Relational Aggression and its Relationships with Physical Aggression, Verbal Aggression, Prosocial Behaviors, and Loneliness among Fourth Grade Students in a Midwestern Rural Community

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore relational aggression in a Midwestern rural community and the relationships that exist between relational, verbal and physical aggression, prosocial behaviors and loneliness. Conflicting research exists concerning relational aggression in terms of functions of the behavior, gender differences, and appropriate intervention strategies. Fourth-grade students in a public school district were invited to participate in the research study during the winter of 2007. The participants were given two surveys during a regularly scheduled guidance class. One survey questioned personal experience with three different types of aggression, prosocial behaviors, loneliness and

inclusion (things others did to or for them). The second survey questioned what students did to or for others in the same areas. Frequencies were tabulated and standardized t-tests were performed. It was found that there were no gender differences in regard to relational aggression. Relational aggression was found to be used less than verbal aggression. Loneliness was positively associated with experiencing relational aggression from others. Finally, there was a negative relationship between performing prosocial behaviors and using relational and physical aggression. Options for successful intervention programs to decrease relational aggression and its negative outcomes are discussed.

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Chapter One: Introduction

One shocking truth about the youth in this country is their increasing participation in violent and aggressive activity. A harsh reality that we are facing is the increasingly common occurrence of violent shootings in schools. When school shootings are investigated, it is often noted that the perpetrators experienced isolation, bullying, and victimization while attending school. This type of peer aggression takes place daily in schools (Leff, Power, Manz, Costigan, & Nabors, 2001).There appears to be a cycle of aggression that in the worst case scenario could result in a deadly level of violence. The only successful solution to this type of violence is prevention. Early aggression is most likely just one variable among many that can lead to the horrific outcomes of the various school shootings that have recently devastated our country. However, one crucial step in the effort towards ending this awful violence is working towards eliminating early aggressive behavior in schools.

Many studies have been done to investigate aggression in childhood and adolescence (Rowe, Almeida, & Jacobson, 1999; Leff et al., 2001; Blankemeyer, Flannery & Vazsonyi, 2002). Researchers have recently suggested that past research was missing something important. Moretti, Odgers, and Jackson (2004) emphasized the need for more research on the aggression that occurs specifically in female populations. According to Moretti and colleagues, the research on aggression in the past has mostly been conducted on male populations. The aggression that was seen in these experiments was both direct and overt. They assumed this was the only expression of aggression that existed (Simmons, 2002). Moretti, et al. question whether the large amount of research concerning adolescent males can be applied to females of the same age group. They also

state that a rising frequency in female aggression alone is cause for further investigation. In areas such as personal offense in the United States and violent crimes against youth in Canada, statistics show that aggression is on the rise much more for females than it is for males. This trend suggests that there is a great need for exploration of female aggression.

What sorts of aggression are typical for males and for females? There are many forms that aggression can take in relation to peer interaction in schools. When one thinks about aggression in general, it is often physical action that comes to mind. However, recently, much more attention has been paid to a discrete form of aggression often referred to as relational aggression (RA). Physical aggression (PA) falls under the category of overt aggression. Overt aggression can include physical harming or verbal abuse to others. Relational aggression is more covert and takes the form of manipulating friendships and interactions with peers. This might include spreading rumors, gossiping, telling secrets, and threatening the end of relationships in general. Both overt aggression and RA are seen at some levels in both genders; however, some researchers have made distinctions between the types of aggression used by the two genders (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Maccoby, 2004; Salmivali & Kaukiainen, 2004).

Maccoby (2004) contended that males are more confrontational, and express aggression more frequently with hitting, kicking, pushing, teasing, and attacking. It is much more typical and even accepted for boys to participate in PA. Professionals and parents might agree that at an early age boys participate in the same behaviors Maccoby mentioned, and much more frequently than girls do. Does this mean that girls just aren't aggressive in the ways that boys are? This is the opinion that was accepted for quite some time. However, recent studies on female aggression have concluded that society has

placed girls in the position of expressing aggression in ulterior forms. Open conflict by girls is often unacceptable to societal norms. When girls need to express anger they must find nonphysical, covert means of expression (Simmons, 2002).

Like the physical aggressiveness of boys, social aggression has been labeled as typical for girls (Simmons, 2002). Even if physical and relational forms of aggression are not separated by gender, it is typical that both types of aggression do have strong, negative impacts on victims and perpetrators. Grotpeter and Crick (1996) explained that in addition to being disruptive to parents, teachers, and peers, the aggressive behavior of children can increase risk for things like "peer rejection, dropping out of school, adolescent delinquency, and adult criminality" for aggressors (p. 2328). Additionally, as technology advances, students have even more access to global ways of attacking other students socially, while remaining anonymous (Long, 2006). This form of harassment, identified as cyberbullying, can have a negative impact on school work. Additionally, it can increase school violence or even the occurrence of suicide (Long, 2006).

In a society where violence has become so widespread and frequent, we must look at the effects of the RA that is occurring in schools in addition to the physical bullying that takes place. According to Sharon Lamb (2001), teachers have argued that girls are "meaner" than boys. Lamb challenges this claim and wonders if teachers are simply surprised, because this goes against the expectation there is for girls to suppress feelings of anger. She explains how self-destructive this sort of anger moderation can be when it takes the form of actions like cutting or eating disorders. However, there are many questions yet to be answered about how to prevent the negative effects of RA. Underwood and Coie (2004) claim that, "understanding more about the specific processes

by which girls' aggression unfolds will likely be critically important in interrupting girls' aggressive behavior"(p. 298).

Another hint to understanding RA in adolescent girls is to examine the benefits that come from its use. Research has been done on the popularity of students who are relationally aggressive (Sandstrom & Cillessen, 2006; Rose, Swenson, and Waller, 2004). Popularity is somewhat difficult to define. Many researchers have identified a form called perceived popularity, or how popular the student is according to peers. It doesn't necessarily mean liked or disliked. Simmons (2002) contends that "the popularity of boys is in large part determined by their willingness to play rough" (p. 17). Might this suggest that the popularity of girls is partly determined by their use of RA? Sandstrom and Cillessen (2006) found that perceived popularity was positively associated with concurrent use of overt aggression and RA. Rose et al. (2004) found positive relationships between relational aggression and perceived popularity when controlling for overt aggression. Both groups only saw significant results of these relationships in older adolescents. If RA is associated with perceived popularity at the adolescent level, what associations can be made at the elementary level? Research by Crick and Grotpeter (1995) has shown that the use of relational aggression is related to feelings of loneliness and that it does not tend to coexist with prosocial behaviors (PSB). This paper discusses this and additional variables associated with RA.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to further investigate relational aggression among students in a Midwestern, small, rural, public elementary school during the winter of 2007. Many factors are considered in an attempt to understand more about the occurrence

of this type of aggression. These factors include self-reports of: how often students use relational, verbal, and physical aggression; how often these are used against them; their associations with reported loneliness and of prosocial behaviors performed; and gender comparisons of these variables. These variables were measured by a self-evaluation instrument. The survey was anonymous to encourage truthful disclosure.

Research Questions

1. To what extent is RA used by fourth grade elementary students towards their classmates in a rural, Midwestern, public school district?

2. To what extent is RA used against fourth grade elementary students by their classmates in a rural, Midwestern, public school district?

3. Are there gender differences in RA used by and/or against these students?

4. Is RA used by and/or against students more or less than PA and verbal aggression (VA)?

5. Are RA, VA and PA associated with the maladjustment of students, in terms of loneliness?

6. Is there a relationship between RA and prosocial behaviors (PSB)?

Definition of Terms

Direct Aggression: Confrontational aggressive actions that are overt and include actions like: hitting, pushing, verbal assault, and physical intimidation (Putallaz, Kupersmidt, Coie, McKnight & Grimes, 2004).

Indirect Aggression: Makes it appear as if there was no intent to hurt at all by avoiding confrontation to the targeted victim (Simmons, 2002).

Popularity: Level of social acceptance by peers. For girls it often coincides with success in their access to "money, good looks, and the 'early attainment of adult social characteristics'" (Simmons, 2002, pp. 156).

Relational Aggression: Actions that harm others through damage (or threat of damage) to relationships or feelings of acceptance, friendship, or group inclusion (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995).

Social Aggression: Intended to damage self-esteem or social status of another individual within a group. Can include some forms of indirect aggression, e.g., rumor spreading or publicly excluding (Simmons, 2002).

Assumptions and Limitations

One assumption in this study is that PA, VA, and VA take place at the elementary school level. It is also assumed that, due to the anonymous nature of the surveys, the students will be more likely to be honest in their evaluations of peers.

Limitations of this study include the small sample of students surveyed and from only one grade level. Also important to mention are limitations associated with the instrument and procedure of the study. Only student self-report surveys were administered, to the exclusion of parent and teacher input. Additionally, peer nomination methods were not used, limiting comparisons that could have been made with variables such as perceived popularity. In regards to limitations in the procedure of the study, there was an inconsistency for one of the classes in the time that had passed between the day the parental letters of consent went home and the day that the surveys were actually administered. Another limitation associated with the instrument and procedure involves some of the wording used in the actual survey. There was some terminology used in the

survey that may have been confusing or misleading. For example, some students questioned what type of hitting the survey questions were referring to, and although it was not addressed by the students, the term "classmate" may have been interpreted differently by different individuals. Additionally, regardless of precautions taken to ensure privacy in responses, some of the responses may have been affected by a desire to hide true feelings from the survey administrators about intimate relationships with others. Finally, the most recent social experiences for students may have also influenced responses to the surveys.

Chapter II: Literature Review

As stated in the previous chapter, many years have been spent conducting research on male aggression, mainly physical and overt forms. Much of this research has led to the conclusion that boys are much more aggressive than girls in general. However, in the past decade or so, literature has suggested that there are more than just physical forms of aggression to consider. According to Simmons (2002), it was not until 1992 that researchers would think to look beneath the surface to see what really takes place when it comes to female aggression. Following this same train of thought, Crick and Grotpeter (1995) did not want to assume that boys are more aggressive than girls. They hypothesized that girls just exhibit this aggression in different ways that are not necessarily physical. They expected female students to use aggression in the area with which girls are most socially concerned. While boys concentrate on physical dominance, girls are more preoccupied with relationships.

In this study, Crick and Grotpeter identified RA as "behaviors that are intended to significantly damage another child's friendships or feelings of inclusion by the peer group" and hypothesized that female students would make use of these techniques when acting aggressively. To test this hypothesis, the researchers looked at 491 boys and girls in an average Midwestern town. Children completed peer nominations to identify peer behaviors that were relationally and overtly aggressive. Results of this study showed that RA was somewhat associated with overtly aggressive behaviors. However, it was an autonomous, aggressive behavior that occurred. In support of the other component of Crick and Grotpeter's hypothesis, the study also showed that the overtly aggressive group

was mostly composed of male participants and that the relationally aggressive group was mostly composed of female participants.

More and more studies have been conducted that support the claim that girls are often more indirect with their aggression than are boys. However, some studies show different results. Salmivalli and Kaukiainen (2004) studied 526 students in two Finland towns. They measured aggression using both peer nomination and self-report measures. Three forms of aggression were identified, direct physical, direct verbal and indirect aggression. In this study it was found that boys used each form of aggression more than the female participants did in all cases except the self-reporting of indirect aggression, and even here the results were reported to be nonsignificant. The results of this study were somewhat confusing. There was a group of "highly aggressive girls whose use of aggression was predominantly indirect" and that when boys were aggressive... "...they either tended to prefer direct strategies or to use quite high levels of all kinds of aggression" (p. 161, 2004). These results suggest that aggressive female students do prefer indirect techniques over physical and verbal forms.

Today there is still conflicting research in the area to some degree. In some cases relational aggression is considered synonymous with "female aggression" (e.g. Crick & Grotpeter, 1995); however, Salmivalli and Kaukiainen (2004) have shown that this might not necessarily be the case. They found that across the board boys used more physical, verbal, and indirect aggression than girls. Maccoby (2004) suggested that research focus specifically on each different form of aggression so that types can be explored on an individual basis. It does become difficult, however, to distinguish between these different forms of aggression. Underwood, Scott, Galperin, Bjornstad, and Sexton (2004) explain

the overlap that exists between the terms. Indirect aggression was first described as subtle ways to hurt others that often involved things like social exclusion. According to Simmons (2002), it can also be identified as non-confrontational. Relational aggression has been discussed in some detail, but according to Crick and Grotpeter (1995) it is "harming others through purposeful manipulation and damage of their peer relationships." The final type of non-physical aggression is termed social aggression. Simmons (2002) defined this behavior as targeting the victim's self-esteem or social status. This aggression can be either direct or indirect, but is aimed at specifically harming a victim's social relationships or status (Maccoby, 2004).

The present literature review focuses on all forms of non-physical aggression and how it is present in school relationships. In this exploration three different topics are explored. The first area discussed is the relational aggression that takes place in intimate friendships. This section explores in detail the characteristics of those who participate in this type of aggression and those who are often targeted. The second area explores the debate over a gender division in different forms of aggression amidst controversial research outcomes. Last, perceived popularity is explored as an additional function of these types of aggression. That is, is there an additional reason for these behaviors other than a need to release anger? This section explores the issues of popularity, social status, power and control that are present among students who are aggressive in general. Also, throughout the paper, the typical development of these forms of aggression is discussed. Studies of non-physical aggression in pre-school through high school are reviewed.

Aggression in Intimate Relationships

Children can begin to use RA as soon as they are forming significant relationships (Simmons, 2002). Vaillancourt and Hymel (2004) state that early use results in more use of RA as children grow older, especially for females, as they develop more intimate relationships with others. One example of this transition was found in the frequency of socially exclusive comments in friendship dyads (Underwood, Scott, Galperin, Gjornstad, & Sexton, 2004).When friendship dyads were playing a game alone, fourth graders made less socially exclusive remarks to one another than did eighth graders.

A shocking aspect about RA is that it usually occurs within intimate friendships (Simmons, 2002). Often, students endure long-term "friendships" involving continual victimization. This RA is very problematic because it is discrete and difficult to spot by parents, teachers, and other adults. Simmons (2002) explained that the quiet nature of nonverbal threatening and bullying appears nothing at all like a problem on the surface. It seems natural that the occurrence of this type of behavior in schools goes unpunished much more often than does overt aggression. Overt aggression is more readily seen and identifiable than most forms of RA. When it is overt, the aggression often affects multiple students, so it seems natural that teachers would spend more time addressing it than they would covert conflict between intimate friends.

In 1996, Crick and Grotpeter specifically examined aggression taking place within friendships. They wanted to see whether the same type of aggressive behavior that existed in peer groups, also existed between friend dyads. This study involved 315 students who were again from average Midwestern towns. The participants were involved in three sessions in an attempt to classify friendships. First, friends were identified, next, friendship qualities, and finally during the third session, the importance of individual

friendship qualities was discussed. Then, aggression was evaluated by students using peer nomination measures. Both relational and overt aggression were separately assessed, each using five items that described the form of aggression. Results from this study confirmed that relationally aggressive students showed high intimacy levels, jealousy, and not surprisingly, relational aggression within the friendship dyad. Amusingly, those students identified as overtly aggressive children would use aggression together (in the friendship dyad) to harm others outside of the dyad. This aggressiveness was also identified by the individuals as being important to the overtly aggressive friend groups. Also important to note is that overtly aggressive students did not describe high levels of intimacy in their friendships. This finding implies that those students who form intimate relationships with peers might be the targets of the most RA behaviors within friendship dyads and possibly with the larger peer group.

Do the results of this study have any connection to gender? Putallaz et al. (2004) describe the importance of girls connecting with one another. This emphasis on connection makes inclusion and exclusion very significant. Putallaz and colleagues suggest that since inclusion is often the objective, exclusion serves a deliberate social function as well. In essence, they see that girls are excluding some peers in an attempt to get closer to others.

How are the excluded individuals responding when this behavior occurs? This question was also explored by Putallaz et al. (2004). They found that 60 percent of the time the aggression was ignored. Other reactions included attempts at diffusion or an increase of aggression. Attempts to stop aggression only occurred 12 percent of the time, while aggression was escalated at least 12 percent of the time. In addition to the lack of

resolution, when a response of ignoring took place, it often acted as an open invitation to others for increased aggression towards the victim. In a sense it created a cycle of aggression towards the rejected individual almost 90 percent of the time.

It has been identified that certain responses to social exclusion might create a cycle of aggression. Is there any connection to gender or are there any developmental differences when it comes to social exclusion in these close friendships? Underwood et al. (2004) attempted to answer this question. They studied 146 pairs of mutual friends between the ages of 10 and 14 years. The participants came from a suburban public school district. The researchers observed the students in play sessions over two summers. The friends were joined in these observations by an unfamiliar student who was trained to act provoking after five minutes. The general moods of the children and their previous experience with the board games were assessed before the session began. After the sessions, the moods of the participants were again separately assessed. They were then asked their opinions of the unfamiliar peer.

The results of this study showed that there were not many developmental differences overall. However, when it came to gender and social exclusion, some differences were noticed. When it came to verbal responses to the peer, the boys were more socially exclusive through verbal aggression than were the girls. Girls, on the other hand, used more nonverbal forms of social exclusion overall. This suggests that both boys and girls use social exclusion in an aggressive situation. However, the results of this study suggest that boys are more vocal and overt while girls are more nonverbal and discreet. It is interesting to see that social exclusion, regardless of form, was used across the board.

Perceived Popularity

When discussing peer groups and intimate relationships, it is natural to wonder how perceived popularity fits into the picture. This section is an examination of some different interpretations of popularity and how aggressive behaviors relate. In a study by Crick and Grotpeter (1995), it was found that the sociometric status of the most aggressive students was controversial (having high numbers of liked and disliked nominations by peers). Other authors have suggested that popularity plays a large role in who participates in relational aggression. Simmons (2002) stated that it is a "skilled politician, [who is] methodically building a coalition of other girls willing to throw their support behind her" (p. 80). Putallaz et al. (2004) interpreted this as a description of popular girls who are scared of losing their social status. The same authors also mention a contradictory opinion by Thompson and Grace (2001) who describe both users and victims of relational aggression as average children yearning for popularity. Due to its use by a wide range of children, it might be helpful to look at the common functions the behavior might serve.

Popularity, in regards to RA, is an issue that has been explored by research. One study, by Sandstrom & Cillessen (2006), examined two forms of popularity: sociometric and perceived. Students who are sociometrically popular show much use of prosocial behaviors like "cooperation, sociability, kindness, and leadership" (p.305). Students who are perceived as popular are simply nominated as the most popular peers. Sandstrom and Cillessen examined differences in the likeability and popularity of aggressive students. They studied a sample of 641 students in a Northeastern town in grade five and then followed up when they were in grade eight (only the students available in grade eight

were included in the data analysis). Peer nomination forms were given to participants in an attempt to asses both types of popularity, overt aggression and RA. Not surprisingly, the study found that sociometric popularity was positively associated with prosocial behaviors and the inclusion of others. Perceived popularity, on the other hand, was associated with both overt and relational aggression. This suggests that those behaviors make students appear to be popular; however they are not necessarily liked by peers. Regardless, there is a definite distinction between sociometric and perceived popularity.

What is interesting about the Sandstrom and Cillessen study is that overt and relational aggression together indicated perceived popularity. Rose, Swenson, and Waller (2004) were interested in separating the overlap in the two forms of aggression by controlling for the alternate type. To try to make this distinction Rose et al. (2004) completed two separate studies. The first study involved 607 third, fifth, seventh, and ninth grade students from two Midwestern school districts. The second study involved two waves of participants (the individuals were studied at two different time periods separated by six months). They were from the same grades as the first study, but from four different school districts. The first wave included 1,041 students and after attrition and new students moving into the district, there were 997 students available for wave two. There were three different groups of participants, those who participated in wave one, those who participated in wave two, and those 992 students who participated in both waves (five students participated only in wave two). This sub sample of students participated in both waves so that the relationship between aggression and perceived popularity could be examined prospectively, to determine whether aggression predicted later popularity or the reverse.

Peer nomination measures were used to determine perceived popularity and to identify aggressive classmates in studies one and two. The results of the study were divided into two parts: concurrent relations and prospective relations. The results from both studies were used to examine concurrent relations, while only study two results were used to examine prospective relations. Both relational and overt aggression were found to be positively related to perceived popularity for seventh and ninth grade students. These forms of aggression were simultaneous predictors of perceived popularity. The authors hypothesized that when controlling for each separate form of aggression, only RA would act as a unique predictor of perceived popularity. They found that overt aggression was a unique significant negative predictor of popularity in some cases; however, RA was a significant positive predictor of popularity for seventh and ninth grade students in study one and for both waves of study two.

In regard to prospective relationships in study two, overt aggression was a significant negative predictor of perceived popularity at time two for study two for the full sample together (there were no significant relations between overt aggression and grade or gender). When separated by grade and gender, RA predicted perceived popularity six months later for both seventh and ninth grade girls. It is interesting to note that RA never predicted later perceived popularity for boys. The researchers further examined whether perceived popularity would predict aggression in the future. Perceived popularity did not predict later overt aggression for any of the grade levels; however, it was a significant positive predictor of RA six months later for fifth, seventh, and ninth grade students. This finding shows that the relationship between RA and perceived popularity is bidirectional. Students may gain popularity due to their relationally

aggressive behavior. If students recognize that RA results in popularity, the behavior could be increased in order to gain this status. It is bidirectional because popularity might increase the RA used and RA may be used to increase popularity.

According to Rose et al., students who are perceived as popular (through peer nominations) are often disliked by a majority of classmates, even though they are still perceived as popular. Factors that contribute to this classification of popularity include attractiveness, athletic ability, and being accepted by others who are considered popular. In addition to possession of these qualities, studies (e.g., Sandstrom & Cillessen, 2006) have linked perceived popularity to pro-social and aggressive behaviors. Some have hypothesized that aggressive individuals use tactics to gain power in order to control social worlds. This might explain the contradiction in students who are perceived as popular also being disliked. Students might feel manipulated into liking "popular" students.

One explanation for this use of aggression by popular students is that it is a cycle of behavior. Vaillancourt and Hymel (2004) suggested that aggression is reinforced by peer groups. In the research they reviewed, it was found that for both boys and girls, aggression was rewarded with a higher social status and more power. They expressed their belief that the peer culture as a whole was supporting and maintaining aggressive behavior in general.

Gender and Aggression

It has already been discussed that there is research linking specific types of aggression to gender (Salmivalli & Kaukiainen, 2004; Maccoby, 2004). The debate over whether or not gender differences can be attributed to biological or environmental factors

continues to flourish. It is very difficult to identify the differences between biological and social contributions to personality attributes (Maccoby, 2004). The same goes for gender differences in aggression. It is obvious that there are strong differences between how males and females take out their anger. However, there is debate surrounding the roots of these gender differences in aggression. Is it biological, environmental, or cultural? It is very probable that gender differences today can be attributed to a combination of all of these factors.

According to some, there are no significant differences between male and female aggression during toddler hood. Vanillacourt and Hymel (2004) claimed that research has shown PA to be standard for preschoolers, regardless of gender. They asserted that it is the development of this aggression that differs between the two genders. Once children reach elementary school, girls start to become less physically aggressive and begin adopting new forms of anger.

However, more recent research shows a differing opinion about the aggression of children during preschool. Crick, Ostrov, Burr, Cullerton-Sen, Jansen-Yeh, and Ralston (2006) completed a longitudinal study comparing relational and physical aggression in preschool boys and girls. They felt that the most accurate approach to measuring aggression during this age would be to use a naturalistic observation technique. Based on previous research, Crick et al. (2006) hypothesized that girls would use more RA than boys in preschool. They also predicted that the RA would more often be directed towards peers who were female.

This study included 91 boys and girls enrolled in preschool in a large city in the Midwest. The participants were assessed four times over a two-year period. Using

naturalistic observation, three things were documented: RA; PA; and peer rejection. Two measures in addition to the naturalistic observation were used; child interviews and teacher-rating scales. Children were observed in the classroom and on the playground during the study, sometimes in a visually concealed observation booth (in the classroom). Observers were made up of professional staff, undergraduate, and graduate students, all of whom were trained. The results of this study showed that female participants were more relationally aggressive than were boys, and they were more relationally aggressive towards female rather than male peers. Additionally, it was found that boys behaved in more physically aggressive ways than girls and that this aggression was directed towards male peers. These results suggest that even as early as preschool, children are using different forms of aggression and are using them with same-sex peers.

One argument for this difference is that "our culture refuses girls access to open conflict, and it forces their aggression into nonphysical, indirect, and covert forms" (Simmons, 2002, p. 3). Throughout childhood, it is standard for boys to be more confrontational and take part in more verbal and physical aggression (Maccoby, 2004). This behavior is viewed as atypical or inappropriate for girls, so they must be more secretive about reacting to conflict. One way to test this cultural explanation is to compare the RA of children in the United States to children from different cultures around the world.

Tomada and Schneider (1997) tested whether the RA results that Crick and Grotpeter found in 1995 would be replicated with a similar population in Italy. They found Italy to be a logical choice because of its occurrence of bullying, adult reinforcement of vocal conflict and traditional sex-roles. They posited that the close,

intimate relationships common for females might create an environment where RA could easily take place. They also mentioned cultural support for aggression in young men in order to prepare them for the dominant, male role. Tomada and Schneider (1997) predicted that this sort of culture might produce even more striking differences in aggression between girls and boys than Crick and Grotpeter (1995) found.

The study was performed with 314 students throughout six small towns, at elementary schools in central Italy. Data was collected using peer nomination methods for overt aggression, relational aggression, and prosocial behavior. They used the same scale that was developed by Crick and Grotpeter in 1995 to compare results and to test the original instrument with this Italian population. In addition to peer nominations, teacher nominations were made for the same three variables.

The results of this study were surprising, given the researchers' hypothesis. Male students used more aggression, both physically and relationally, according to the peer nomination scales. The teacher-nomination results showed no difference between genders when it came to any of the three factors measured in this study. The data of the extreme groups of children gave a better understanding of the results. For those boys and girls who were either extremely overt or extremely relational, it was found that for boys there was a high number of overlap in overt and relational aggression while, for the girls, all but one were only relationally aggressive. The overall results of this study showed strong differences from similar studies in the past (e.g., Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). Contrary to the researchers' hypothesis, there was no difference in frequency of RA used by Italian boys and girls. Only boys in the Italian study used high levels of both relational and overt aggression. This study suggests that Italian boys are more aggressive in general, unlike

boys in the United States who were found to be more physically aggressive, but less relationally aggressive, than girls.

Additional studies have attempted to find a cultural explanation for differences in gender and aggression. Unlike Tomada and Schneider (1997) who compared similar cultures, French, Jansen, and Pidada (2002) examined the physical, verbal, and relational aggression of peers in two very different cultures. The United States is a very individualistic society. They believed it would be interesting to compare the aggression in the United States to that of a society that is more collectivist. Individuals of collectivist societies tend to value social accord and avoid conflict, while individualistic societies like that of the United States value personal achievement and competition. It is possible that the use of RA might be more frequent in members of society (male or female) in cultures that discourage overt conflict. To investigate this question, French et al. (2002) compared the aggression levels of 120 fifth and eighth grade students from Indonesia with those of 104 students from the United States.

Interviews were used to collect data in this study. Participants were asked to describe two peers that they liked most and two peers that they liked least, of the same sex (only data concerning the least liked peers was used for the study). They were asked five standard questions about the disliked peers (e.g. is there anything about the way that this person acts with you that makes you dislike him/her?) The interviews were tape recorded and rated using a specific protocol. The coding system was divided into three different measures, physical, verbal, and relational aggression.

The results of this study showed some definite differences between genders and cultures. In the interviews, PA was talked about more often by boys than girls, and by

participants from Indonesia than those from the United States. However, the female participants from both countries described more RA than did the boys. It is important to mention that these results were found without directly asking children to describe aggression, so these descriptions arose spontaneously. It is possible that the results might have been even stronger if descriptions of aggression were specifically solicited when conducting the interviews. The conclusion of this study was that gender differences cannot be explained as a function of a collectivistic or individualistic culture.

Another explanation for the difference between male and female aggression is that each gender might have different agendas for relationships and socialization. As stated earlier, girls participate in overt aggression as well; however, it decreases at a much younger age than it does for boys. Maccoby (2004) identified how aggression can be part of a male group process and that they tend to be faster at reconciliation of this type of conflict. She further explained this gender difference as a result of different agendas existing between the sexes in general in terms of peer interactions.

The male agenda for contact with other males is more or less to prove that he can protect his personal territory, or look strong enough so that he does not experience victimization. So, "there is more competition, more mock fighting, and occasionally real fighting, in boys' groups than in girls' groups" (Maccoby, 2004, p. 12). This also leads to the formation of alliances and larger group interaction.

Girls, on the other hand, prefer smaller friend groups. Dyads and trios fulfill a more intimate agenda for peer interaction, and girls know more specifics about one another's lives (Maccoby, 2004). Another interesting difference between the two sexes is that, in general, girls talk more than boys do (Maccoby, 2004). This increased vocabulary

alone might be associated with the tactics that girls have adopted when expressing anger and aggression.

Intervention and Aggression

After exploring the extensive research on the RA that often takes place between adolescent females, one might wonder about possible intervention strategies. Fortunately, intervention programs have been implemented in an attempt to reduce the negative effects. This section includes a discussion of some possible prevention and intervention strategies as well as the success of programs that have been put into practice in the past.

In an ideal world, the occurrence of RA would be prevented early on, before it has a chance to negatively impact students altogether. Dellasega and Nixon (2003) claim that girls are never too young to start preventing RA. They give tips for parents that include being specific about behavior that is acceptable and unacceptable, role-playing appropriate interactions, and brainstorming what to do when conflict occurs with other girls.

One factor to examine when considering prevention is the early relationship between parent and child. In 2006, Casas, Weigel, Crick, Ostrov, Woods, Jansen Yeh, and Huddleston-Casas completed an investigation on the effect that parenting style, psychological control and attachment relationship have children's aggressive behavior. A study like this is important because its results might give some insight into what parenting styles and practices can lead to less aggression in childhood. The earlier those precautions can be taken, the better chance that the child has to escape the negative effects of RA.

This study included 122 families and 23 preschool teachers. The preschool-aged children ranged from two and a half years to almost six years in age. Consent for participation was received from letters that were sent home to parents in each of the four participating preschools. Data was obtained by giving each parent a packet to finish individually. Motivation for participation was a drawing for those who completed and returned the packets. One item inside the packet was the Children's Social Experiences measure (Crick, Casas, et al., 1999; Crick, Werner, et al., 1999). This measure assessed each parent's perception of the child's aggression (relational and physical). Also inside the packet was the Parenting Practices Questionnaire (Robinson, Mandleco, Olsen, & Hart, 2001). This instrument involved parental self-reports on interactions with their child and their observations of their partner's interactions with their child. An evaluation of three patterns was included: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. Next in the packet was the Psychological Control instrument (Barber, 1996; Hart et al., 1998; Olsen et al., 2002), which included seven scales of psychological control (e.g., erratic emotional behavior, love withdrawal, guilt induction). Finally, the last assessment included in the packet was the Parent/Child Reunion Inventory (Marcus, 1991), to gain information on the attachment relationship between parent and child, such as parents' ratings of behaviors their children displayed at a time of routine reunion. This inventory measured secure and insecure attachment. Teachers rated the children's social behavior in school, using the Preschool Social Behavior Scale (Crick et al., 1997) which evaluated relational and physical aggression on a scale from one to five.

As expected, results of the study showed that the "girls' ratings for RA by mothers and fathers were positively correlated with authoritarian and permissive

parenting styles of mothers and fathers (Cases et al, 2007)." Also, for girls, authoritative parenting (by the mother) was negatively associated with PA. There was also a significant relationship between permissive parenting by mothers and their sons' RA.

It was found that the mothers' use of psychological control was associated with RA in girls. This control included mothers' self reports of erratic emotions, love withdrawal, guilt induction, invalidating feelings, and defectiveness. Interestingly, love withdrawal from fathers was associated with PA according to teachers. With regard to fathers' psychological control as an indicator of RA, erratic emotional behavior, invalidating feelings, and directiveness approached significance for girls. For boys, it was only love withdrawal that showed a significant correlation to RA according to teachers' reports. Finally, with regard to attachment, it was found that mothers' reports of RA were related to insecure attachment. The scores were not similarly correlated for boys. As for fathers' reports there was a significant relationship between insecure attachment and RA for boys. However, there was no relationship between the two in the fathers' reports on girls.

So what do these results mean for the prevention of RA in general? First, this study has shown that parenting style can indeed predict RA for both boys and girls. For boys, mothers' permissiveness and fathers' authoritarian parenting were associated with RA in their son. For girls, authoritarian parenting by both mothers and fathers and permissive parenting by mothers alone predicted RA. These results suggest that one way to decrease the use of RA in general is to educate more parents on successful ways of parenting. If authoritative parenting can be used more often, we could see a decrease in the negative effects of RA in the future.

Psychological control was also found to be correlated with both relational and physical aggression. Fathers' use of psychological control predicted their daughters' use of RA. This emphasizes the important role that fathers have in the development of their children in general. The fact that there were more mothers than fathers who participated in this study indicates a missing link in terms of the father-child relationship. This study suggests that some aspects of that negative relationship could be affecting the social development of the child as well. This again suggests that there is a need for awareness and education when it comes to parenting skills in this country.

This was a complicated study because so many variables were involved. One area of ambiguity was in the degree of agreement between school and home ratings on RA. There was much less agreement on this behavior than there was for PA. In future studies the context should be an important factor to consider. Since different results were sometimes found between home and school, it is important to consider other contexts where differences in aggression might be shown, such as afterschool care. In addition, there is a need for longitudinal studies to examine the relationship between RA in preschool and later in life. Examination of a variety of factors could help researchers find the most appropriate prevention strategies for relational aggression.

Since prevention of RA will require much research, it is necessary to also identify intervention strategies that can currently be used in schools to decrease its negative effects. Schoiack-Edstrom, Frey, and Beland (2002) assessed a school based intervention for aggression among students in middle school. This intervention program was designed to change the attitudes that students had about aggression and their use of social skills. This intervention was designed based on the negative attitudes that are often associated

with aggression. Some of these negative attitudes include: hostile attribution bias; the belief that aggression is an effective tool to avoid a negative image; and the belief that there is no alternative strategy for the use of aggression.

The name of the intervention program evaluated by Van Schoiack-Edstrom et al. (2002) is the Second Step program. It is "a classroom based social emotional learning program that attempts to prevent aggression by fostering empathy and perspective-taking, problem solving, and anger management skills (Frey, Hirschstein, & Guzzo, 2000, in Van Schoiack et al., 2002)." This program addresses aggression in a broad sense by examining multiple forms of aggression. However, a good percentage of the lessons in the program are devoted to relational forms of aggression. This evaluation examined the impact that the Second Step program has on students in their second or third year of secondary school. Evaluations have been done in the past on first year secondary students; however, the results were less clear for those farther along in middle school or junior high. This evaluation also attempted to overcome limitations from the past that omitted research on RA and only included PA.

The participants of this study included 714 students who were in sixth, seventh, or eighth grade. Fifty-one percent of the participants were female. Participants were chosen from five different middle schools or junior high schools in the U.S. and Canada. In four of the five schools there was a control group chosen in addition to the intervention group. The students were grouped based on whether it was their first or second year of secondary school. The study participants also included sixteen educators.

The actual intervention program had two specific goals. The first was to encourage the learning of prosocial skills. The second goal was to reduce the impulsive-

aggressive behavior of students. Specific objectives related to these two goals were outlined as well. This led to an expansion of the original one-year program to a three-year program. Presenters of the program were most often teachers; however, others included school psychologists and counselors. The presenters had been trained about materials to be used, including scripted lessons, class led discussions with videos, newspaper events and stories, small group work with role playing, homework and activities for parents and teachers. Two different modules were used. The level one module included basic emotional skills and problem solving strategies. The level two module included a review of concepts and skills, and focuses on additional factors related to aggression. This presenter training was one-day long in length.

The intervention was done as part of a class for which students received credit on a pass or fail basis. All students enrolled in the class were invited to participate in the study. Parental consent was given for 83 percent of those invited. Students who were not given permission to participate still participated in the second step program, however, did not participate in the activities that were specific to the study. Normally, the level one part of the program is given to students in their first year of secondary school and level two is given during the second year. However, for this study the second year students were evaluated without previous exposure to the program. Teachers were responsible for executing lessons on their own; however, they consulted with a curriculum writer who evaluated each lesson. They were also given an individual exit interview.

To measure the effects of the intervention, two specific scales were used. The first was the Endorsement of Aggression Scale (Adapted from Slaby & Guerra, 1988; Erdley & Asher, 1998; Crick & Bigbee, 1998; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). This scale uses a 1

(disagreement) to 4 (complete agreement) rating system and asks questions about either supporting or outlawing aggression. The second scale used was the Perceived Social Difficulty Scale (Perry, Perry & Rasmussen, 1986). This scale is an 8-item questionnaire. These questions ask students to rate how much difficulty they would have performing certain skills (that were either antisocial or prosocial). To answer these items, students used a 4-point Likert scale by claiming that it would be anywhere from EASY! to HARD! Students were given these confidential surveys at the beginning and the end of the semester. Precautions were taken to make sure that the responses were never viewed by classroom teachers; a student was chosen to administer tests, seal and mail them. An original goal of the program was to have random assignment of intervention and control groups. They did not quite accomplish this goal, however, because some teachers refused to be in an assigned group (due to previous teaching experience with students, and so forth).

The results of the study were divided into four sections: aggression endorsement for year one curriculum; perceived difficulty of performing social skills for year one curriculum; aggression endorsement for year two curriculum; and perceived difficulty of performing social skills for year two curriculum. Three factors were analyzed for the aggression endorsement scale: physical aggression; verbal derogation; and social exclusion.

For the students who received the year one curriculum the group means for physical and verbal aggression did not significantly decrease. However, social exclusion stayed constant over time for the intervention group while controls showed an increase from pre- to posttest. For students who had received the second year of curriculum,

endorsement of aggression decreased in all three areas for the intervention students. As for the control group, the aggression either increased or remained constant in the three areas of aggression. In terms of the perceived difficulty of performing social skills, the students who received first year curriculum showed no significant effects. For the year two students, those in the program perceived social skills as less difficult to perform at the time of the posttest than they were perceived during the pre-test. The control group's perceptions of difficulty of performing certain social skills stayed fairly constant over time.

To summarize, this school-based intervention was able to accomplish some great progress. During the second year of the curriculum, students in the program were less likely to support the use of aggression, were less understanding of all three forms of aggression, and were less likely to view prosocial skills as difficult to perform than were the control group. When the success of the first year curriculum was compared to the success of the second year curriculum, it is interesting to see that the results were not nearly as consistent. This makes one question to what these differences are attributable. Some possibilities include, simply a difference in subsamples, the variation of the program content, or the increase of lesson concentration by the second year of the curriculum. Some limitations occurred during the implementation of this intervention. First, there were some inconsistencies in lesson numbers and lesson concentrations. During year two there was an increase by teachers in number of lessons per week compared to those received by year one students. There were also non randomly assigned intervention and comparison groups for first and second year middle/junior high school students. Finally, there could have been great variances in the ways that teachers carried

out lessons. Teachers were given coaching and other support; however, there is no way to ensure that all lessons were taught the same in the classrooms.

This section on prevention and intervention provides some hope about what can be done to decrease the use of RA. Some possibilities include parental education and intervention programs at the middle school/junior high levels. There is also much more to learn about what can be done to alleviate the negative effects that currently exist for victims and perpetrators of relational aggression.

Purpose of the Present Investigation

The purpose of this investigation was to examine the RA that takes place among fourth grade students at a Midwestern, rural, elementary school and its associations with other social behaviors, including VA, PA, PSB, loneliness, and inclusion. The first question asked in this investigation was whether or not RA would be reported among fourth grade students at one particular, rural, Midwestern elementary school. Next, this investigation examined any differences in the reported frequency of RA used in comparison to other forms of aggression. Also explored was whether or not a specific relationship existed between reports of RA and the maladjustment of students in school in terms of loneliness. Similarly investigated was whether or not there was a frequency relationship between RA and PSB at this elementary school. An additional purpose of this study was to test for gender differences in the fourth grade students' reports. The final purpose of this investigation was to determine whether or not there were differences between the RA reportedly used by fourth grade students and the RA that was used against fourth grade students.

Hypotheses and Rationale

Two directional hypotheses were made. First, it was hypothesized that there would be a positive relationship between the use of RA and the maladjustment of students in terms of loneliness felt. This hypothesis was made based on Crick and Grotpeter (1995), who found that relationally aggressive students experienced more loneliness than peers that were not identified as relationally aggressive. Second, it was hypothesized that there would be differences in the aggression used by boys and girls. Specifically, girls would use more RA and boys would use more overt aggression (PA and VA). This hypothesis was made based on two separate studies. First, in their 1995 study, Crick and Grotpeter found that the majority of the overtly aggressive participants was made up of boys and that the relationally aggressive participants were largely made up of girls. In 2002, French et al. further supported this hypothesis when it was found that boys more often mentioned PA than girls, and that girls described more use of RA by peers than did boys. The remainder of the research questions were explored in a non-directional manner, due to limited previous research on these comparisons.

Chapter III: Methodology

This chapter describes the methodology for addressing the research questions. Participant selection, choice of instrument, the procedure for data collection, data analysis, and finally the limitations of the study are all discussed here.

Participant Selection and Description

All fourth grade students enrolled at a Midwestern, rural, public elementary school were invited to participate in the study in the winter of 2007. This particular school was chosen by the researcher due to her experience the previous school year with the same group of students during a required practicum placement, and the administration's interest in the study. Letters explaining the project and parental consent forms (See Appendix A) were sent home with the students from their three different classrooms. Approximately 75 students were invited to participate. Based on return of affirmative consent forms and student desire to participate, 53 students were included in the sample, including 25 male and 28 female participants. The ethnic composition of the school was largely Caucasian.

Instrumentation

The instrument used was a modified version of the Children's Social Behavior Scale (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995, see Appendix B). The survey included 27 items. The first part of the survey asks students fifteen questions regarding things they do to/for others in school from five separate categories. These categories are: relational aggression; physical aggression; prosocial behavior; verbal aggression; inclusion; and loneliness. For purposes of this study a second section, developed by the researcher, was included that asked twelve very similar questions. This time however, students were asked "what

others do to/for them in school" (see Appendix C). The second section of the survey included only twelve questions because the inclusion and loneliness questions could not be logically reversed and were only included in the first section.

Data Collection

Participation was voluntary. Letters of consent signed by a parent and verbal consent by the student were both necessary for participation. The self-report measures were administered to the students in their weekly guidance classroom by the researcher and the school counselor. Students sat at three large round tables, typical for their weekly guidance class period. Prior to administering the instrument, students were trained in the 5-point response scale with a practice question. The short paragraph at the top of each section of the survey (See Appendices B and C) was read to students, as follows: "We are interested in how kids get along with one another. Please think about your relationship with other kids and how often you do these things at school," and "We are interested in how kids get along with one another. Please think about your relationship with other kids and how often they do these things to you or for you at school." Students were asked to answer honestly and to ask either adult present for assistance, if needed. Students were instructed to look up upon completion of each question and were asked to wait before moving on to the next question. Each item was read aloud to the group by the researcher and both adults were available to answer questions. There were some questions asked about how to answer questions in general and for clarification of specific items (see the limitations section in Chapter V for further discussion). After reading each question there was approximately ten to fifteen seconds given before moving on to the next. Upon completion of the survey, students were instructed to fold surveys in half,

with no responses showing. The researcher personally approached each student and each individually placed the folded survey into a large collection envelope.

Data Analysis

Frequency counts and percentages were tabulated for responses to each of the survey questions. The means and standard deviations were then calculated. Variables explored were gender, relational, verbal and physical aggression, prosocial behavior, loneliness, and inclusion ratings. Both independent groups t-tests and paired samples t-tests were conducted to analyze differences among the variables. Last, the data was analyzed using the Pearson Correlation coefficient to examine any relationships between performed PSB and aggression done to others as well as done to me. Statistical significance was judged using the alpha level of .05.

Limitations

A few limitations exist in the present investigation. First, only fourth grade students were included. The researcher chose to examine the presence of RA before students entered middle school. The 2007-2008 school year was the first year this particular district moved the fifth grade classes to the middle school building, so they were not available to survey at the elementary school during the time of data collection.

A second limitation is that data collection for this research project was limited to the children's point of view. Other researchers in the past have used parent and teacher reports to identify use of aggression and prosocial behavior (Casas et al., 2006; Crick, 1996). The self-report method was chosen in hopes of obtaining the most accurate information, since the respondents would be speaking first hand about what they encounter on a day to day basis. However, this assumes that the fourth grade children

were willing to be honest in their answers. The accuracy of these results depends largely on the honesty of the students. Since the surveys were distributed in the regularly scheduled guidance class periods, students may have been reluctant to answer some of the questions truthfully. Most of the students had a very positive relationship with the school counselor as well as the researcher and may have been concerned about disappointing us if they admitted to aggressive acts in school. Additionally, students may have been more likely to report truthful responses on the second section of the survey (target experiences) than the first (aggressor experiences).

Also, in many of the RA studies in the past, researchers have used peer nomination methods to identify the most aggressive students in class and the most liked or popular students (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Tomada & Schneider, 1997; French et al., 2002). There was concern by the present researcher that parents would be hesitant about a class roster being distributed to students to identify popularity. Therefore, this type of instrument was not included in the study. While this choice may have resulted in a larger sample size, it did prohibit the ability to compare self-reports of aggression with perceived popularity and aggressiveness by peers.

A fourth limitation was a lack of clarification about the word "classmates" in the survey. This word may have been interpreted by some to include only people in their particular classroom, while other students may have included experiences with fourth graders in all three classrooms at the elementary school. Reports of experiences with students in one specific class may have minimized the results; the instructions should have been clarified as including all fourth grade students at school.

Fifth, the time difference between administration times for each individual class may have influenced responses on questions. Letters and consent forms were distributed during the last week of November. The days set aside for administration of the survey to each of the three classes was the Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday during the first week of December. Due to a low return of consent forms, during the initial week of administration for one particular class, additional time was given for returning forms. Due to the holiday break and scheduling conflicts, the Thursday fourth grade guidance class did not receive their actual surveys until January 3rd. Possible conversations between students from different classes in the time periods between survey administration days may have affected responses.

Finally, survey responses may have been skewed in the direction of the students' most recent experiences prior to taking the survey. Their frequency estimates may have been either inflated or deflated based on whether they had been having a positive or negative week socially with their peers.

Chapter IV: Results

The focus of this study was to examine the frequency of RA taking place in the fourth grade of a public, Midwestern elementary school, and its associations with other social behaviors at school. One objective was to examine relationships between RA and the social maladjustment (i.e., loneliness or exclusion) and PSB (i.e., helpfulness or inclusiveness) of male and female students. The second objective was to perform gender comparisions between different forms of aggression used by and against students in that grade at that school. A two-part survey was given to students in order to address these questions. The findings are presented in this chapter.

Is Relational Aggression Used Among Fourth Grade Students?

To answer this question, the frequency of affirmative responses to each of the RA questions, was tabulated. It was found that RA indeed was taking place among fourth grade students in this elementary school. Relational aggression can be determined from two different perspectives from the surveys: what students reported doing to others and what students reported experiencing from others. The results of the RA targeted items in the "What I do to Others" section showed that 6 to 38 % of students answered that they sometimes, almost all the time, or all the time performed these behaviors. For example, students were asked how often they get back at the person they are mad at by not letting the person be in their group anymore, and 37.8 % of students responded that they did this sometimes, almost all the time, or all of the time. The percentage of students who answered that they sometimes, almost always, or always tell lies about a classmate so that the other kids won't like the classmate anymore was much lower at 5.7 % (see Table 1 for complete results of the RA items). The results show that RA may not be performed all

of the time by students, but a noticeable number of students reported performing these behaviors at least some of the time.

Table 1

Frequencies and Percentages of Relational Aggression Performed by Students

Question	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All the Time	%
1. Some kids tell lies about a classmate so that the other kids won't like the classmate anymore. How often do you do this?	3	0	0	5.7
2. Some kids try to keep certain people from being in their group when it is time to play or do an activity. How often do you do this?	9	0	0	17.0
4. When they are mad at someone, some kids get back at the person by not letting the person be in their group anymore. How often do you do this?	16	1	3	37.8
10. Some kids tell their friends that they will stop liking them unless the friends do what they say. How often do you tell friends this?	6	0	1	13.2
12. Some kids try to keep others from liking a classmate by saying mean things about the classmate. How often do you do this?	5	0	0	9.4

In terms of the receiving end, the reported occurrence of these relationally aggressive behaviors seems even more noteworthy. The sometimes, almost all of the time, and all of the time responses were given 36 to 42 % of the time for all of the five RA questions on the survey. On the low end, 35.8 % of students answered that others sometimes, almost all the time, or all of the time try to keep others from liking them by

saying mean things about them. On the high end, when asked if others try to keep them from being in their group when it is time to play or do an activity 42.2 % of students said this happened at least some of the time (see Table 2). The percentages of students reporting RA at least some of the time indicates that RA was in fact taking place within this sample of students. The difference in reports of RA being performed by and against students will be presented later in the chapter.

Table 2

Frequencies and Percentages of Relational Aggression Used Against Students

Question	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All the Time	%
1. Some kids tell lies about a classmate so that the other kids won't like the classmate anymore. How often do others do this to you?	15	3	2	38.4
2. Some kids try to keep certain people from being in their group when it is time to play or do an activity. How often do others do this to you?	10	10	2	42.2
4. When they are mad at someone, some kids get back at the person by not letting the person be in their group anymore. How often do others do this to you?	16	4	2	41.5
10. Some kids tell their friends that they will stop liking them unless the friends do what they say. How often do your friends tell you this?	14	4	3	39.6
11. Some kids try to keep others from liking a classmate by saying mean things about the classmate. How often do others do this to you?	13	4	2	35.8

Are there Differences in the Frequency of RA Used in Comparison to Other Forms of Aggression?

For exploratory purposes, the frequency of reported RA used by and against students was compared to PA and VA separately. Relational aggression was reported significantly less than VA in the "What I do to Others" section, with a mean difference of 0.248; $t(49) = -2.78$, $p < .008$ two-tailed. Significantly more students reported using VA than using RA. The difference between PA and RA frequencies was not significant. The mean difference between the two forms of aggression was 0.096, with RA occurring slightly more often than PA, $t(52) = 1.32$, $p < .194$ two-tailed.

In the "What Others do to Me" section there were no statistically significant results when comparing RA to PA or VA.. When students were asked what they experience in school, VA was reported just slightly more often, with a mean difference of 0.146 between the two; $t(50) = -1.09$, $p < .280$. The results from this section were very similar to the results of the 'What I do to Others" section. When asked what was experienced from others, RA was reported slightly more than PA with a mean difference of 0.106; $t(48) = 0.94$, $p < 0.353$. The results from the "What I do to Others" section suggest that VA is more likely to be used than RA, and that if one is using RA they are likely to report a similar frequency of PA. On the receiving end of aggression, the results showed similar levels of PA, VA and RA used.

Is there a Relationship between RA and the Maladjustment of students?

One of the objectives of the research was to determine whether RA was associated with loneliness. It was hypothesized that students using RA in school would also experience areas of maladjustment (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). The responses for the loneliness felt at school question were divided into two groups. Never and almost never responses were categorized together as one group (not lonely) while sometimes, almost

all of the time and all of the time responses were categorized as another (lonely). Independent t-tests were done to examine any relationships between loneliness and each form of aggression. Surprisingly, there were no statistically significant differences in frequency of RA used between the two groups of lonely and not lonely. Students categorized as lonely or not lonely reported the same frequencies of using RA and VA towards others. For RA, there was a mean difference of -.142, $t(49) = -0.84$, $p < .204$ one tailed. The mean difference for VA was -.360, $t(46) = -1.41$, $p < .082$ one tailed. In regard to reports of PA used, lonely and not lonely students differed, with lonely students using more PA than not lonely students. The mean difference for PA was -.315, $t(49) = -1.90$, $p < .032$ one tailed. Use of RA was not positively associated with loneliness experienced. Both of these findings are contrary to the results from the Crick and Grotpeter (1995) study. Once these relationships were examined, the author was interested in testing whether loneliness had any relationship with PSB performed for others. No significant results were found. Specific results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Group Results of Loneliness and RA, PA, VA, PSB Done To or For Others

Variable	Loneliness	*n*	*M*	SD	*t*	*df*	*p*
RA Average Score	Lonely	27	1.53	.58	-0.84	49	.204
	Not Lonely	24	1.68	.63			
PA Average Score	Lonely	27	1.35	.50	-1.90	49	.032
	Not Lonely	24	1.67	.69			
VA Average Score	Lonely	25	1.64	.86	-1.41	46	.082
	Not Lonely	23	3.58	.91			
PSB Average Score	Lonely	26	3.55	.78	-0.13	47	.448
	Not Lonely	24	2.89	.71			

Although data from this study did not support previous research, there was another significant relationship between aggression and loneliness. There were significant differences between reports of loneliness and RA as well as loneliness and PA done to individuals. There was a mean difference of .928 between the reported frequencies of RA done to lonely and not lonely students. The lonely group reported more RA being done to them than did the not lonely group, $t(48) = -3.87$, $p < .001$ two-tailed. Similarly, when comparing loneliness and PA, the lonely group reported more PA than the not lonely group with a mean difference of -.985; $t(47) = -3.61$, $p < .001$ two tailed. There was no statistically significant difference found between VA reportedly done to these two groups (see Table 3). These results suggest that students reporting feelings of loneliness are more likely to experience RA and PA than those students not self-classified as lonely.

Table 4

Group Results of Loneliness and RA, PA, VA, and PSB Done To Me

Variable	Loneliness	*n*	*M*	SD	*t*	*df*	*p*
RA Average Score	Lonely	26	1.73	.60	-3.87	48	.000
	Not Lonely	24	2.67	1.03			
PA Average Score	Lonely	25	1.64	.74	-3.61	47	.001
	Not Lonely	24	2.63	1.13			
VA Average Score	Lonely	27	2.22	1.12	-1.04	49	.302
	Not Lonely	24	2.58	1.35			
PSB Average Score	Lonely	24	3.19	.79	1.23	46	.226
	Not Lonely	24	2.89	.91			

Is there a Relationship between RA and PSB?

An additional objective of the research was to explore whether or not students who use and experience RA are performing PSB as well. This information will help researchers better understand when and why this specific form of aggression is used and could help shape intervention programs in the future. There was a significant negative correlation between PSB performed and RA done to others $r(49) = -.41$, $p < .05$. It is also interesting to note that PSB performed was also significantly negatively correlated with PA done to others, $r(49) = -.31$, $p < .05$ and VA done to others, $r(48) = -.34$, $p < .05$. This suggests that the group of students who is performing PSB towards others is separate from the group of students who are acting in aggressive ways.

There was also interest in whether or not performing PSB was correlated with experiencing RA, VA, or PA. These questions address whether or not those students who

are acting in caring ways towards others are also experiencing high levels of aggression from others. No correlation was found between reports of performing PSB and experiencing any form of aggression. The correlations are listed in Table 5.

Table 5

Correlations between Different Types of Aggression and PSB

Survey	Aggression Type	Correlation w/ PSB Performed	*p*	*N*
Aggression I Do	RA	.16	.28	49
	PA	.02	.89	49
	VA	.02	.91	51
Aggression Done to Me	RA	-.41**	.00	51
	PA	-.31*	.03	51
	VA	-.34*	.02	50

Note. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Are there Gender Differences in reports of RA among Fourth Grade Students?

Another main objective of the research was to examine whether or not girls use RA more often than boys. It was hypothesized that girls would report more use of RA and experience more RA from others than would boys (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; French et al; 2002). Contrary to the hypothesis, there was no significant difference found between genders in RA reportedly used by students, $t(51) = 0.04$, $p < 0.49$ one-tailed. The mean score for RA used was 8.00 for boys and 7.96 for girls. The researcher was also curious about the question of gender difference that might exist in RA used against other

students. Again, there was no significant difference between the two genders reported, $t(49) = 0.74$, $p < 0.23$ two-tailed. The means for the genders were similar (11.54 for boys and 10.56 for girls). These results suggest that the girls and boys in this sample were using and experiencing similar levels of RA at the fourth grade level.

For further exploratory purposes, gender comparisons among the other variables involved in the current study were also conducted. First VA and PA were examined. Again, no significant gender differences were found. The mean scores for PA done to me were almost identical, with boys averaging 4.17 and girls 4.15. Similar results were found for VA. Girls showed a mean score of 2.60 and boys 2.14 for the VA done to me question. For PSB, inclusion, and loneliness, there were again no statistically significant differences between these variables (See Tables 6, 7 and 8 for complete lists of gender results).

Table 6

Gender Comparisons of I Do for RA, VA, PA, and PSB

Variable	gender	*n*	*m*	SD	*t*	*df*	*p*
RA	boy	25	8.00	3.43	.04	51	.483
	girl	28	7.96	2.52			
VA	boy	23	1.74	.86	-.74	48	.233
	girl	27	1.93	.92			
PA	boy	25	3.24	1.39	1.38	51	.087
	girl	28	2.79	1.00			
PSB	boy	24	14.08	3.19	-.34	49	.738
	girl	27	14.37	2.90			

Table 7

Gender Comparisons of Done To Me for RA, PA, VA, and PSB

Variable	Gender	*n*	*m*	SD	t	*df*	*p*
RA	boy	24	11.54	5.31	.74	49	.232
	girl	27	10.56	4.21			
VA	boy	25	2.60	1.32	1.37	51	.089
	girl	28	2.14	1.11			
PA	boy	24	4.17	2.10	.03	49	.488
	girl	27	4.15	2.21			
PSB	boy	23	11.78	3.72	-.29	48	.773
	girl	27	12.07	3.39			

Table 8

Inclusion and Loneliness Gender Comparison

Variable	Gender	*n*	*m*	SD	t	*df*	*p*
Inclusion	boy	25	7.12	2.24	.20	51	.839
	girl	28	7.00	2.04			
Loneliness	boy	24	2.42	1.53	-.53	49	.598
	girl	27	2.63	1.33			

Are there Differences between reports of RA used by and against Fourth Grade Students?

Whether students report using aggression more or less than they report experiencing it was examined. This difference was significant, $t(50) = -4.51$, $p < .001$.

The mean rating of RA from section 1 (What I do) was 1.61 while the mean rating from section 2 (What others do to me) was 2.20.

These results led to curiosity about the other forms of aggression and whether or not similar differences existed. A significant difference was again found when comparing VA done to me to VA performed, $t(49) = -2.56$, $p < .014$. When reporting what they do to others, the mean rating was 1.84, and when reporting what others do to them the mean rating was 2.32. Similarly, significance was found when comparing PA from the two sections, $t(50) = -4.04$, $p < .001$. The mean for reported PA that students do to others was 1.51 while the mean for PA received was 2.08. Again, students were reporting more VA and PA done to them than they were reporting doing to others. The same question was examined for PSB. Again, there were significant results; however, this time students reported doing more PSB than they reported experiencing from others, $t(47) = 4.58$, $p < .001$. The mean scores from PSB that I do was 3.61, while the mean for PSB done to me was 3.00 (See Table 9 for complete list of comparisons).

Table 9

Comparison of Aggression and PSB I Do and Done to Me

Variable	Survey Section	*n*	*m*	SD	*t*	*df*	*p*
RA	I Do	51	1.61	.60	-4.51	50	.000
	Done to Me	51	2.20	.95			
PA	I Do	51	1.51	.61	-4.04	50	.000
	Done to Me	51	2.08	1.07			
VA	I Do	50	1.84	.89	-2.56	49	.014
	Done to Me	50	2.32	1.24			
PSB	I Do	48	3.61	.72	4.58	47	.000
	Done to Me	48	3.00	.88			

Chapter V: Discussion

The purpose of this research was to examine RA and related social behaviors that take place among fourth grade students in a rural community. This chapter includes three different areas of discussion. First, limitations of the study in general are reviewed. Second, conclusions from the present research are drawn and connections to previous research are made. Last, recommendations and implications for the future are discussed.

Limitations

There are some limitations that should be taken into consideration before conclusions of the research are discussed. First the limited sample size should be noted. The data was collected from only fourth grade students in a small, rural, Midwestern public school district. Therefore, the results of the study are only representative of similar communities and grade level.

There are also limitations in the instrument and procedure of the study. First, it may have been limiting to the study to use only self-report measures to the exclusion of teacher, parent, and peer nominations. Multiple points of view may have been beneficial in establishing reliability of the results. Additionally, there were inconsistencies in the time that passed between the day that letters of consent went home and the day the survey was administered across classes. For two of the three classes just a week had passed; however, due to a low return rate, scheduling conflicts, and a holiday break, 28 days passed between the two dates for the third class. Last, there may have been ambiguity in the term "classmates" in the survey instructions. Some students may have interpreted this term as meaning only people in their homeroom class while others may have included all fourth grade students at their school in the definition.

In addition, there were a few specific survey items that raised questions by students in all three classes. On the Things I Do at School survey, questions five and nine concern PA towards others (hitting, pushing, or shoving). Many students questioned whether or not they should include moments when you are hitting, pushing, or shoving as a joke. This question was asked in two of the three classes; the researcher instructed students from all three classes not to "count" times when they were sure others were joking. Part of the difficulty in measuring aggression that takes place in schools is that they are often interpreted differently depending on the individual. Therefore, the individuals' personal interpretations of aggressive acts may have varied.

Another limitation is the possibility that students were not completely honest when responding to the survey questions. Although there were precautions taken to ensure privacy, the subject matter involved intimate relationships with other individuals, and for various reasons some students may have felt a need to hide their true feelings or behaviors from the survey administrators, with whom they had a positive long-term relationship.

Finally, some students may have had memorable positive or negative experiences with peers shortly before responding to the surveys, which may have skewed their overall estimates in one direction or another.

Conclusions

Relational aggression among fourth grade students.

There is consistent evidence from previous research that RA does take place at this stage of development in elementary students (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Underwood et. al, 2004). The data from both sections of the survey used in this project further

confirm these results. Six to 38 % of fourth grade students in this sample answered that they sometimes, almost all of the time, or all of the time performed relationally aggressive behavior towards their classmates. The results are even more noteworthy for the percentage of students who said they experienced RA from other students; 36 to 42 % of students answered that they sometimes, almost all of the time, or all of the time experienced RA.

These results are not surprising. In the past decade or so research has consistently shown that RA is a common occurrence among multiple age levels in school (Crick et al, 2006; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Rose et al, 2004). This data helps support claims that more discrete forms of aggression like RA are indeed a problem that should be addressed in schools.

Differences in RA used in comparison to other forms of aggression.

In the present study overt aggression was separated into two types: physical and verbal. Researchers in the past conducting similar studies have found varying amounts of aggression used when comparing boys and girls. Crick and Grotpeter found that boys use more overt aggression and more RA than do girls. French et al. (2002), who conducted research in Indonesia as well as the United States, also found similar gender differences in RA. In terms of VA in Indonesia and the United States there were no significant differences found when comparing gender, age or culture. The current researcher hypothesized that, consistent with the Crick and Grotpeter (1995) study, gender differences would be found between the different forms of aggression. In the present study PA and VA were separately compared to RA for each section of the survey (What I do or What Others do to Me). Unexpectedly, there were no significant differences found

between genders for either form of overt aggression for either section of the survey. The results of this study are inconsistent with past research using the same (though unmodified) survey. Possible explanations for this discrepancy is the smaller sample size and different population of the present study.

It is interesting to note that the frequency of RA reported was significantly lower than the frequency of VA reported when students were asked what they do to others. Both boys and girls reported yelling at others and calling them mean names more than they reported using RA. This difference was not found when comparing RA to PA for the same section of the survey. When asked what others do to them, there was no difference between the reports of PA and RA or VA and RA, and each form of aggression was reportedly being used at similar levels by boys and girls. Unexpectedly, VA was the only behavior reportedly used more than RA, while in the literature cited in the previous paragraph it was PA or RA that was used most often by both boys and girls. It is possible that since both boys and girls from this specific sample were using similar levels of each aggression form, VA is more acceptable to both genders and therefore used the most by the entire group.

Relationship between RA and the maladjustment of students.

Maladjustment of students was also examined in relation to RA. Based on Crick and Grotpeter (1995), it was hypothesized that the use of RA would be related to loneliness and isolation in school. The results of this study did not support Crick and Grotpeter's findings. The self-identified lonely group did not report more use of RA than did the self-identified not-lonely group. However, there was a relationship between the use of PA and the self-identified lonely group. For this particular sample, physically

aggressive students experienced higher levels of loneliness than did those who used the other forms of aggression. This might suggest that the use of RA and VA are more accepted by peers. The self-identified lonely group (students who felt lonely sometimes, almost all of the time, or all of the time) also reported more RA being done to them than did the self-reported non-lonely group. This result is consistent with Crick and Grotpeter's past research which shows that there are some serious negative risks for maladjustment that accompany the presence of RA. Not surprisingly, the same association was found between PA and loneliness. Students who identified as part of the lonely group reported more PA being done to them than did the non-lonely group. This association was not found for VA, which more students reported experiencing in comparison to RA. A possible explanation for this difference is that RA and PA are used more selectively at the fourth grade level than VA. Verbal aggression may be acceptable to use with more individuals, while RA and PA are used on a select few for bullying purposes.

Relationship between RA and PSB.

In their research using peer nominations of RA, Crick and Grotpeter (1995) found that the more prosocial group was composed of nonaggressive girls. The other three groups of children (aggressive girls, nonaggressive boys and aggressive boys) were viewed as less prosocial, with the group of nonaggressive boys viewed as the least prosocial. The current study did not use peer nominations; however, a similar result was found. A negative correlation was found between reported PSB and RA (as well as PA). This finding suggests that education on PSB should be addressed in intervention programs for elementary aged students, and will be further discussed later in this chapter.

The frequency of PSB reported and the reported frequency of different forms of aggression experienced from other students were also explored. There was no correlation between any of these sets of variables. This finding indicates that the care students show towards others does not affect how little or how much aggression they experience from others. This finding indicates that the perpetrators of aggression are not seeking out individuals who are nice or not nice to them when they choose their victims.

Gender differences in reports of RA among fourth grade students.

There were no significant gender differences in RA among fourth grade students at this specific elementary school. Further, the mean scores of the boys and girls for each additional variable: VA; PA; PSB; loneliness; and inclusion, were nearly identical. Gender differences have been shown in the past using the same or similar surveys with similar demographics (Crick and Grotpeter, 1995; French et al, 2002). What was it about this specific sample that showed no difference between genders in aggressive behavior, prosocial behavior, loneliness, and feelings of inclusion? There are a few possible explanations for these results. Again, the small sample size in comparison to previous studies could explain the lack of difference seen between genders. It could also be that for various reasons this sample of students does not show the same gender differences that those of other communities might. It could be that this group of students has been reinforced by their families, school officials, and/or their peers for avoiding gender stereotypes for certain ways of releasing anger or showing kindness towards one another.

Differences between the RA used by and against fourth grade students.

The reports of aggression being used in school show less RA than the reports of RA experienced from others in school. Responses in the first section (What I Do)

averaged between never and almost never, but on the second section they averaged between almost never and sometimes. This difference could be explained in at least two ways. It is possible that students were less honest when reporting the RA they actually perform. Or, there could very possibly be a smaller group of students who are the aggressors to a larger group of students who reported receiving the aggression.

Recommendations and Implications

A growing body of research shows regular usage of RA among school children and its negative effects on students. Additional studies should be done with larger samples to again test for gender differences. The Crick and Grotpeter (1995) study included students from grade levels three through six. This study focused solely on fourth grade students. The lower and upper elementary grade levels should be included in the same study. It would also be interesting to include other measures to analyze RA. For example, peer nomination methods make possible the identification of small or large groups of aggressive students. An additional variable that could be examined using peer nomination methods is popularity. More information may be found about gender differences, and additional exploration in these areas could lead to more successful intervention programs.

Teachers, parents, counselors, and community members must look for ways of preventing and intervening in the aggression that takes place among children in schools. The information gained from this research project suggests that intervention programs would be appropriate by the end of elementary school. Earlier, prevention programs are also indicated. The second step program discussed in chapter two is an example of a successful program at the middle school/junior high level (Van Schoiack et al; 2002).

Students at this age were able to decrease their overall endorsement of aggression and increase social skill performance. One finding from the present study that suggests the the desirability of a similar program in this school is that students who reported using RA also reported little use of PSB, while those students who showed infrequent use of RA showed more use of PSB. Two of the social skills that the second step program incorporated into its curriculum were empathy and perspective-taking. If prosocial behaviors can be facilitated at the fourth grade level through development of those skills, it is possible that students might decrease their use of RA and PA. A similar or modified version of the second step program might be beneficial to students even before they enter middle school.

One example of a successful elementary school program, called the Early Risers Program (August, Realmuto, Hektner, & Bloomquist, 2001) targets overt forms of disruptive childhood aggression in the classroom. The program involves components such as a summer school session, teacher consultation, a mentoring program, social skills groups, and parent education and information resourcing. After being enrolled in the program for two years, progress was shown for kindergarten students from a semi-rural community who were originally identified as high-risk in the areas of school behavior and academic achievement. Children from the group identified as most severely aggressive showed improvements in behavioral self-regulation. A successful intervention program like this at the elementary school level that targeted overt aggression in the classroom may also be successful if directed towards relationally aggressive children, a form of aggression that was not addressed in this study.

There are also programs that have successfully decreased VA in the classroom. Dykeman (2003) attempted to reduce acting out behaviors (PA and VA) by students who were referred for a special education assessment due to behavior difficulties, with a family systems intervention. This particular study involved students who were identified by counselors as those with separated or divorced parents. The average age of the children participating in this study was 13.1 years of age. The dyads received parent-child counseling that was based on family-systems treatment. The counseling sessions met weekly for approximately one hour and went on for three months. After treatment ended, use of VA significantly decreased and reasoning skills significantly increased. Both of these improvements were associated with improved classroom behaviors. In situations where VA is problematic with older adolescents, intervention programs targeted at family counseling and conflict resolution might again be successful.

Access to research based intervention programs targeting aspects of RA is limited (Young, Boye, & Nelson, 2006). However, a large body of research is developing to aid in the organization and implementation of school programs that decrease RA and its negative associations. Young et al. (2006) identify factors to keep in mind when creating an intervention program that is aimed at reducing RA in schools. First, it is stated that peer group issues should be addressed in addition to individual behaviors. They explain that successful interventions should target both levels. Young et al. also mention that Functional Behavior Assessments (FBAs) can be successful when working with problematic RA behaviors. The key is finding the function of relationally aggressive behaviors by interviewing students, parents, and teachers, then identifying positive replacement behaviors for the future. A final word of advice that is given in regards to

creating an intervention program for RA is to work on constructing a positive school climate that promotes prosocial behaviors such as inclusion, acceptance, and respect. This approach is said to decrease bullying and threatening behaviors that might take place in schools.

Relational aggression is often unseen, unheard, and unnoticed by adults in schools, at home, and in the community. However, it is imperative that action is taken to decrease this behavior, in order to decrease the negative effects that can come from this hidden form of aggression.

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Appendix A: Letter of Consent

Dear Parents and Guardians of Bloomer Elementary 4th Grade Students:

My name is Nicole Crowell and I recently worked as an intern at Bloomer Elementary School in the guidance office under the supervision of Jenny Tarnowski, the school counselor. I am currently finishing my master's degree in Guidance and Counseling at the University of Wisconsin-Stout. The reason I am writing is to ask your permission to allow your child to respond to a survey that I will use to complete my thesis in order to obtain my degree. Your child is being invited to participate in the study because he or she is enrolled in a 4th grade class in the Bloomer School District. No factors other than enrollment grade were used in the selection of your child. With your permission, I will be presenting the survey to your child in his or her guidance class in the month of December.

My thesis is entitled *Relational Aggression and the Need for Intervention at the Fourth Grade Level.* Relational aggression is a type of aggression used by children in middle childhood and adolescence to hurt others through the damage of relationships, feelings of acceptance, friendship, or being included in a group. Examples of relational aggression include things like: spreading rumors, telling lies, or ignoring friends. When I was working at Bloomer Elementary last spring I had the opportunity to complete a self-esteem unit with the third grade classes. One thing that was brought to my attention in a few of the classes that I taught was that students felt that the words of others could positively or negatively affect their self-esteem. This type of behavior is something that I personally see students struggle with often. In writing my thesis, I am trying to find out how often this type of aggression occurs in comparison with other forms of aggression (such as physical) in an average midwestern city. I am aware of some intervention strategies for middle school students to help decrease the negative effects of relational aggression in schools. By surveying your child, I will be gaining information necessary to determine whether or not a similar program might be needed in elementary schools like your child's.

The students who participate will be given a modified form of a self-report survey called the Children's Social Behavior Scale (Crick and Grotpeter, 1995). This survey was designed to examine relational aggression, physical aggression, verbal aggression, positive social behaviors, inclusion by classmates, and loneliness felt by the child. Each student will answer 27 questions total pertaining to these six things. Answers will be given using a five point scale. Some examples of questions asked are: Some kids help others out when they need it. How often do you do this? How often do others do this for you? Some kids tell lies about a classmate so that the other kids won't like the classmate anymore. How often do you do this? How often do others do this to you? The students will be told not to put their names on the survey, and no information other than gender that could identify your child will be recorded. Participation is completely voluntary. It is up to you and your child to decide whether or not they will take part in this study. If you choose to let your child participate and later wish to remove him or her from the study, you may do so at any time. There will be no negative consequences for students who choose not to participate, or those who withdraw from the study. Your child also has the option of refusing to participate at any time, and may skip any questions they choose.

There is no expected risk to the students who do choose to participate, other than a possible feeling of discomfort when it comes to sharing personal information about their behaviors, feelings and experiences in school. I will explain the purpose of the survey to the children before they complete it and answer any questions that they may have. The survey could be interesting for students and might help them learn something about themselves. The information asked is personal, but the survey is easy to understand. The children will be told that if they think of anything they want to talk about with the school counselor after completing the survey the counselor will be happy to talk with them.

Overall, the findings from this study could help counselors focus on successful ways to deal with aggression that can often take place in the elementary grades. Aggression is often hidden in schools, so the more information that we can find out about it, the easier it will be to understand why it is taking place and what counselors, teachers and parents can do to stop it. As a future school counselor, I want all students to have a positive experience while receiving their education.

I appreciate the opportunity to involve your child in my research project. I am available to answer any questions or respond to any worries that you might have. I can be reached by e-mail at crowelln@uwstout.edu, or by telephone at 715-379-4534. You can also get in touch with my research advisor, Dr. Helen Swanson, Department of Psychology by e-mail at swansonh@uwstout.edu, or by phone at 715-232-2784.

This study has been reviewed and approved by The University of Wisconsin-Stout's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has determined that this study meets the ethical obligations required by federal law and University policies. If you have questions or concerns regarding this study please contact the Investigator or Advisor. If you have any questions, concerns, or reports regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB Administrator.

Thank you for your time.
Sincerely,

Nicole Crowell
Graduate Student, School of Guidance and Counseling
University of Wisconsin-Stout

Helen Swanson, Ph.D.
Professor of Psychology
University of Wisconsin-Stout

Appendix B: Survey One

Things I Do At School

We are interested in how kids get along with one another. Please think about your relationship with other kids and how often you do these things at school.

1. Some kids tell lies about a classmate so that the other kids won't like the classmate anymore. How often do you do this?

Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All The Time
1	2	3	4	5

2. Some kids try to keep certain people from being in their group when it is time to play or do an activity. How often do you do this?

Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All The Time
1	2	3	4	5

3. Some kids try to cheer up other kids who feel upset or sad. How often do you do this?

Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All The Time
1	2	3	4	5

4. When they are mad at someone, some kids get back at the person by not letting the person be in their group anymore. How often do you do this?

Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All The Time
1	2	3	4	5

5. Some kids hit other kids at school How often do you do this?

Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All The Time
1	2	3	4	5

6. Some kids let others know that they care about them. How often do you do this?

Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All The Time
1	2	3	4	5

7. Some kids help out other kids when they need it. How often do you do this?

Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All The Time
1	2	3	4	5

8. Some kids yell at others and call them mean names. How often do you do this?

Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All The Time
1	2	3	4	5

9. Some kids push and shove other kids at school. How often do you do this?

Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All The Time
1	2	3	4	5

10. Some kids tell their friends that they will stop liking them unless the friends do what they say. How often do you tell friends this?

Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All The Time
1	2	3	4	5

11. Some kids have a lot of friends in their class. How often do you have a lot of friends in your class?

Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All The Time
1	2	3	4	5

12. Some kids try to keep others from liking a classmate by saying mean things about the classmate. How often do you do this?

Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All The Time
1	2	3	4	5

13. Some kids wish that they had more friends at school. How often do you feel this way?

Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All The Time
1	2	3	4	5

14. Some kids say or do nice things for other kids. How often do you do this?

Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All The Time
1	2	3	4	5

15. Some kids have a lot of classmates who like to play with them. How often do the kids in your class like to play with you?

Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All The Time
1	2	3	4	5

Appendix C: Survey Two

Things Others Do At School

We are interested in how kids get along with one another. Please think about your relationship with other kids and how often they do these things to you or for you at school.

1. Some kids tell lies about a classmate so that the other kids won't like the classmate anymore. How often do others do this to you?

Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All The Time
1	2	3	4	5

2. Some kids try to keep certain people from being in their group when it is time to play or do an activity. How often do others do this to you?

Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All The Time
1	2	3	4	5

3. Some kids try to cheer up other kids who feel upset or sad. How often do others do this for you?

Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All The Time
1	2	3	4	5

4. When they are mad at someone, some kids get back at the person by not letting the person be in their group anymore. How often do others do this to you?

Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All The Time
1	2	3	4	5

5. Some kids hit other kids at school. How often do others do this to you?

Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All The Time
1	2	3	4	5

6. Some kids let others know that they care about them. How often do others do this for you?

Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All The Time
1	2	3	4	5

7. Some kids help out other kids when they need it. How often do others do this for you?

Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All The Time
1	2	3	4	5

8. Some kids yell at others and call them mean names. How often do others do this to you?

Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All The Time
1	2	3	4	5

9. Some kids push and shove other kids at school. How often do others do this to you?

Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All The Time
1	2	3	4	5

10. Some kids tell their friends that they will stop liking them unless the friends do what they say. How often do your friends tell you this?

Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All The Time
1	2	3	4	5

11. Some kids try to keep others from liking a classmate by saying mean things about the classmate. How often do others do this to you?

Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All The Time
1	2	3	4	5

12. Some kids say or do nice things for other kids. How often do others do this for you?

Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All The Time
1	2	3	4	5