an ability to recognize the behavior (Craig & Pepler, 2003). However the average age and grade level of girls in the experimental group was slightly higher than the average age and grade level of girls in the control group, so it was

concluded that this did not contribute to the control group's ability to better recognize the behaviors.

Finally, questions about siblings and respondent participation as an aggressor or victim were analyzed. While fewer individuals in the control group reported being victims, they more often reported participating in the behavior as aggressors. A higher number also reported having older sisters (53% versus 43%) and a slightly higher number reported having younger sisters (36% versus 35%). These two analyses provided possible explanations for the unexpected results.

According to social learning and coercion theories, older siblings provide their younger siblings with modeling and training in the use of social behaviors, including aggression (Bandura, 1971; Ostrov, Crick & Stauffacher, 2006). Evidence supports the premise that "sibling interactions may offer children frequent opportunities to observe and learn about aggression" (Ostrov et al., p. 243), while longitudinal research has documented that one sibling's use of aggression significantly predicts the other sibling's future use of aggression. Ostrov and colleagues also suggest that the most serious consequences of this copycat behavior are illustrated when children transfer antisocial actions into new social contexts, such as the classroom. Although the chi-square analysis in this study shows no statistical significance for workshop participants in recognizing "pretending to be hurt to make someone feel bad" and "insulting someone without calling names" as relationally aggressive behaviors, descriptive statistics indicate that 10% more control group participants reported having older sisters. This could account for their ability to recognize these behaviors when observed on television. Likewise, being subjected to bullying by a sibling, or bullying a younger sibling, can determine a

proclivity for participating in the behavior (Craig & Pepler, 2003; Ostrov et al., 2006). This may account for 67% of control group participants reporting that they engaged in these particular behaviors versus a rate of 49% from respondents in the experimental group.

Additionally, the descriptive statistics indicate that more respondents in the control group reported having participated in the three recurring significant behaviors, “pretending to be hurt to make someone feel bad,” “insulting someone without calling names,” and “using sarcasm to insult,” than did respondents in the experimental group. This implies that participating in one or all of these behaviors may have made respondents more conscious of the behavior when seeing it conducted in the television program, thus shaping their response. Moreover, more respondents overall reported being victims of the relationally aggressive behaviors listed in the inventory (See Appendix H) which may have positively impacted the ability for all participants to recognize the behaviors. Constructivism suggests that learners create knowledge as they attempt to understand their experiences, and that learners gain understanding by actively participating in their environment (Driscoll, 2000). This theory may be a factor in explaining why respondents who were victims of and/or participants in the behavior more readily recognized it than those who did not report participation or victimization.

Moreover, a higher number of respondents from the control group failed to answer behavior recognition questions which would cause a greater inequality between sample sizes, thus potentially confounding the anticipated results. Type II errors also may have occurred due to the low number of responses for individual questions 6xxx (“insulted without calling names), 6xxix (“pretended to be hurt to make someone feel

bad”), and 6xxxi (“using sarcastic tones”). In all cases, the responses were sparse, but they were particularly low for the experimental group (6xxx: 27/110 control and 21/121 experimental; 6xxix 14/110 control and 13/121 experimental; 6xxxi 32/110 control and 26/121 experimental).

In conclusion, although the sample size for the study ($N = 231$) had adequate power, the large chi-square analysis it required adversely affected the overall statistical significance. However, the descriptive statistics indicate that relationships do, indeed, exist between television viewing and relational aggression for this particular sample. Chapter V will further summarize and discuss the results and limitations of this investigation.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

This study sought to investigate the interaction between relationally aggressive behavior portrayed by television characters in a popular television show watched by adolescent girls, girls' engagement in relationally aggressive behaviors, and whether viewers who are informed about the behavior are better able to recognize it and its consequences when they see it. Its general aims explored the relationship between the amount of television watched and general participation in relational aggression and the relationship between the amount of television watched and participation in a type of relationally aggressive behavior. It also investigated whether an educational intervention explaining relational aggression enhanced a respondent's ability to recognize relationally aggressive behaviors in the context of a popular television program and consequences to the victim, aggressor or both.

The ensuing discussion will summarize the results and focus on implications for school anti-bullying policy and FCC considerations, limitations of this study, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of Results

Aim 1

The study's first aim explored the relationship between the amount of television watched and participation in relational aggression. It was hypothesized that the number of hours a girl spent watching television would correlate with a propensity to participate in relationally aggressive behavior. No statistically significant correlation was found between the amount of television watched and engagement in relationally aggressive behaviors, thereby negating the original hypothesis.

These findings are consistent with research conducted by Anderson et al. (2001) suggesting that programming content is a greater determinant of a viewer's behavior than amount of time spent in front of the television. The data also support findings that violence viewed on television results in violent behavior, but that hours watched had little impact if viewers were watching nonviolent programming (Bandura, 1971; Cline et al., 1973). In fact, a heavy diet of television might occupy a viewer so that any tendency to relate aggressively with friends or others is tempered by lack of time for social interaction.

However, it should be noted that more than half of the respondents indicated participation in relationally aggressive behaviors and all of the respondents reported watching at least some television. These findings cannot be ignored. Overall, the girls in this study reported watching an average of 16.25 hours of television each week. Seven percent indicated they watched more than 28 hours of television per week, exceeding the national per-person average of 22 hours per week (A.C. Nielsen Media Research, 2007) and the screen-time average of 20 hours per week for adolescents (American Heart

Association, 2008). Sixty-three percent of respondents indicated they engaged in relational aggression. These numbers suggest that an above-average rate of television watching was not necessary for relationally aggressive behaviors to emerge. In other words, time spent on television viewing, regardless of the amount, could affect the emotional state of the viewer (Fletcher, 2006). A compromised emotional state can lead an individual to emulate the behavior of television characters with which they associate or decrease sociability, as time spent with the television decreases time spent with friends and other real-life role models (Anderson et al., 2001). Depending on the individual's choice, relationally aggressive behaviors could emerge, leading to aggressive behaviors toward others. Likewise, the individual may withdraw, leading to social isolation and, perhaps, victimization.

Aim 2

The second aim examined the relationship between the amount of television watched and participation in a particular type of relationally aggressive behavior. The behavior "using sarcasm to insult a friend" was weakly and negatively correlated with the amount of television watched. Contradicting research in this area suggesting that children model behaviors they see on television, particularly if the behaviors are conducted by an attractive protagonist who is rewarded and justified (Bandura, 1971; Berkowitz & Rawlings, 1963), these results indicate that the tendency to use sarcasm to insult a friend decreases as the amount of television viewing increases.

According to a Kaiser Family Foundation study (1999), much of a child's early exposure to relationship formation is influenced by the vast amounts of television consumed between the ages of newborn to teen. When this information is coupled with

Harris' and Pexman's (2003) findings that children are unable to comprehend the differences between irony and meanness until adolescence, and Van Evra's (2004) discovery that sarcasm is a mainstay in television programming, it is unsurprising that girls in this study indicated sarcasm as a form of aggression.

The inability of study participants to view sarcasm as detrimental to a victim concurs with Huesmann's (1988) findings suggesting that formation of individual cognitive scripts begins early in a child's life. A developmental inability to comprehend sarcasm seen on television can cause long-term misinterpretations of not only the meaning of the behavior, but also a blurring of the lines between when humorous irony is appropriate and when it is relationally aggressive thus prohibiting recognition of the behavior as hurtful. Additionally, the prevalence of sarcasm on television programming may desensitize viewers to the harm it may cause or elevate it to be construed as a normal communication strategy. Like other entertainment genres, situational comedies employ conflict between characters to retain viewer interest. Sarcasm, when used as humor, is, indeed, entertaining and therefore might not be construed as harmful if a viewer is developmentally or otherwise unable to discern a victim's level of discomfort. Likewise, when resolution to the conflict or consequence is not illustrated in the context of the program, it could be difficult for a viewer to recognize that the sarcastic behavior was intended to hurt, particularly if he or she is unable to empathize with the victimized character.

Aim 3

The goal of this aim was to determine the extent to which an educational intervention about relational aggression enhanced a respondent's ability to recognize it in the context of a popular television program. It also sought to identify whether respondents could recognize consequences to the victim and aggressor. The results were mixed, supporting two of the three hypotheses. Each of these points will be discussed in turn.

An overall trend emerged, showing that workshop participants recognized more relationally aggressive behaviors than non-participants. This indicates that even short-term interventions can increase awareness. While Olweus (1997) and others promote long-term, holistic intervention as optimal, they agree that providing information about relational aggression and the language to discuss it gives teachers, parents and students the tools to recognize it.

Certain behaviors were recognized more readily than others by girls who did not participate in the workshop, indicating that the intervention was more helpful in illustrating some types of relationally aggressive behaviors and not others. Statistical significance was indicated for non-participants on items "pretending to be hurt to make someone feel bad" and "insulting someone without using mean names."

There are several potential reasons for this result. Because of the developmental inability of certain individuals in this age group to differentiate sarcasm from other forms of communication (Harris & Pexman, 2003), it is possible that participants might have interpreted "insulting someone without using mean names" as sarcasm. When considering Van Evra's (2004) assertion that ironic humor is the mainstay of television

programming, an additional supposition can be made that all respondents recognized this behavior readily due to its prevalence in programming. In other words, they needed no intervention to aid in recognition. Additionally, a girl's early verbal prowess may allow her to perfect this technique and therefore be better able to recognize it when it happens (Bonica et al., 2003; Salmivalli, 1998).

It is unsurprising that "pretending to be hurt to make someone feel bad" was not only identified as a relationally aggressive tool used by characters on the television show, but also readily recognized by non-participants. In a study on self-estimated behavior, Salmivalli (1998) found that young girls, particularly those with advanced language skills, have the capability of intentionally manipulating individuals using socially acceptable behaviors. Additionally, girls begin to process social information at a relatively early age and realize that hurt is a more socially acceptable response than anger (Camodeca & Goossens, 2005). Based on this information and the results from this study, a reasonable conclusion is that girls use this technique in their own repertoires which positively impacts their ability to recognize it when others employ the behavior.

Survey questions pertaining to Aim 3 also asked respondents to identify consequences to the victim and/or aggressor. "Pretending to be hurt to make someone feel bad" and "insulting without using mean names" again were behaviors for which non-workshop participants recognized a consequence for the aggressor. Because these behaviors were previously recognized as relationally aggressive in the context of the program, it makes sense that all girls, not just workshop participants, might identify the associated consequences. However, no statistically significant differences appeared for participants and non-participants when asked to identify if the victim was hurt by any of

the other relationally aggressive behaviors listed on the inventory. This could indicate that, when watching the behaviors unfold, respondents could not detect a victim's distress or potential distress caused by this type of relationally aggressive behavior.

The inability to empathize with the victim warrants a lengthier discussion and has implications for further study. These results support the work of researchers studying social information processing theory (Camodeca & Goossens, 2005; Sutton et al., 1999), Dellasega's and Nixon's (2003) work on empathy and female bullying, the work by Cline et al. (1973) on media desensitization, and brain development studies conducted by Jensen (2005).

First, an inability to accurately process social information occurs during adolescence (Sutton et al., 1999), when girls are most likely to bully. The naturally egocentric developmental stage in which girls aged 11 - 14 exist causes them to experience negative emotions more internally which inhibits their ability to consider a victim. Identifying with a victim also may create psychological dissonance, so girls gravitate away. Girls might also fear that they will become "victims by association" if they align themselves too closely with the target (Rigby & Slee, 1993; Flahive & Glazier, 2004) and therefore remain silent bystanders even though they understand the behavior is hurtful.

Secondly, Sutton et al. (1999) suggest that girls in this developmental trajectory invest tremendous amounts of energy in peer acceptance. Even though studies show an unspoken status associated with being a girl bully (Coyne & Archer, 2004), it still is unacceptable to get caught and thus become labeled a bully. However it is more unacceptable to be labeled a victim (Rigby & Slee, 1993). This suggests that, when

presented with a choice between identifying with a victim and aggressor, a girl at this age may choose to associate with the aggressor as it is less risky to bully when the odds are low that she will not get caught (Feinberg, 2003) and much higher that she will be ostracized and bullied herself if she sides with the victim.

Third, Coyne and Archer (2004) found that relationally aggressive behaviors of girls are often justified and rewarded on television, particularly if the aggressor is attractive. Girls on a steady diet of media messages that promote relational aggression may begin to emulate the behavior or become desensitized to the consequences, particularly if the character and behavior are realistic (Wilson et al., 2002). As early as 1973, studies by Cline et al., showed that prolonged exposure to violent television programming desensitized a child viewer to the ramifications of television violence. While overt, physical violence on television has since been regulated by the FCC, the more pervasive acts of relational aggression are not policed. According to Coyne and Archer, 18.46 acts of relational aggression occur per hour in popular adolescent programming. When the number of acts per hour is combined with the below-average weekly number of television hours recorded in this study (16.25), girls see 300 incidents of relational aggression per week, or 15,600 acts per year, on television alone—a number that implies prolonged exposure and therefore possible desensitization. Furthermore the current study shows that 71% of participants in the experimental group reported engaging in relational aggression while only 12% reported recognition of the victim being hurt, which supports the theory that girls who are relationally aggressive tend to be less likely to show empathy (Dellasega & Nixon, 2003).

Finally, Jensen (2005) posits that brain development is a predictor of an

individual's ability to empathize. This is supported by a supposition that neurons affecting emotions are incomplete until late adolescence, therefore making it difficult for younger individuals to empathize (Dellasega & Nixon, 2003). The 11- to 14-year-olds in this study are in the early stages of neural development , which could preclude them from having a fully developed ability to relate to a victim.

Discussion

Relational aggression, in all its insidious forms, is complex and difficult for educators, administrators and parents to understand and recognize, yet there is strong evidence that it influences psychological well-being and impedes an individual's ability to function in current and future relationships as well as in an academic environment, especially for girls (Olweus, 1997; Craig & Pepler, 2003). The findings from this study indicate the following:

1. Relationally aggressive behaviors are engaged in by girls in academic settings.
2. All girls recognized some relationally aggressive behaviors, yet more behaviors were recognized by girls after even short-term application of developmentally appropriate interventions.
3. Students have a varied ability to detect relational aggression when they see it happen.
4. The ability of girls to recognize relational aggression may be influenced by the content of media messages rather than the amount of time spent watching television.

5. No statistical significance emerged for respondents' abilities to recognize consequences for the victim in this study.

Implications

Although relational aggression gradually is becoming recognized as an issue of harassment and bullying, as evidenced by inclusion of wording in school policy that has traditionally only banned the more overt aspects of bullying, this study suggests that strategies for overcoming relational aggression should focus on all aspects of the behavior because of its pervasiveness in girl and popular culture and its ability to inflict harm, and particularly on consequences for the victim of relational aggression.

Heightened awareness of the issue by school personnel should result in more focused attention on the social interactions of girls in group settings and the implementation of a variety of intervention strategies that are appropriate for each age group. While 71% of the respondents in the experimental group could recognize the behavior, there is room for improvement. A series of workshops that are not only lecture style, but also interactive and involve a wider sector of the school community, would more fully develop awareness and understanding that relational aggression is not simply a social rite of passage in which it is acceptable for all girls to engage. These workshops should be a secured line item in school budgets and, perhaps, the community health budgets in cities. Additionally, given the inability for girls to understand certain aspects of relational aggression, policy must focus on all types of bullying and provide the funding and tools to teachers so they can understand the variety of aggression that takes place in a school building.

Increased awareness in schools must be coupled with increased general awareness of the behavior and modeling of empathy. This study found that none of the respondents could identify, with statistical significance, whether a victim was hurt by relational aggression. This general lack of empathy by respondents may indicate a larger societal issue brought about by widespread use of electronic communication, which disables an individual's development of empathetic response by removing the necessity to witness the results of the hurtful behavior. Teachers and school personnel can establish caring and empathic mentoring relationships with students and create an emotionally safe classroom where learning, achievement, success, and security are the norm if awareness exists about how the behavior hurts everyone involved.

Findings also suggest that the content of media messages may desensitize viewers. In other words, there is a real possibility that heavy exposure to programming containing relational aggression—or misconstrued ironic humor—prohibits girls from recognizing the behavior. The relatively low percentage of individuals in the control group and the 29% in the experimental group unable to recognize relational aggression implies that the behavior has become normalized. The role models on television are not powerful women who have succeeded due to persistence and kindness (Dellasega & Nixon, 2003), but girls and women who engage consistently in relational aggression to achieve their goals. Concerned parents and activists must lobby hard for producers and networks to cast a critical eye on the female protagonists in situational comedies as well as the level of appropriate conflict resolution that ensues. Conflict is unavoidable in fictional programming just as it is in nonfiction. However, the creation of fictional programming provides writers and producers the opportunity to showcase both humorous

conflict and healthy resolution in the 22 minute time block typically reserved for children's shows. While the experts who rated the programs for this study were looking specifically for high incidents of relational aggression in programming, they found two shows, *Hannah Montana* and *Full House*, to consistently contain meaningful resolution, and therefore allocate less time to incidents of relational aggression.

Since the FCC has the responsibility for regulating content of television programming, these results might be useful in pointing out that physical violence is not the only form of aggression requiring regulation and that program rating guides should include a wider array of antisocial behaviors. Advertisers should take note as well and begin depicting women in healthy relationships with themselves and each other. The television programs explored in this study seem unvetted for developmental suitability, leaving adolescents attempting to filter messages—often incorrectly. Interpretive assistance in the form of media literacy courses or, at the least, media analyses training should be a norm in educational curriculum. Subsequently, informing parents with more detailed programmatic ratings provides opportunities for them to better screen and help girls interpret what is being watched.

Limitations of This Study

Any interpretation and discussion of the results of this study should be based on consideration of the following limitations:

1. The sample was not randomly selected from the population, so the ability to generalize results to the population is limited. The sample was initially limited by utilizing only one school to generate a list of possible study participants. Some of the students included in the sample indicated they

had been informed about relational aggression in some way but were not removed from either the control or experimental group so they may not be representative of the general population. It may indicate that the student was able to recognize the behavior prior to participation in the workshop. Additionally, students attended the relational aggression workshop voluntarily and may not be representative of the general population. The dynamic of voluntary participation should be considered as a confounding variable as it may reflect a student's desire to be out of the classroom for the survey and/or workshop. Either case would be important to take into consideration for analysis.

2. The reluctance to remove students from instructional time proved to be a factor that limited the success of data retrieval efforts. Given only a 22-minute block of time prohibited a more thorough workshop and eliminated the ability for student dialog during the workshop and hindered some respondents' inabilities to complete the entire survey.
3. The survey instrument may not have provided for an accurate and/or comprehensive insight into either behavior recognition or participation as it was limited to self-reports and did not include teacher or peer reports, which have been used widely in similar studies. Additionally, the instrument was used only in this study and, despite face- and content-validity verification, caution must be taken in interpreting the results until the instrument is used more frequently.

4. The study design did not examine other moderating or mediating external variables that may be associated with recognition of and participation in relational aggression, such as: language barriers and word choice, access to media content (based on student socioeconomic status), behavior restrictions based on ethnicity or with which character the respondent most identified. While providing baseline information on survey participants and descriptive information about the intervention, the cross-sectional nature of the design offered a picture of participants and the program at only one point in time which effectively limited the predictive value of the study.
5. The study also did not analyze other media with which the girls are engaged nor did it capture the type of programming watched. It did not take into account other television programs, video games, Internet sites that may contribute to either a heightened awareness of relationally aggressive behaviors or desensitization to the behavior. The results show that programming content, rather than amount of programming viewed, is a greater determinant of an individual's behavior. This study did not capture information about favorite programming and therefore could not address the issue of content.
6. While this study is too narrow to include an achievement analysis of the victims and perpetrators of relational aggression, it is essential to include this information in the discussion so that the importance of the examination of relational aggression is not lost on school personnel.

Future research should incorporate how relational aggression, in particular, impedes achievement.

7. Despite face- and content-validity efforts, some wording on the survey may have been confusing for respondents. For example, interchanging the terms bullying with relational aggression may have been confusing or cause discomfort for a respondent if she had to admit to bullying as opposed to relational aggression.

Suggestions for Future Research to Improve This Study

1. Participants should be solicited from other middle schools to generate a sample that is representative of a larger cross-section of students and to provide insight into a wider sample from the population. If this is done, however, one issue that must be addressed is how the researcher could provide workshops to a larger population in a cost effective manner.
2. Girls who indicated prior exposure to relational aggression information should be segregated from the control group.
3. The workshop should be revised to better fit into a shortened school period so that respondents can contemplate responses, complete the survey and engage in facilitated discussion.
4. Data collection tools should be revised to include peer reports, teacher responses and more open-ended questions and wording should be clarified to enhance understanding of questions.
5. The study design can be enhanced to avoid confusion around terminology (bullying versus relational aggression) and account for differences in

cultural behaviors and mores.

6. The data collection procedure can be revised to capture longitudinal data by administering the survey to fifth-grade students and following this population through eighth-grade.
7. The workshop can be revised to include more thorough descriptions of concepts that seemed unclear to girls.
8. More information about what happens to the victim should be included in the workshop.
9. A qualitative component should be included that would encourage dialog and the sharing of personal experiences to obtain richer and more robust results.
10. Remove some variables in the chi-square analysis and/or increase the sample size to at least 500 to improve effectiveness of the measure.

Conclusion

This study was designed to investigate media interaction on relationally aggressive behaviors of adolescent girls. Its quantitative format used a Pearson correlation coefficient to examine the volume of television consumption and participation in relationally aggressive behavior, and Pearson's chi-square to examine whether an understanding of relational aggression aided recognition of its consequences. Results indicated that the amount of television watched does not correlate with participation in the behavior generally, and that the use of sarcasm to hurt a friend decreases as the amount of television viewing increases. Results also indicated with statistical significance that knowledge about the behavior is associated with awareness of occurrences and

consequences to the aggressor, but not with consequences to the victim. Together, these results should have implications for regulations regarding television violence, mediation of relational aggression, and development of appropriate and thorough interventions.

Anti-bullying policy, as regulated in schools by the No Child Left Behind Act and for the networks by the FCC, can only be fully realized when all aspects, physical and emotional, of personal aggression are understood and addressed. When children are provided with opportunities to thrive and learn in safe environments, they can form self-concepts that allow for development of healthy relationships.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Term	Definition
Relational Aggression	Relational aggression is a manipulative and covert way of harming others by using the social structure as a way to exclude and ostracize—typically demonstrated in same-sex female behavior. The behavior is intentional and can take many forms including gossiping, destroying friendships, spreading rumors, and breaking confidences (Coyne & Archer, 2005).
Mass Culture	A set of cultural values and ideas that arise from common exposure of a population to the same cultural activities, communications media, music and art, etc. Mass culture becomes possible only with modern communications and electronic media. A mass culture is transmitted to individuals, rather than arising from people's daily interactions, and therefore lacks the distinctive content of cultures rooted in community and region. Mass culture tends to reproduce the liberal value of individualism and to foster a view of the citizen as consumer (see also mass culture) (Drislane & Parkinson, 2002).
Gossip	Idle talk, especially about other people. Telling tales, chatter, scandal and rumors (Coyne & Archer, 2005).
Ignore	Refuse to notice or disregard deliberately, to leave out, neglect, omit, overlook, reject or turn a blind eye (S. Coyne, personal communication, November 16, 2007).
Huddle	Where a small group or a heap or crowd stand closely together, intentionally to leave someone out (Coyne, 2007).
Social Ostracism/ Exclusion	Socially ban, bar, disallow, expel, forbid, omit, reject, refuse and shut people out from a social events and occasions (Coyne, 2007).
Criticize Clothes and Personality Behind Back	Condemning a person's personal choice and making negative comments about the character and nature of an individual without the individual hearing the remarks (Coyne, 2007).
Dirty Looks	To indicate dislike and disapproval to others through inappropriate facial body language and expressions without adding verbal comment.
Roll Eyes	To show boredom, non-acceptance and disagreement by inappropriately rolling their eyes (Coyne, 2007).

Leaving the Room to Make Someone Feel Bad	Storm out of a situation leaving an individual alone to reflect upon what has been said (Coyne, 2007).
Tell Someone to Leave	Tell someone to leave Request a particular person to exclude themselves from a gathering or individual meeting (Coyne, 2007).
Turn Others Against	Deliberately try to influence and change other people's views and opinions of individuals who they reject (Coyne, 2007).
Withhold Information from Them that the Rest of the Group is Let in on	Remain secretive regarding specific information towards an individual where other group members are privy to that knowledge (Coyne, 2007).
Make Them Feel Like they Don't Fit In	Use own strength of character to intentionally suppress the feelings and contributions of another person in order that they feel uncomfortable within the group (Coyne, 2007).
Not Sharing	Adopting a selfish attitude, refusing others to join in participate in doing or using something (Coyne, 2007).
Embarrass in Public	Deliberately cause another person to feel self-conscious or ashamed in front of other people (the physical appearance of the recipient may indicate embarrassment, for example, they may blush, or appear to be tearful etc) (Coyne, 2007).
Practical Jokes	To have fun at the expense of others which aim to hurt or embarrass another person (Coyne, 2007).
Gesture Behind Back	An action, hidden from the recipient, to convey unkind thoughts or aggression towards that person (Coyne, 2007).
Imitate Behind Back (in front of others)	Mimic and mocking in an unfriendly and spiteful manner (the character may be present or not at this time) (Coyne, 2007).
Try to Get Others Into Trouble	Devise/set-up situations where an individual will be led into wrong-doings (Coyne, 2007).
Do Something to Try and Make Another Girl Look Stupid	Deliberately embarrass a person by knowingly asking them to do or say something they know little about or that appears to be silly to others (Coyne, 2007).
Made Fun in Public	Laugh at the comments or actions of someone in order to embarrass and hurt their feelings (Coyne, 2007).
Deception	Mislead by lying and cheating another person (Coyne, 2007).
Form a Friendship/ Relationship to Get Something	Intentionally befriend an individual for personal gain (Coyne, 2007).

Put Undue Pressure on Someone	Use excessive influence or authority on a person in order to entice them to do something against their wishes (Coyne, 2007).
Blame	State that another person is responsible for actions they have not done (Coyne, 2007).
Judge Others' Work in an Unjust Manner	Pass derogatory comments about the standard of another person's work (Coyne, 2007).
Pretend to be Hurt or Angry to Make Someone Feel Bad	To gain sympathy at the expense of others when the incident or action taken didn't warrant such a response (Coyne, 2007).
Influence Others by Making them Feel Guilty	Place undue pressure on a person that intentionally plays on their conscience possibly resulting in them doing things they regret doing in order to please the other person (Coyne, 2007).
Blackmail (emotional)	A selfish attitude where an individual attempts to gain something by using threats to pressure the victim (Coyne, 2007).
Vandalism	Taking ones aggression/frustration out on other things rather than the actual source of the aggression (Coyne, 2007).
Took or Damaged Property Belonging to Someone Else	Deliberately deface/destroy or remove the possessions of other people in order to get back at them (Coyne, 2007).

APPENDIX B

RELATIONAL AGGRESSION IN TV PROGRAMMING INVENTORY

Introduction: Thank you for completing this survey. You are playing an important role in my college research studies. Your answers are anonymous. When you have completed your survey, please fold it and put it in the envelope on the desk.

Directions: Please do not put your name anywhere on this survey! Answer the questions to the best of your ability, following the instructions for each question. You are allowed to write anything in this survey that you feel would be helpful for me to understand your answers. It should take you about 42 minutes to complete the survey. Please skip any questions that you do not wish to answer or that make you uncomfortable. There is no penalty for skipped questions.

Please tell me about yourself:

What is your...

Age _____

Grade _____

Race (please check only one):

_____ Native American	_____ Black
_____ Hispanic	_____ White
_____ Asian Indian	_____ Asian
_____ Pacific Islander	_____ Biracial
_____ Middle Eastern	

How many older brothers do you have? _____

How many older sisters do you have? _____

How many younger brothers do you have? _____

How many younger sisters do you have? _____

Please answer the following questions:

1. Has anyone explained relational aggression to you before? (Please circle **one answer only**).
 - a. YES
 - b. NO

2. If you know what relational aggression is, how did you learn about it? (Please circle **all that apply**):
 - a. teacher/school counselor
 - b. friends
 - c. parents/caregivers/family
 - d. a book
 - e. educational program or lecture
 - f. internet
 - g. television
 - h. other _____

3. I think relational aggression is (please circle **one answer only**):
 - a. **Physical harm, such as hitting, kicking, or punching, done to another person who may or may not be a friend or acquaintance.**
 - b. **Purposely harming or hurting a friend's or acquaintance's feelings by saying mean things about her to other people, ignoring her, gossiping about her behind her back, text-messaging or instant-messaging mean things about her, calling her names or threatening to do something mean to her.**

4. How many hours of TV do you watch each day? **Please write in a number for each day:**
 - a. Monday _____
 - b. Tuesday _____
 - c. Wednesday _____
 - d. Thursday _____
 - e. Friday _____
 - f. Saturday _____
 - g. Sunday _____

5. If you have been bullied by girls, what did they do to you? (**Please check all that apply**):
- i I have never been bullied
 - ii Called me mean names
 - iii Left me out of something on purpose
 - iv Teased me to hurt my feelings
 - v Talked about me with other girls behind my back
 - vi Threatened to not be friends with me unless I did what they wanted
 - vii Made fun of the way I look to my face
 - viii Made fun of the way I look behind my back
 - ix Picked on me because of my race
 - x Used a cell phone to text something mean or untrue about me
 - xi Spread rumors (either true or untrue) about me
 - xii Ignored by my friend
 - xiii Stormed out of the room to show me she was mad
 - xiv Passed around mean notes about me
 - xv Made prank phone calls to my house
 - xvi Got other people to gang up on me
 - xvii Huddled together on purpose, whispering and talking so I couldn't hear

- xviii Gave me dirty looks
- ixx Rolled her eyes at me
- xx Didn't invite me to a party on purpose to hurt me
- xxi Laughed at a joke that was made about me
- xxii Made embarrassing comments about me around other people
- xxiii Told private information to some else after I told her not to tell it
- xxiv Dropped me to become friends with another girl so I would feel left out
- xxv Destroyed my property behind my back
- xxvi Tried to break up my friendship with another person
- xxvii Tried to get other people to dislike me
- xxviii Made me feel guilty by trying to get me to do something I didn't want to do
- xxix Yelled at me
- xxx Pretended to be hurt so I would feel bad
- xxxi Insulted me (without calling me a name)
- xxxii Used sarcastic tones to insult me
- xxxiii Picked on my because of my religion
- xxxiv Used the Internet to send something mean about me

xxxv. Other _____

6. If you wanted to get even with other girls who were your friends, what would you do? **(Please check all that apply):**

- i I would never used bullying behavior
- ii Call a girlfriend mean names
- iii Leave a girlfriend out of something on purpose
- iv. Teased someone to hurt them
- v Gossiped about a friend I know behind her back
- vi Threatened to not be friends unless she did what I wanted
- vii Made fun of the way my friend looks to her face
- viii Made fun of the way my friend looks behind her back
- ix Picked on a friend I know because of her race
- x Used a cell phone to text something mean or untrue about a friend
- xi Spread rumors (either true or untrue) about a friend
- xii Ignored a girl who is my friend
- xiii Stormed out of a room to show my friend I was mad
- xiv Passed mean notes about my friend
- xv Made prank phone calls to a friend's house

- xvi Got other people to gang up on a friend
- xvii Huddled together on purpose, whispering and talking, so my friend couldn't hear
- xviii Gave a friend dirty looks
- ixx Rolled my eyes at a girl who is my friend
- xx Did not invite my friend to a party on purpose to hurt her feelings
- xxi Laughed at a joke that was made about my friend
- xxii Made embarrassing comments about a friend to other people
- xxiii Told private information to some else after my friend told me not to tell it
- xxiv Dropped my friend to become friends with another girl so she would feel left out
- xxv Destroyed my friend's property behind her back
- xxvi Tried to break up a friendship between my friend and another person
- xxvii. Tried to get other people to dislike my friend
- xxviii Made my friend feel guilty to try to get her to do something she didn't want to do
- xxix Yelled at my friend
- xxx Pretended to be hurt so my friend would feel bad
- xxxi Insulted my friend (without calling her a name)
- xxxii Used sarcastic tones to insult my friend

xxxiii Picked on a friend because of her religion

xxxiv Used the internet to send something mean about another girl

xxxv Other _____

7. Please answer the following questions for **Suite Life of Zach & Cody**:

1. **List the names of each important character and circle M for male and F for female:**

a. _____ M F

b. _____ M F

c. _____ M F

d. _____ M F

e. _____ M F

2. **Which character do you feel is most like you?**

3. **Explain why you think this character is most like you:**

Behavior	Write in the name or names of the character(s) next to the behavior you saw them do.	Write in the name of the character(s) who got in trouble for being mean.	Write in the name of the character(s) who were hurt in some way by the behavior.	Describe what the characters were doing when the behavior happened.
Calling someone a mean name				
Criticizing other's clothing, personality to their face				
Yelling or arguing in a mean way				
Breaking confidences				
Rolling eyes				
Pretend to be hurt to make them feel bad about themselves				
Insulting someone (without calling names)				
Being sarcastic to insult				
Deliberately trying to break up someone's friendship				

APPENDIX C

DENIAL OF CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

We are working on a study about girls' television viewing habits and bullying experiences. Classes of 6th, 7th and 8th grade girls in your child's school will be invited to participate in this survey. We are asking students to share their viewpoints by completing an in-school survey that will take about 40 minutes to finish. Students will watch a television program and then complete a survey that asks questions about their experiences with being bullied and bullying, time spent watching television, and their ability to recognize bullying in the program they watched.

In addition, randomly chosen girls will participate in a workshop about bullying that is unique to girls—called relational aggression. At the conclusion of the research, all the girls will have the opportunity to participate in the free workshop.

All information provided by the student on the survey will be held in confidence. No names or identification number will be asked for – the surveys will be completely anonymous. Written reports of the data will not identify individuals but will summarize results across all the students.

Participating in this survey is voluntary and the student may withdraw at any time without penalty. If you do not want your child to participate in this study, it will involve no penalty. Students who do participate will not gain any special benefits. Furthermore, students can choose not to answer any questions that make her feel uncomfortable.

If you do not want your child to participate in this study, please complete the lower portion of this form and return it to the researcher within 10 days at the address below. If you do not return this form, your child will be invited to participate in the study. Your child will still have the option of choosing not to participate in the study on the day the survey is administered.

When the study is completed we will be glad to share the results with you. If you have any questions please contact Laura Hammel or Dr. Joanne Goodell at the address listed below.

* The Suite Life of Zach & Cody (TVG)

I have received an explanation of the study and would prefer not to allow my child to participate.

Parent's Name (please print) _____

Student's Name (please print) _____

Parent's Signature _____

Address questions/return this form in the enclosed envelope to:

Laura Hammel or Dr. Joanne Goodell

Cleveland State University

Department of Teacher Education

Chester Building, #269

2121 Euclid Ave.

Cleveland, OH 44115

216-687-3644 or 216-687-5426

l.hammel@csuohio.edu / j.goodell@csuohio.edu

APPENDIX D

LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS/STUDENT ASSENT FORM

Dear Student,

We are asking you to help us with our research about girl bullying and TV watching. Participating is voluntary. This means that you do not have to take part if you do not want to. Nothing will happen to you if you decide not to participate.

If you agree to participate, you will do so during the school day. Some of you will participate in a workshop about girl bullying. All of you will watch a popular television program and take a survey about it after you've watched. Please do not put your name on the survey. That way, there is no way to know who filled out which survey.

Please read the following and sign below if you agree to participate.

I understand that:

- *If I don't want to take the survey that's okay and I won't get into trouble*
- *Anytime that I want to stop participating I can and it's okay to do so*
- *My name will not be known and my answers will be completely private*

Student's signature: _____

Name: _____ (Please print)

Date: _____

There are two copies of this letter. After signing them, keep one copy for yourself and return the other.

Thank you for your help!

For further information regarding this research, please contact either of the individuals listed below. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant you may contact Cleveland State University Institutional Review Board at 216-687-3630.

Faculty Member
Dr. Joanne Goodell,

Cleveland State University
Dept. of Teacher Education
Chester Bldg., Rm. 261
(216) 687-5426
J.goodell@csuohio.edu

Student Researcher
Laura Hammel

Graduate Student
Cleveland State University
Dept. of Urban Education
l.hammel@csuohio.edu
216-687-3644

APPENDIX E

CODING GUIDE

Show/Episode	Total Acts of Aggression	Consequences for Aggressor	Consequences for Victim	Predominant RA Behavior	Resolution
Suite Life 1: French Fry Machine	12	5	2	Yelling means names/arguing; insulting using sarcasm	none
Suite Life 2: Mermaid	15	5	1	Criticizing to face/behind back; damage relationship; insulting using sarcasm	none
Hannah Montana 1: Bathroom	8	4	4	Teasing; gossiping behind back	yes
Hannah Montana 2: Cracker	9	3	6	Physical violence; calling mean names; gossiping behind back; leaving out	yes
Full House 1: Kids Club	14	9	7	Giving dirty looks; yelling means names; arguing; threatening relationship	yes
Full House 2: Making Out	8	1	3	Threatening relationship; influencing through guilt	yes
That's so Raven 1: Election	5	2	2	Calling mean names	yes
That's So Raven 2: necklace	6	1	2	Gossiping behind back	yes







APPENDIX F

RELATIONAL AGGRESSION WORKSHOP RATIONALE

Why Me: Do Girls *Have* to be Mean to Each Other?

Based on the philosophy of the *Ophelia Project* (2007), the focus of this workshop is to create or enhance awareness of relational aggression and its consequences, to provide girls with the ability to identify the behavior in their environment, and to empower them to confront it.

At the end of the workshop, participants will:

-  Have a definition of relational aggression
-  Recognize the forms of relational aggression
-  Understand the motivation for relational aggression
-  Recognize how they knowingly or unknowingly participate in the behavior
-  Understand the consequences of relational aggression on others
-  Leave with tools to deal with the behavior

APPENDIX G

WORKSHOP PRESENTATION

It's a Girl's World

- As you watch, think about what you are seeing on the playground.

Why Me?



**Do Girls *Have* to be Mean
to Each Other?**



What is Relational Aggression (RA)?

- ➔ Intended to harm someone you know
- ➔ Done in secret
- ➔ Girls do it more than boys
- ➔ Parents and teachers often can't see it



2 Types of RA

- ➔ Proactive
 - Sue forces Becky out of her group so she can stay in charge.
- ➔ Reactive
 - Linda gets teased repeatedly at school so she starts to tease other people to protect herself.

What Does it Look Like?



- Intimidation
- Manipulative affection
- Alliance building
- Cyberbullying
- Exclusion
- Ignoring
- Malicious gossip
- Rumor spreading
- Teasing

Why Do Girls Do It?

Fear
Power
Control
Popularity

Who Does It?

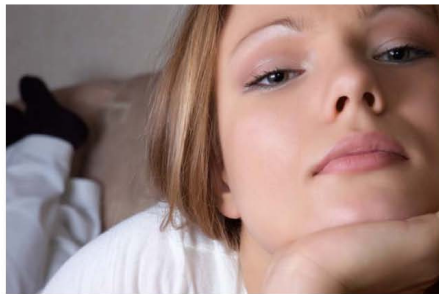
➤ Queen Bee

- Friends do what she wants
- Not intimidated by other girls
- Charming to adults (can fool the teacher)
- Takes no responsibility for hurting others
- Defines right and wrong by loyalty

Do you know a Queen Bee?



Sidekick



- Queen is authority
- Gets pushed around by Queen
- Lies for the Queen
- Can change her behavior

Do you know a Sidekick?

The Gossip



- Secretive
 - Friends with all
 - Acts trustworthy
 - Good listener
 - Uses confidential information
 - Rarely excluded from group
 - Seems harmless
- Do you know a Gossip?**

The Floater



- Moves freely among groups
- Doesn't want to exclude
 - Avoids conflicts
 - High self esteem
 - Not competitive

Do you know a Floater?

Torn Bystander



- Accommodating
- Peacemaker
- Goes along to get along
- Sometimes has to choose between friends

Do you know a Torn Bystander?

The Wannabe

- Wants what group wants
- Loves to gossip
- Loves to give help and advice
- The right “look” is important
- Puts her opinions last

Do you know a Wannabe?



The Target

- Helpless to stop other's behaviors
- Excluded & isolated
- Rejects first
- Scared
- Tempted to change to fit

Do you know a Target?



It's a Girl's World

- What's happening on the playground?
- Do you recognize any of the behavior we just talked about in this scene?
- What roles do you think these girls are playing? Who is the Queen Bee?

What Happens to Aggressors & Victims?

➤ Physical, emotional & academic problems

- Headaches
- Stomachaches
- Feeling tired
- Depression
- Appetite loss
- Unexplained crying
- Reluctance to go to school

➤ Suicide



How Do I Deal with It?

- Activities outside of school or group
- Create your own club
- Find a hobby
- Find friends who appreciate you for who you are
- Volunteer
- Seek advice
- Telling is NOT tattling
- Stand up for a victim
- Concentrate on schoolwork
- Set academic & sports goals
- Keep a journal



References

- Glazier, L., & Flavie, G. (2004). *It's a girl's world: A documentary about social bullying*. The National Film Board of Canada.
- *It has a name: Relational aggression. Shaping healthy peer relationships for today's girls and young women* (2007). Erie, PA: The Ophelia Project



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APPENDIX H

Frequencies of Engagement in or Abuse from Relationally Aggressive Behaviors for All Respondents

	Victim	Aggressor
Behavior	(<i>N</i> = 226)	(<i>N</i> = 220)
Called mean names	174	74
Left out of something on purpose	122	58
Teased to hurt feelings	138	40
Said mean things behind back	165	79
Threatened to end friendship if individual did not comply with demands	81	24
Made fun of looks to face	107	34
Made fun of looks behind back	128	47
Picked on due to race	48	13
Used cell phone to text something mean	54	34
Spread rumors	132	45
A friend ignored me/I ignored friend	136	71
Stormed out of room to show anger	77	62
Mean notes passed/Passed mean notes	73	46
Ganged up on/Instigated ganging up	82	32

Huddled together to prevent hearing	100	46
Gave dirty looks	164	91
Rolled eyes	136	94
Purposely left out of an event/party	63	26
Laughed at joke about me	110	74
Made embarrassing comments about me to others	109	37
Divulged confidential information	121	34
Dropped me for another friend so I would feel left out	79	23
Destroyed my property behind my back	55	19
Tried to break up my friendship with another person	135	28
Tried to get others to dislike me	136	34
Made me feel guilty for not doing something when I didn't want to	110	26
Yelled insults at me	108	50
Pretended to be hurt to make me feel bad	83	27
Insulted without calling names	109	48
Used sarcasm to insult	120	58
Picked on because of religion	32	11
Used Internet to send something mean	67	33
Other	29	12
