

THE DESIGN OF A LUNCHTIME RELATIONAL AGGRESSION PREVENTION  
PROGRAM TARGETING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AGED FEMALES

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY

OF

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF APPLIED AND PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

OF

RUTGERS

THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

BY

LAUREN BROOKE ELKINSON

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## ABSTRACT

Aggression, in all of its forms, is a growing problem in today's schools. Relational aggression, the attempt to harm another person through manipulation and damage of relationships with others, is a specific form of aggression that is not only increasingly prevalent, but also undertreated (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). Children gossip about peers, exclude each other from activities, and engage in name-calling, among other relationally aggressive behaviors. Females are more likely to engage in this behavior; males tend to engage in more physically aggressive behaviors (Yoon, Barton, & Taiariol, 2004). While frequently dismissed by teachers and administrators as "typical" childhood behavior, studies have shown that relational aggression can be as harmful as physical aggression (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006; Yoon et al., 2004). The purpose of this dissertation is to design and develop a classroom program for a central New Jersey public school to be implemented with third to fifth grade female students during lunch, an unstructured time of day during which children often engage in relational aggression with peers. The program is based on a thorough needs assessment conducted in the middle school for which the program is being designed (Maher, 2000). The program design also relies on Dodge's (1986) Information Processing Model as a foundation for its design (Lochman & Dunn, 1993). The needs assessment examined students' peer relationships and students' bullying behaviors through student and teacher questionnaires. The program consists of ten classroom-based lessons that address bullying, relationship skills, anger management, and problem solving. The other part of the program is a teambuilding component for implementation during lunch and recess. The dissertation includes detailed lesson plans as well as session outlines for teambuilding activities. Also included are introductory

lessons, which provide school personnel with a clear lesson for introducing each component of the program to students. Finally, the limitations of the program, implications for the program's use, and future directions are also discussed.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Bullying has become an increasingly prevalent and pervasive issue in schools across the country. Recent data from the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics indicate that almost 30% of American students have reported either being bullied or having bullied other students at some point during their school years (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006). Additionally, studies have shown that approximately 10-20% of elementary school students are teased or threatened violently on a daily basis (Leff, Power, Manz, Costigan, & Nabors, 2001). Aggressive behavior in the school setting, specifically the elementary school setting, has been linked with elevated risk for future social problems, substance abuse, and criminal behavior.

Bullying can be observed in many forms and has various physical, emotional, and psychological effects. Physical aggression, or harm through damage or threat of damage to another's physical well-being, is most common (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). Children engage in hitting, pushing, kicking, and biting other students, which are physical acts of aggression. Verbal aggression, which is any communication intended to cause psychological pain to another person, is another form of aggression that becomes increasingly common as children's verbal abilities develop (Vissing, Straus, Gelles, & Harrop, 1991). This might include acts like name-calling or threatening to hurt another person. Finally, relational aggression is an attempt to harm another person through

manipulation and damage of relationships and social exclusion (Werner & Crick, 1999). This form of aggression encompasses verbal aggression and can include gossiping, excluding students from social activities, and telling lies about another student in order to stop other children from liking him or her. Children may attempt to thwart or damage the efforts that other children make to be social with their peers, which often go unnoticed by school officials. This behavior is sometimes believed to be normal children's behavior, making it especially dangerous because it is often ignored by teachers and administrators (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995).

Despite the fact that physical bullying is more readily observable, relational aggression can be just as harmful to students, leading to future social maladjustment (Merrell, Buchanan, & Tran, 2006). The latter form of aggression is categorized by indirect behaviors that are often overlooked by teachers, who may dismiss them as typical childhood behaviors. However, it is imperative that these behaviors be addressed in an effort to avoid the negative trajectory associated with the experience of bullying. Bullies and victims are more likely than their peers who do not engage in bullying behaviors to drop out of school, run away from home, have decreased school attendance, or attempt suicide (Crick, Casas, & Mosher, 1997). Since most school based interventions address physical bullying, it is necessary for school personnel to work together to address the more subtle bullying that often goes unnoticed.

A limitation of current bullying programs in schools is the predominant focus on physical aggression and lack of emphasis on relational aggression (Crick, 1996). Studies have shown that if anti-bullying programs are implemented as intended, 60% of females

and 7% of males will fail to be identified as bullies or victims of relational aggression due to the focus of the programs on physical aggression (Young, Boye, & Nelson, 2006).

The purpose of this program design is to develop an intervention to be implemented during lunchtime that will prevent relational aggression from occurring. The program design is based on the relational aggression literature, specifically as it occurs in schools; the program is being designed for a school district in central New Jersey in which a need for relational aggression prevention has been identified and thoroughly evaluated. Current anti-bullying programming in the school setting has focused on physical aggression and has not addressed relational aggression among students. The school district has requested consultation and subsequent program design to target this issue.

In the following section of this dissertation, an overview of the current relational aggression research is provided, including a discussion on the factors influencing aggression and the potential impacts on bullies and victims. A review of school based prevention and intervention programs was included to provide an overview of the strategies currently used in school settings as well as discussion of school as a context for this behavior. This, in conjunction with a theoretical basis for the study, serves as the foundation for the design of the program.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### *Overview of Aggression*

Aggression is a construct that encompasses many different behaviors which commonly occur in schools. A review of the scientific literature on aggression indicates that multiple definitions have been delineated. It is used to describe a range of behaviors, from physical violence to forceful assertion of one's opinion to strong ambition. Some of the behaviors that are described are socially inappropriate; others, however, are highly valued, such as ambition or assertiveness. In this dissertation, aggression is defined as any form of behavior that is intended to injure someone physically or psychologically, and the terms "bullying" and "aggression" are used interchangeably (Berkowitz, 1993). More specifically, the focus in this dissertation is on relational aggression, defined as harm that occurs through manipulation of a relationship (Young, Boye, & Nelson, 2006).

Many forms of aggression have been discussed in the literature. Harm to another person can be caused physically, verbally, or relationally, and the term "peer aggression" encompasses all three of these methods (Crick et al., 1999). The most frequently referred to form of aggression is physical aggression, or harm through damage or threat of damage to another's physical well-being (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). Hitting, pushing, kicking, and biting are examples. These are most commonly observed among children and the impetus for the "zero tolerance" policies for bullying that are often implemented

in school districts, which strictly prohibit any bullying behaviors among students (Leff, Power, Manz, Costigan, & Nabors, 2001). Another form of aggression is verbal aggression, which is any communication intended to cause psychological pain to another person (Vissing et al., 1991). This might include acts like name-calling or threatening to hurt another person. These behaviors are often included in zero tolerance policies in schools, as verbal aggression often leads to office discipline referrals. Finally, the third type of aggression, relational aggression, is an attempt to harm another person through manipulation and damage of relationships and social exclusion (Werner & Crick, 1999). This form of aggression encompasses verbal aggression and can include gossiping, excluding students from social activities, and telling lies about another student in order to stop other children from liking him or her. Children may attempt to thwart or damage the efforts that other children make to be social with their peers. This behavior is sometimes seen as “typical” of children, making it especially dangerous because it is often ignored by teachers and administrators (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995).

Given the varying types of aggression, it follows that the goals of aggression differ. While there is no consensus about why people behave aggressively, various hypotheses have been suggested (Berkowitz, 1993). Berkowitz theorizes that the assertion of power, for example, is a common goal of aggressive behavior. Human beings attempt to enhance their power and dominance over others through aggressive actions. In order to demonstrate that they have power in their relationships and are not subordinate, people act aggressively to coerce others. This coercion may aim to stop the person from doing something that bothers them, or coerce the person to do something else. Impression management is another theoretical explanation for why individuals behave aggressively



toward others (Berkowitz, 1993). Wanting to appear formidable and fearless, people are aggressive to impress others by appearing frightening. Individuals may believe this will enhance their reputation, gaining popularity by intimidating others. This is often seen in schools where children compete for popularity among their classmates and will go to any length to achieve status (Berkowitz, 1993).

There are also evolutionary hypotheses for aggressive behavior. Threatening stimuli leads to fear, which triggers a fight or flight response, both of which are evolutionarily adaptive (Mammen, Pilkonis, Kolko, & Groff, 2007). Responding aggressively in situations in which threats are present has survival value because it helps the individual escape the situation. Behaving aggressively is critical in the fight response, and has proven to be quite adaptive in response to physical threats (Kassinove, 2007). This behavior is reinforced in that aggressive behavior allows for protection of the family and the individual, and access to necessities, like food, water, and shelter. Not behaving aggressively could potentially cost a person his or her life.

Overall, the focus of aggression research among school aged children has been on aggressive boys, which often ignores the motives of aggressive girls and the needs of their victims (Crick, 1996). Boys' aggressive behaviors tend to be more overt, and thus more noticeable and punishable, while girls display aggression in more covert ways. As a result, with anti-bullying programs typically addressing physical aggression, 60% of girls and 7% of boys will fail to be identified when they display aggressive behaviors (Young, Boye, & Nelson, 2006).

### *Biological Basis of Aggression*

For years, there has been debate regarding the basis of human aggression, namely whether it is more influenced by nature (biological factors), or nurture (environmental factors). While much of the past debate has focused on physical aggression and not relational aggression, many of the perspectives apply to both forms of aggression.

Berkowitz (1993) describes the debate as originating with Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory. Freud conceptualized aggression as an active instinct for hatred and destruction that lives within all human beings. Freud's notion of the battle between the death instinct, which drives individuals to eliminate all internal tension through death, and the opposite force of the life instinct, is at the root of aggression. Freud concluded that aggression is biological in nature.

Freud's views correspond with those of Charles Darwin, who suggested that it is probable that instincts persistently follow from the mere force of inheritance, without the stimulus of pleasure or pain (Berkowitz, 1993). Both perspectives indicate that all human beings have inner urges that drive them toward a particular goal. Environmental or situational factors are not considered to have any influence on aggression, and have no impact on one's genetic makeup, which does influence aggression.

According to Berkowitz (1993), Konrad Lorenz, the founder of the study of animal behavior known as ethology, also made the case that humans have an innate aggressive drive, similar to that of animals. He viewed aggression as an evolutionary adaptation passed down from our ancestors. He, along with Darwin and Freud, believed that humans have an inborn urge to attack others. This urge is generated within the person and is present due to their biological makeup. Unlike his predecessors, however, Lorenz

acknowledged that aggression is moderated by social constructs, such as culture and education. Seeing the connection between his beliefs and Freud's, he recognized situational forces, but only in the sense that they function to unlock innate internal drives. In response to the social problems that stem from aggression, like violence, he believed these issues were due to intractable human nature, thus making the argument for the biological basis of aggression.

Another component of the biological basis of aggression involves the relationship between hormones and aggressive behavior. Studied primarily in animals, the hormone testosterone has been documented to affect aggression. High levels of testosterone increase aggressive behavior whereas decreased levels of testosterone diminish aggression (Durkin, 1995). Both male and female children with higher levels of testosterone will engage in more masculine behavior patterns, including aggressive behavior (Durkin, 1995). Similarly, testosterone is thought to be related to irritability, which also leads to aggressive acts.

Other biological factors such as temperament are believed to play a role in aggressive behavior. Loeber and Hay (1997) cite multiple studies that indicate children who have difficult temperaments as babies display later behavioral problems, including aggression. Similarly, children who struggle with emotional regulation are at risk for displaying aggressive behavior. The control of anger and tolerance for frustration are abilities that must be learned, and children with difficulty regulating their emotions tend to engage in aggressive behaviors to express their feelings.

Biological theories of aggression are not without criticism. First, there is little empirical research involving humans; rather, much of the research has been conducted

with animal subjects instead of human participants (Berkowitz, 1993). Humans are not prone to killing their own species in the same way that lions and wolves do, and while violence certainly occurs, it is not as prevalent as it is with animals, which makes it difficult to generalize the findings. Additionally, it has been hypothesized that there may be a reciprocal relationship between testosterone and aggression; it may not be that testosterone leads to aggression, but rather aggressive behavior increases the level of testosterone in the bloodstream. Finally, while hormones may mediate what is happening in the environment and the aggressive response, they are not believed to be responsible for generating the aggressive response itself (Berkowitz, 1993).

Given the arguments for the biological basis of aggression and the criticisms that have been discussed, it is difficult to ignore the influence of environmental factors on individual behaviors (Durkin, 1995). While it is probable that biology plays a role in aggression, it is not the sole factor to be considered. As a result, both biological and environmental factors should be considered when trying to understand the basis of aggressive behavior.

#### *Environmental Basis for Aggression*

In addition to the biological factors influencing aggression, it is imperative to consider environmental factors. In terms of relational aggression, it has been suggested that environmental factors have a greater impact on relational aggression than biological factors, including genetic makeup, whereas genes have a greater impact on physical aggression (Brendgen, Dionne, Girard, Boivin, Vitaro, & Perusse, D., 2005). Many relationally aggressive behaviors are either learned or experienced through one's interaction with the environment. Environmental factors include anyone an individual

might interact with on a daily basis, such as family, teachers, peers, or principals in settings such as home, work, or school. This way of thinking of environmental factors influencing aggressive behaviors reflects the ecological model, which suggests that individuals exist within multiple ecological layers and contexts. It takes into account the many different contexts in which aggression may be observed, such as peer groups, the family, school, and the internet.

*Role of the Family.*

One of the most important contexts in which children learn is with their family at home. Because so much development occurs during the years the child is home prior to attending school, parents' behavior is essential in the child's development of positive and negative behaviors. The knowledge and skills that parents have concerning parenting can have a great impact on how children behave. According to Berkowitz (1993), parents may be deficient in that they do not effectively monitor their child's activities, fail to discipline antisocial behavior, do not reward prosocial behaviors like helping others, and are not good at problem solving; he argues that these deficits are predictive of their children's future aggressive behaviors. Parents may invalidate a child's feelings, threaten to withdraw love or affection, or use sarcasm and power-assertive discipline (Maccoby & Martin, 1983 as cited in Yoon et al., 2004). Children who live in this type of environment often learn to behave in such a way, because the modeling of behaviors is a powerful learning tool. Berkowitz (1993) posits that poor parental discipline is often predictive of children's conduct problems, which are associated with academic problems and rejection by peers, and a greater likelihood that the child will be attracted to a deviant peer group. Association with this new peer group tends to be linked with delinquency in adolescence.

Based on this trajectory, a child's parents play a critical role in their child's development. When children are unsupervised and exposed to harsh and punitive punishment, children learn that their coercive behavior is what gains them attention, and they are more likely to develop problems with conduct and aggression.

Relationships in the household are also crucial in a child's development and are often where children learn their aggressive behaviors. For example, when there is parental conflict in the home, children may be distressed by the antagonism between their parents (Berkowitz, 1993). Such conflict is highly stressful for children, and it may result in parental divorce. However, Berkowitz clarifies that marital discord is often more stressful than divorce, if fighting is ongoing and children witness it regularly. A child's aggression is not just exhibited because their parents divorce (McCord, 1986). If the divorce was settled amicably, a child will not have the same difficulty with adjustment as a child whose parents' divorce was tense and bitter.

Two theories have been developed that shed further light on possible causes for aggressive or delinquent behavior. Hirschi's (1969) social control theory suggests that people engage in delinquent behavior when social bonds are weak. In other words, harsh discipline and poor supervision may be evidence of disrupted parent-child bonding. The child may fail to identify with parental and societal values without such a bond, leaving the child lacking internal controls. Children with strong and stable attachments are generally less likely to violate social norms and also less likely to damage their own or others' relationships and attachments.

Patterson, DeBaryshe, and Ramsey (1989) also identified the social interactional perspective as useful in explaining the importance of family variables on aggressive

behavior. This theory suggests that children are trained by their parents to perform in anti-social ways. Children observe the ways their parents interact with people and the environment and learn to use both physical and relational aggression to get what they want. Coercive behaviors are also reinforced daily through interactions with family members; parents often respond positively, with attention or affection, to unacceptable behaviors, meanwhile ignoring the behaviors that are appropriate. In this sense, bad behaviors are rewarded while good behaviors go unnoticed, teaching the child to engage in the bad behaviors to effectively achieve their goals. Children, in essence, learn to control others with coercive means, including exerting their power both physically and verbally.

Overall, research indicates that the most powerful family variables that impact children's aggressive behaviors are harsh and inconsistent discipline, little positive parental involvement, and poor monitoring and supervision (Patterson, DeBaryshe, & Ramsey, 1989).

#### *Role of Peers.*

A child's family has a great impact on their future aggressive behavior. Additionally, the child's peer group also serves a variety of functions, including helping children to discover which behaviors are effective in helping them reach their goals. Children learn from others' behaviors through observation and interaction, and often imitate the behaviors they have witnessed in order to reach their own goals. While this is often a positive learning experience, it is also how children learn the impact of aggression as a means to achieve goals. This reflects Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, which posits that behaviors are learned through observation, modeling, and imitation. By

observing others' attitudes and behaviors, as well as their outcomes, such behaviors may be added to one's repertoire for use in the future. Bandura's notion of reciprocal determinism explains the relationship between the person and the environment; not only does the environment impact behavior, but behavior impacts the environment as well. For instance, children will learn aggressive behaviors from their families and peers, and simply observing them allows the opportunity for the behaviors to be added to the child's repertoire, and the child may imitate these behaviors in future interactions.

As a result, aggression in the peer group, whether physical or relational, is quite common in today's society (Yoon, Barton, & Taiariol, 2004). Children victimize one another for a variety of reasons, such as improving one's reputation or acquiring a desired object. Some use physical force to intimidate others into doing something for them, (i.e., homework), or to obtain something they desire, (i.e., such as a piece of clothing or money). Other children use more relationally aggressive behaviors to manipulate others. They may try to directly control others by threatening social exclusion or peer rejection. These behaviors are often reinforced by peers, making them difficult to extinguish (Yoon et al., 2004). The manipulation and damaging of peer relationships that is increasingly seen as students' verbal abilities improve is also endorsed by peer groups. Although victims may feel high levels of conflict and betrayal, the aggressor experiences acceptance and higher popularity status (Rose, Swenson, & Waller, 2004). Bullies are perceived as popular, which is often quite desirable (Parkhurst & Hopmeyer, 1998).

Berkowitz (1993) also identifies poor early learning experiences with peers as responsible for teaching victimized children to be threatening and assaultive. Children who are bullied by their peers not only learn that aggressive actions can improve social



status but they can also get what they want by bullying others. After experiencing so many aggressive social interactions, children are more likely to misunderstand the actions of others and perceive threats and challenges where they do not exist (Berkowitz, 1993). They are less likely to develop appropriate social skills, and often misinterpret their peers' actions as malicious when they are benign; this leads to a cycle of aggression and victimization. Not surprisingly, children who struggle to function in the "normal" peer group are often drawn to the deviant peer group. Others within this group have similar personalities and understand the experiences of the rejected child. Together, this group tends to reject society's traditional norms and values, and uses delinquent acts such as breaking the law to bring about their own type of popularity within their peer group.

*Two Cultures Theory: An Organizing Framework for the Current Research*

In addition to examining the role of biological and environmental factors, aggression research is often rooted in theories of gender differences, specifically in children's peer groups (Underwood, 2003). These theories incorporate both biological and environmental factors while explaining how children engage in play. For the purpose of this study, these theories serve as the organizing framework guiding the research.

There are distinctive characteristics of girls' peer groups that may lend themselves to relational aggression. Underwood (2003) describes the Two Cultures Theory, which is based on Maltz and Borker's (1982) research of children's play within peer groups. The basic tenet of this theory is that the manner in which children play differs according to gender. These differences continue to manifest themselves in distinct cultures that develop within the same-sex peer group as children grow older (Maltz & Borker, 1982). In essence, males and females form two distinct cultures. Girls' social encounters, first in

play and also later in life, emphasize relationships; boys' social encounters, on the other hand, are more structured and action-oriented. Girls are less likely than boys to play organized sports or engage in competitive games, and more likely to engage in cooperative activities (Maltz & Borker, 1982).

In terms of their relationships with one another, girls' tend to have more intense and intimate relationships with their same-sex peers (Underwood, 2003). They disclose more about themselves and are concerned about who they can consider to be a friend from a young age. Additionally, girls' peer groups are more open to adult input; they pay closer attention to teacher instruction and engage in less rule-breaking than boys' groups (Underwood, 2003).

The Two Cultures Theory may serve as a guide for relational aggression research because the differences that are noted, namely in terms of girls' play within the peer group and relationships with others, reflect the greater likelihood that girls will engage in relational aggression rather than physical aggression (Underwood, 2003). Girls engage in fewer competitive activities involving physical contact, making physical aggression less likely. Girls are also more sensitive to adult input; therefore, they are more likely to engage in relational aggression than physical aggression because it is less obvious to observers. Finally, because girls place a high value on their relationships, and harming another girl's relationships is considerably more damaging than causing physical harm (Underwood, 2003).

In this dissertation, the Two Cultures Theory guides the development of the research questions and the design of the program. Using this theory as a foundation

means that girls' culture will be considered in great detail, with a focus on relationships, as they are critical in girls' culture.

### *School as a Context for Relational Aggression*

Given that children interact with their peer group quite frequently in the school setting, the school can be considered a broader context in which aggression exists. Relational aggression is quite common in the classroom. Students tease one another about not understanding an academic concept, the clothes they wear, or the friends with whom they interact. Unfortunately, teachers tend to have a very passive approach to discipline when it comes to relational aggression (Yoon et al., 2004). They report seeing students "being mean" to one another as normative developmental behavior, believing that "boys will be boys" and "girls will be girls." They are often indifferent to the behavior. While physical aggression will immediately result in students being sent to the principal, relational aggression is more likely to be ignored and less likely to be punished (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006). This lack of response makes many students feel unsafe at school (Leff et al., 2001). In more extreme cases, unnoticed aggressive acts can lead students to engage in violent acts, such as bringing a weapon to school. Leff et al. (2001) report that school violence has recently received much attention in the media due to the school shootings in the United States. While these cases are relatively rare, the victimization that occurs leading up to these tragic events should not be ignored.

Relational aggression occurs in class as well as during less structured times such as recess. The break following lunch has many positive aspects to it, and it can be an integral part of children's social, health, and learning development (Cuccaro & Geitner, 2007). Cuccaro and Geitner specified that recess is a time associated with increased

student attention in the classroom, better student health, and improved social skills, since students are able to freely interact with one another outside of the structured classroom. However, given the unstructured nature of the recess period, this appears to be a time when many relationally aggressive acts are committed. One study found that when students were observed during this time, an aggressive act occurred every 2.4 minutes, whereas aggressive acts in the classroom only occurred once every 37 minutes (Pepler, Craig, & Roberts, 1998). Both physical and verbal aggression occurred on the playground. Recess can also promote exclusion of students and gossiping about peers, since students can talk freely with one another and there is far less supervision.

According to Craig, Pepler, and Atlas (2000), verbal aggression that occurs on the playground is more difficult to detect than aggression in the classroom. The space is far less confined, making interactions difficult to hear. While physical aggression is highly observable, verbal or relational aggression is more inconspicuous. Adult supervision on the playground is also far less than in the classroom. Lunch aides tend to be untrained in dealing with student issues and they have a large number of students to monitor, making it highly unlikely that they will notice when relational aggression occurs, unless blatant physical aggression is also involved.

Mason (2008) found that bullying that occurs in schools often continues after school and on weekends when students use the internet. Known as cyberbullying, victimizing others over the internet is another form of harassment (Mason, 2008). Relationally aggressive behaviors, such as taunting, gossiping, and exclusion make their way to the internet through a multitude of means (Mason, 2008). Some children also create websites and blogs devoted to embarrassing another person; others use networking

sites to manipulate and humiliate peers. Since internet use is typically not monitored by parents, the internet provides an outlet for relational aggression to occur. In a recent study, Ybarra and Mitchell (2004) reported that many adolescents were uncomfortable telling an adult about being victimized by peers on the internet. In fact, only 24% told a parent and 14% told a teacher; most children did not tell anyone about their experiences. This is clearly a difficult issue to deal with in schools, as these behaviors are either not observed or difficult to verify. In terms of response, the level of the school's involvement is often unclear and not well delineated by school policy. As a result, it is challenging to discipline these behaviors and interactions among students.

#### *Relational Aggression and Development*

Often, the extent of relationally aggressive behaviors continues to develop as children grow, from infancy through adolescence and even throughout adulthood (Durkin, 1995). Aggressive behavior is first noticed during infancy when the child is approximately seven to nine months old, and aggression is typically displayed in the form of anger (Underwood, 2003). Infants and toddlers will have conflicts over objects and sometimes harm others to attain a desired object. This behavior continues during the preschool years in which children use aggression to satisfy their needs. Typically, children at this stage desire attention from adults and peers, and possession of toys and objects. They may hit another child in order to gain access to a toy, or scream and cry for attention from a parent or teacher. During this stage, aggressive behaviors tend to be mostly physical due to the lack of verbal and cognitive ability.

In a study examining physical and relational aggression in preschoolers, Crick, Casas, and Mosher (1997) used teacher and peer reports to gather data. Their use of

multiple informants provided a unique perspective on children's behavior; peers provide useful data because children do not always engage in aggressive behavior when adults are around; hence, peers know best how other students act on a daily basis. Findings of this study indicated that relational aggression actually appeared in children as young as three to five years old. Crick et al. (1997) noted that at this age, children were able to verbalize their thoughts more accurately, and they begin to use words rather than physical actions to get what they want. As a result, girls tended to exhibit more relationally aggressive behaviors, while boys tended to be more physical with one another. However, it is also worth noting that boys were rated as more popular among their peers when they engaged in relational aggression. Finally, when children engaged in relational aggression as victimizers, they were more likely to experience higher levels of peer rejection and lower levels of prosocial behavior.

Other studies have concluded that girls tend to be more relationally aggressive than boys, whereas boys tended to be more physically aggressive than girls (Crick, Ostrov, Burr, Cullerton-Sen, Jansen-Yeh, & Ralston, 2006). This study examined the preschool age group but did so longitudinally over two years. The differences between children were stable across an 18-month period. Relational aggression was found to be associated with social maladjustment, internalizing problems, and externalizing problems. This study utilized observational methods, which are perceived as best for assessing social behavior, since teacher and peer report incorporate biases about gender stereotypes. With that bias removed, the findings still show that girls are more relationally aggressive than boys, and that difference is evident at a very early age.

As children's verbal abilities increase with age, they tend to rely more on relationally aggressive actions as opposed to physically aggressive behaviors (Durkin, 1995; Young et al., 2006). In elementary school, children begin to utilize their expanding cognitive abilities to come up with painful taunts to hurt their peers. Since they have a better understanding of what might be hurtful to others, they begin to engage in taunting, gossiping, teasing, and other forms of social exclusion. Children's development of social-cognitive and advanced verbal skills has been found to be associated with an increase in relational aggression, specifically among girls (Vaillancourt & Hymel, 2004).

Children that are prone to aggression begin to exhibit adjustment problems in social situations, resorting to relational aggression when interacting with others. When children display stable patterns of aggression in childhood, it is indicative of future social isolation, difficulty with familial interaction, and poor social decision making skills. For these reasons, it is important to begin prevention and interventions efforts at this stage.

While these behaviors are clearly noticeable in the elementary age group, they are most frequently identified as issues in middle school, or adolescence. According to Yoon, Barton, and Taiariol (2004), relationally aggressive behaviors increase during middle school because social status and acceptance are of utmost importance, as the social network extends to the peer group and children begin to seek independence from their parents. At this time, adolescents are beginning to navigate peer relationships and resolve social conflicts. Successfully doing so increases one's social competence. As a result, one's social status at this age is critical. Used as a way to fit in among peers, relational aggression is often used as a tool to improve popularity. It is used by those with more sophisticated social cognition skills as a means to an end, the goal being higher social

status. Though relational aggression is believed to decrease with age, it is quite prevalent with this age group.

Specific risk factors make certain children particularly susceptible to developing relationally aggressive behaviors as they mature. Teglasi, Rahill, and Rothman (2007) identify temperament, social cognitions, and context as three important risk factors to consider. Both bullies and victims may be predisposed to participating in relationally aggressive interactions based on their temperament. A proactive bully, one who is naturally aggressive toward other people and does not need to be provoked in order to become aggressive, tends not to experience much emotion. They have low anxiety and low empathy as well. A reactive bully, who has been a frequent target of bullying and begins to engage in aggressive acts him or herself, is easily provoked emotionally. In terms of victims, a passive victim tends to be submissive and fearful. They are often quiet and inhibited, and more socially withdrawn. On the other hand, a provocative victim responds to others' taunting by reacting angrily or aggressively. This response tends to invite further harassment or aggressive acts from the bully.

The next risk factor identified by Teglasi et al. (2007) involves social cognitions. Reactive bullies often misinterpret social situations by focusing on hostile cues from people in the environment. Even in circumstances in which they are not provided with hostile cues, they will misread the intent of the other person and react as if the other person was being malicious. Proactive bullies, on the other hand, might actually interpret social cues accurately, but use the information to deliberately manipulate other people. They see aggression more as an effective means to attain their goals and use it to obtain what they want.



Finally, the context is important in determining the level of risk for relational aggression (Teglasi et al., 2007). Victims tend to receive very little support, emotional and otherwise, from their peers who are bystanders, because quite often these children are not well liked. They get little empathy from others and are often viewed as being responsible for their own predicaments. When peers believe that a victim has brought the trouble on him or herself, they are less likely to intervene. Teglasi et al. (2007) suggest that having friends is a protective factor since peers help victims deal with bullying. However, this only serves as a protective factor when the friend speaks up during the episode, which may decrease the chances of it recurring.

The social learning perspective proposes that two social processes occur during the early development of aggression (Snyder, Schrepferman, Brooker, & Stoolmiller, 2007). The first process, anger regulation, is learned differently by different individuals. The feeling of anger prepares a person to attain their goals and respond to experiences that make them frustrated and leave them challenged. When anger is dysregulated, the person's cognitive processing is flooded and coercive responses are used instead, instigating verbally and physically aggressive behavior. The second social process that Snyder et al. (2007) discuss is social reinforcement contingencies. There is a functional value in gaining access to desired activities, materials, and social attention, and as children develop they learn the best methods for attaining them. Quite often, children who observe others using coercive behaviors to attain their goals will also utilize such behaviors to do the same. Coercive behaviors are maintained by short-term reinforcement contingencies and continue to be used given their high rate of effectiveness.

### *Impact of Relational Aggression*

The focus of much of the recent literature has been on overt aggression, an observable and measurable construct and a significant stressor that children deal with, especially in the school setting. However, research on overt aggression is typically more applicable to boys, who are more likely than girls to engage in such behavior. As a result, relational aggression, which occurs more frequently in girls, has been neglected, leaving this population underserved (Crick & Bigbee, 1998; Crick, Ostrov, Burr, Cullerton-Sen, Jansen-Yeh, & Ralson, 2006; Yoon, Barton, & Taiariol, 2004).

According to the National Education Association, 160,000 children miss school each day in the United States due to fear of being tormented by their classmates (NEA, 2003). Children often feel scared of being teased or harassed for a multitude of reasons. Clearly, the experience of aggression, both physical and relational, has an impact on feelings of safety at school (Goldstein, Young, & Boyd, 2007). While it may be expected that overt physical aggression will cause discomfort for children in terms of their safety, a less known cause of discomfort is relational aggression. Goldstein et al. (2007) found that when exposed to high levels of relational aggression, students perceived the school environment to be unsafe. They had negative overall social experiences with their peers, and were more likely to have imperfect attendance. The study also found that males who experienced high levels of relational aggression tended to be more likely to carry a weapon to school, even though they did not anticipate being harassed physically.

Engaging in relationally aggressive interactions is harmful not only for the victims, but for bullies as well. For all of these children, relational aggression is one of the best known predictors of future social maladjustment (Crick et al., 1997). One way in

which victims are harmed by relational aggression is that they are often rejected by their peers. They are less accepted by their peer group in that they are less likely to be included in their peers' activities or friendship groups. This experience can be very isolating, leaving children who are victims of relational aggression more depressed (Merrell, Buchanan, & Tran, 2006). They may feel sad about not having close friendships with their peers or become increasingly anxious in social situations. The overall feeling of emotional distress can greatly impair children's functioning in the academic environment and the lowered self-esteem makes social situations anxiety provoking (Merrell et al., 2006). In an effort to improve their functioning, victims of relational aggression often turn to substance use as a coping strategy (Sullivan, Farrell, & Kliewer, 2006). Children may begin to experiment with cigarettes, alcohol, or marijuana in order to feel better, which creates additional risk factors.

Not only is relational aggression harmful to victims, but it is harmful to bullies as well (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). Relationally aggressive students use their behavior to improve their position with peers. Teasing and gossiping about others has a way of elevating the bully's social status, but the experience is not entirely positive. Other children simultaneously respect and fear children who are bullies; as a result, peer nomination measures often reveal that these students have both high "like" and "dislike" ratings according to their peers. However, despite the popularity of these students, bullies often become socially and emotionally maladjusted later in their lives. They experience higher levels of loneliness, depression, and negative self-perceptions (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). Ironically, this experience is quite similar to that of the victims of relational aggression, with many of the same negative outcomes.

The manner in which girls learn the relationally aggressive behaviors that impact females directly is related to gender role identity development (Crothers, Field, & Kolbert, 2005). Rooted in feminist theory, a woman's sense of self is believed to be based on connectedness and interdependence with others. Being affiliated with and feeling accepted by others are often essential elements of a woman's identity. However, typical gender roles place an emphasis on the restriction of emotion and the expression of anger, leaving direct confrontation out of a woman's feminine gender identity. Since direct expression of emotion is not considered acceptable behavior, girls are reinforced for using covert methods to express their anger toward others (Belensky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1997). They also use these methods to resolve conflict and establish dominance among their peers. Girls struggle to pursue power and control in their relationships, meanwhile conforming to society's expectations of submission and repressed emotion. While girls' sense of self and gender identity begin developing in early childhood, the restriction on expression of emotion and use of relational aggression is most evident when there is a greater emphasis on their relationships, namely in adolescence (Remillard & Lamb, 2005). Although relational aggression is used as a means to obtain what they want, it is used with frequency at this age, given the importance of belonging in the peer group as well as the high value of friendships.

*School-Based Prevention and Intervention for Relational Aggression*

In schools, there is a multitude of approaches that may be used to address aggressive behavior. There is increasing recognition of the value of prevention and intervention in schools, and growing empirical support for the use of educational and supportive strategies to promote a safe school climate (Nickerson & Martens, 2008).

While this topic is broad, specific strategies have been found to be effective through empirical studies. Improving communication and positive interactions has been found to be more effective with students than coercive discipline, while utilizing comprehensive approaches that incorporate training and teaching of skills and expectations have been more effective at decreasing the number of office discipline referrals (Meltzer, Biglan, Rasby, & Sprague, 2001; Reinke & Herman, 2002; Sprague, Walker, Golly, White, Myers, & Shannon, 2001). Bickmore (2002) also found that peer mediation is an effective tool used in the schools.

Teachers and administrators play an important role in responding to aggression when it occurs, both in terms of prevention and intervention. Research has shown that despite teachers' critical role, they are often undertrained in responding to aggressive behavior (Bauman & DelRio, 2006). Perhaps a result of this, teachers tend to intervene mostly when physical bullying is occurring, and ignore relational bullying. Bauman and DelRio (2006) reported that teachers also typically have less empathy for victims of relational bullying as opposed to victims of physical bullying, and are less likely to intervene, corroborating their results with previous research. The teachers in their sample also indicated that they would take less severe actions towards relational bullies and victims. Furthermore, when teachers did acknowledge the severity of the bullying, the majority of teachers reported not knowing how to cope with it, especially within the school setting.

When it comes to relationally aggressive behaviors, many teachers believe that teasing and gossiping are typical behaviors for normally developing children (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006; Yoon et al., 2004). Additionally, relational aggression is difficult to

detect. It often occurs during unsupervised times, (i.e., lunch or recess). When it occurs in the classroom, it is done quietly and indiscreetly. It occurs between classes, before school, and after school; during all of these times, teachers are often unaware that it is occurring. Teachers have also reported a lack of confidence in addressing relationally aggressive behavior (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006). School policies are often clear regarding physical aggression; typically, there is a zero-tolerance policy in effect. However, policies regarding relational aggression are far less common, and even when they do exist, they can be somewhat unclear (Chesney-Lind, Morash, & Irwin, 2007).

To aid teachers in responding to relational aggression, various prevention strategies have been developed (Yoon et al., 2006). Yoon et al. (2006) explain that first, teachers need to be trained in identifying, managing, and intervening when they see relational aggression occurring in their classroom. Training should include information that enhances knowledge of bullying behaviors, and improves teachers' skills for identifying and assessing the behaviors. It is important that teachers are aware of the warning signs of relational aggression, such as a child's attempts to control other students' relationships, a tendency to embarrass or humiliate others, and coercing others to meet his or her needs. It is also helpful to know the students' background, so that risk factors, such as growing up in an abusive home or with parents who abuse substances, can be assessed as possible predictors of such behavior. Nonetheless, it is often difficult for teachers to identify students who are bullying others because they typically display other positive qualities that may make it seem unlikely they could bully their peers (Yoon et al., 2006).

Teacher training should also produce attitudinal change toward prevention and intervention. Once students are identified, teachers should help students to identify the support services that are provided by the school, and encourage students to participate (Yoon et al., 2006). These services are often offered by psychologists and social workers within the school setting. They may include groups targeting social skills, anger management, or friendship skills, or individual counseling for children who are either bullying others or being bullied by their peers. It is essential that teachers know what services are available, in order to recommend them to students and their parents when problems occur.

Despite teachers' role in reducing relational aggression in the schools, there are also school-wide prevention strategies that can be implemented (Yoon et al., 2006). The school climate in any school, which consists of the attitudes, feelings, and behaviors of individuals in the school setting, needs to be positive and bully-free (Hernandez & Seem, 2004). Welsh (2000) included cognitions in his definition of school climate, describing school climate as the unwritten beliefs, values, and attitudes that become the style of interaction between students, teachers, and administrators. According to Welsh (2000), school climate sets the parameters of acceptable behavior among all members, and it assigns individual and institutional responsibility for school safety. Fostering an environment in which these relationships are valued, positive, and respected requires a collaborative effort between administration, teachers, parents, and students, all of whom need to promote respect for individual differences.

The creation of a school climate that fosters inclusion, tolerance, respect, and similar positive values helps students develop and maintain social support for one another

(Young, Boye, & Nelson, 2006). This may take the form of assemblies in which differences are discussed in a positive way, or through classroom lessons that emphasize this topic. To that end, school personnel should target belief systems and teach children tolerance, acceptance, and respect through effective communication and constructive conflict resolution (Knoff, 2003). These important tasks need to be enforced and reinforced by all people that children come in contact with in order to promote the greatest change. Unfortunately, zero tolerance policies often are not enough to counter the social success that is acquired by bullies. Relational aggression is a very difficult behavior to change; when bullies enjoy a high status among their peers, they are not likely to want to engage in other behaviors that will rob them of this popularity (Vaillancourt, Hymel, & McDougall, 2007).

All school personnel and students, including both the bullies and the victims should be included in school programs to address aggression (Yoon et al., 2006). Peers, or other bystanders, are also an untapped resource (Vaillancourt et al., 2007). Research has shown that bystanders, more often than not, do not intervene when a peer is being victimized. Confronting a powerful bully is difficult because students risk losing social status by helping a victim. Consequently, children who have a high social status themselves are more likely to intervene than their less popular peers. Thus, all of these factors need to be considered when generating programming specific to relational aggression.

Young et al. (2006) describe effective school programming as focusing on both inhibiting physical aggression and increasing prosocial skills. More often than not, however, the focus is on physical aggression. Young et al. (2006) suggest that relational



aggression should also be addressed through prevention programming in the schools because relational aggression is stable over time. Additionally, social prominence and relational aggression can interact and increase over time, especially for females (Young, Boye, & Nelson, 2006). As status increases because of relational aggression, the frequency with which children use relationally aggressive behaviors may increase, creating a difficult cycle to break. Finally, school programs should also focus on group dynamics (Young et al., 2006). The basis of relational aggression is rooted in the social hierarchy in children's peer groups. Intervening directly with the group itself is the most effective way to change the behavior because the relationships between children can be targeted.

One school-based aggression prevention approach, the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, is currently being implemented in the school for which this program is being designed (Olweus, 1991). The first part of the program is the administration of a needs assessment in which prevalence, types, and attitudes related to bullying are identified. Next, a coordinating committee, consisting of school personnel and community members, uses the needs assessment data to develop school specific implementation plans (Olweus & Limber, 2000). The program provides school, class and individual level interventions, with core components such as rules against bullying, a bullying awareness day, improving supervision, increasing parent involvement, class councils, clearly communicated positive and negative consequences, and individual interventions.

This program is implemented school-wide, and aims to reduce and eventually prevent bullying behaviors in the classroom. There is a great deal of empirical support for

this program. Studies have shown that in schools where this program is in place, there are substantial reductions in bullying, based on student report; reductions in vandalism, fighting, theft, and truancy (Olweus, 1991; Olweus, Limber, & Mihalic, 1999). In addition, significant improvements in the social climate of the classroom occurred; students experienced more positive social relationships with their peers and there was more structure in the classroom. Although other studies have not demonstrated the same effectiveness of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, Olweus (2003) suggests that this may be due to the less controlled conditions of subsequent studies.

The implementation of this program indicates a commitment on the part of the school to eliminate bullying among students. On a school-wide level, there are school rules against bullying as well as positive and negative sanctions for behavior. There is greater teacher involvement; rules are reinforced in the classroom, and regular discussions are held in class to help students recognize bullying and help to prevent it from occurring.

#### *A Conceptual Model for Relational Aggression Program Design*

Programs that target relational aggression, either through prevention or intervention strategies, are quite uncommon for many of the reasons discussed above, including the covert nature of the behavior. In order to design and develop an appropriate and useful relational aggression prevention program, it is important to have a strong conceptual model that serves as the foundation. One such model is the Social Cognitive Model, based heavily on Dodge's (1986) Information Processing Model (Lochman & Dunn, 1993).

Dodge proposed the following five important information processing steps with which aggressive children tend to struggle. First, children that are aggressive tend to perceive social cues as hostile. They also attend to fewer cues before forming an interpretation of the event, making it more likely that they will inaccurately interpret what happened. As a result, when an aggressive child interprets social cues, they are more likely to believe that the person with whom they are interacting had hostile intentions. Simultaneously, they underperceive their own aggressiveness while overperceiving their partner's aggressiveness. Third, the problem solving strategies of aggressive children tend to result in solutions that are less effective and more action oriented, as opposed to verbally oriented, than their nonaggressive peers. Fourth, aggressive children expect that their aggressive solutions will have more positive consequences and fewer negative consequences than do nonaggressive children, making it more likely that they will utilize aggressive strategies in their problem solving. Nonaggressive children, on the other hand, are more likely to see the positive consequences of utilizing verbal strategies in social situations. Finally, the aggressive child may have limited social skills when it comes to implementing their selected solutions.

Lochman and Dunn (1993) categorize the first two steps as cognitive distortions. When the child interacts with other people they are more likely to inaccurately perceive and interpret social cues, believing that the other person has hostile intent. They categorize the child as displaying cognitive deficiencies at the third and fourth steps, because the child is not able to generate solutions that are effective or efficient. Lastly, they display a behavioral deficiency at the fifth step.

Given the connections between relational and physical aggression, this model is appropriate as a theoretical model on which the current program will be designed. It describes how the interaction between a child and his or her environment, specifically with regard to social interaction, makes them behave aggressively. The model is not limited to physical aggression; it can also be applied to prevention of relational aggression. While this conceptual model was initially developed to understand the behavior of overtly aggressive children, studies support its application to relational aggression (Crain, Finch, & Foster, 2005). Studies have demonstrated the strength of using the Information Processing Model as a theoretical model of relational aggression, despite the dearth of literature on this topic (Crick, Grotpeter, & Bigbee, 2002; Crick & Dodge, 1994; Crick, 1995). Relationally aggressive children also misinterpret social cues and the intent of others, causing them to react in ways that damage relationships with their peers. Quite often, social cues are perceived as hostile, thereby greatly contributing to relationally aggressive behaviors. If a child perceives others as being aggressive, he or she may respond by spreading a rumor about that child, or attempting to get others to exclude that child from an activity. The difference between the applications of this theory to physically and relationally aggressive children is that relationally aggressive children are more likely to be provoked in situations that have to do with a relationship, such as not being invited to a classmate's birthday party, rather than provoked physically, such as being hit by another student (Crick et al., 2002). Deficits in information processing are very strongly involved in the relationally aggressive behaviors of children.

### *Summary*

The purpose of this literature review is to provide a synthesis of current aggression research. Both biological and environmental factors have been discussed. While it is likely that some individuals' tendency toward aggression may be innate, these factors must always be considered in conjunction with environmental factors, because the environment that interacts with the person. The development of relational aggression is also discussed in this review, using multiple studies to indicate how early these behaviors are displayed by children, gender differences, and risk factors in the development of relational aggression. The effects of relational aggression are also discussed, in an effort to portray the severity of the issue. Girls appear especially vulnerable to developing relationally aggressive behaviors because of the emphasis they place on relationships and the detrimental nature of relationally aggressive behaviors.

Additionally, review of school based prevention and intervention programs was included to provide an overview of the strategies currently used as well as discussion of school as a context for this behavior. Some strategies may be used by individual teachers in the classroom, while others are intended for use with schools. Although much of the school-based prevention and intervention research focuses on physical aggression, suggestions are made in an effort to target relational aggression as well. The literature review is expected to lay the foundation for the proposed program design that targets relational aggression in a particular suburban school setting.

For an intervention to be effective, it is essential that its design be rooted in theory. While research in the area of relational aggression has increased over the past few years, it is scant in comparison to research in the area of physical aggression. This leaves

an entire population underserved by the current programming that is available. Nonetheless, one of the commonly used theories that serves as a model of physical aggression, Dodge's (1986) Information Processing Model, has also been found to be useful in explaining relational aggression. The model conceptualizes that children who are aggressive tend to perceive social cues as being hostile, and this misinterpretation combined with their lack of effective problem-solving skills, leads them to act in ways that are action oriented and aggressive toward their peers. This model will guide the development of the relational aggression prevention program in this dissertation.

## CHAPTER III

### PROGRAM PLANNING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The process of human service programming requires the use of a framework to guide the collection, analysis, and use of information in an appropriate and effective manner. The program designed and developed in this dissertation follows Maher's (2000) program planning and evaluation framework. This model consists of four distinct, yet interrelated, phases that take place in the following order: Clarification, Design, Implementation, and Evaluation. For the purposes of this dissertation, only the Clarification and Design phases were emphasized; they are described in detail below.

#### *Clarification Phase*

In the first phase, Clarification, the goals are to obtain a clear understanding of the present situation, which is of concern to a client and other relevant stakeholders (Maher, 2000). Maher explains that a lack of clarity about the presenting issues, as well as the target population, needs, and context, will severely limit the program planning process. Little value can then be added to the situation, making the process somewhat unsuccessful.

In order for a situation to be clarified and well understood, the first task is to specify the target population (Maher, 2000). The target population may be an individual, group, or organization for whom a program is designed and implemented. Specifying this group involves estimating the number of people involved and describing the relevant

characteristics of this group. Relevant characteristics of the target population might include demographic characteristics (e.g. gender), social or community related characteristics (e.g. cultural values), education characteristics (e.g. level of academic achievement), psychological characteristics (e.g. personality traits), or physical characteristics (e.g. motor development). Additionally, should the group need to be segmented, or divided into clusters based on any of these relevant characteristics, this is also done at this time.

The next task is to determine the needs of the defined target population that the program design may address. Maher defines a need as a discrepancy between the current psychological or educational functioning of the target population, and the desired state in terms of that functioning. The process of determining these needs, called a needs assessment, allows for a program to be designed specifically to meet those needs in order to be successful. The needs assessment pinpoints specific problem areas which can be organized into a structure of needs.

According to Maher (2000), there are four qualities of a sound needs assessment. The first quality, practicality, means that the implementation of program must not disrupt the organizational routine. The needs assessment must also be timely and cost-effective. The second quality, utility, refers to the needs assessment obtaining useful and relevant information throughout the process. The third quality, propriety, is one of a legal and ethical nature, and refers to adherence to rules, regulations, standards, and rights of the target population. The final quality, technical defensibility, refers to the use of reliable and valid methods, procedures and instruments throughout the needs assessment process. The value of the program itself depends on how well it addresses the needs of the target



population. A needs assessment that encompasses these qualities allows for the most appropriate documentation of needs to be made, and thus evaluative judgments to be formulated in the future.

The final task is to delineate the relevant context of the setting in which the target population functions (Maher, 2000). The target population that has already been delineated in the first task is embedded in a context. Understanding this context helps those involved in the process to have a clear picture of the factors in the environment that can have an effect on the program's design, implementation, and evaluation. Additionally, it implies important information regarding the readiness and ability of the organization to sustain an intervention. Maher's framework utilizes the A VICTORY approach, which identifies eight factors pertaining to the setting's context (Davis & Salasin in Gutentag & Struening, 1975)). The factors are described as follows:

1. **A**bility of the organization to commit resources to design and implement a human services program for the target population.
2. **V**alues that people within the organization and other stakeholders ascribe to the target population and its needs, as well as potential programs.
3. **I**deas that people have about the current situation with respect to the target population and their needs.
4. **C**ircumstances within the organization that relate to its structure and direction.
5. **T**iming of the human services program and its appropriateness.
6. **O**bligation of the organization to assist in addressing the needs of the target population programmatically.

7. **R**esistance that might be encountered by individuals or groups in relation to the program planning process.
8. **Y**ield that may result for the target population as a result of the programmatic efforts.

### *Design Phase*

In the second phase, Design, the main tasks are to outline the program's purpose and goals; consider program design alternatives; develop the program and its components, phases, and activities; and to document the program design (Maher, 2000). Through this process, the essential elements of the program are delineated so that it may be implemented successfully. These tasks link the design of the program to implementation in the sense that they clearly demarcate the goals of the program and thoroughly prepare the program's components to meet those goals. In this stage, the process is clearly detailed so that it may be implemented in settings without the direct involvement of the consultant.

In Maher's (2000) model, programmatic goals are developed using a SMART framework to help guide the program planning and evaluation activities. Goals that are SMART increase the likelihood of a worthwhile program design being generated.

SMART goals possess the following qualities:

- **S**pecific regarding the knowledge, skills, and abilities that the program seeks to improve
- **M**easurable in terms of the way that goals and progress are monitored
- **A**ttainable by the target population
- **R**elevant for the target population

- **T**imeframed in that goals are expected to be met within a given period of time

Utilizing this approach allows for goals of the program to be established, and thus provides the organization with a clear understanding of the value of the program, what the program is expected to accomplish, and a proposed timeframe in which the goals may be met.

The design of the program discussed in this dissertation will provide detailed information regarding the following essential program design elements:

1. Purpose and SMART Goals
2. Eligibility Standards and Criteria
3. Policies and Procedures
4. Methods and Techniques
5. Materials
6. Equipment
7. Facilities
8. Components, Phases, and Activities
9. Personnel
10. Incentives
11. Program Evaluation Plan

Each of these important elements will be discussed at length in Chapter IV of this dissertation.

## CHAPTER IV

### METHOD

#### *Introductory Information*

##### *Client.*

The client is the assistant principal in the school and works closely with the principal. He has a variety of administrative tasks, including the disciplining of students reported to the administration for misconduct. These two administrators, along with the Student Assistance Counselor (SAC) and the school psychologist, meet weekly as a Core Team to identify students in all grades who are having social, academic, or other difficulties. The Core Team reviews students' progress and address their needs through individual meetings with either an administrator or the SAC; the team confers with parents when necessary. During these meetings, the Core Team expressed interest in developing programming to meet some of the needs of their current students. The assistant principal has the authority to approve the design, implementation, and evaluation of any such program and he has obtained verbal approval and support for this project from the principal and the superintendent. The assistant principal feels that the SAC has the best understanding of the issues facing their students and that he would be a valuable asset in the program design process, and so he has requested that the SAC participate in this stage.

*Organization.*

The organization for this project is a school that serves students from grades three to eight in Cranford Township Public School District in Cranford, New Jersey. Students learn in the subject areas of language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, and various cycle classes, including art, music, and physical education. Specific information about the school is as follows:

- There are approximately 700 students in the school (80 to 90 students each in grades three through five, and 130-160 students each in grades six through eight)
- There are 52 full-time teachers on staff
- The student to teacher ratio is 14:1
- The average class size is about 23 students
- Approximately 12% of the students are classified as requiring special education or related services through an Individualized Education Program
- Roughly 95% of students are Caucasian; the remaining 5% is comprised of Black, Asian, and Hispanic students
- Spending per pupil averages \$11,710 each year.

The school district has a clear policy on Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying, and Hazing that is shared openly with the public. They provide a clear definition of these behaviors, as well as identifying behaviors that are appropriate and expected of all students. The district also explains that consequences will be determined based on a number of factors, including the developmental levels of all parties involved in the situation, levels of harm, nature of the behaviors, past incidences, and the context within

which the incident occurred. The policy informs all personnel about the reporting procedure as well. This policy indicates that the school district intends for all schools to be safe learning environments for students and teachers. The particular school for which the program is being designed appears to utilize many of the appropriate strategies to prevent relational aggression. There is zero tolerance for relationally aggressive behaviors; however, this is limited by the nature of the behavior which makes it difficult to observe. The covert nature of relational aggression may make this environment conducive to its occurrence, given that school personnel are often focused on other responsibilities, and such behaviors may go unnoticed. As a result, relational aggression is unfortunately still an issue in this setting.

#### *Target Population Description*

##### *Relevant Characteristics.*

To delineate the target population, I interviewed the client, who is the assistant principal, as well as the Student Assistance Counselor (SAC), who the assistant principal asked be involved in the process due to his direct contact with students. During these interviews, we discussed the issues that the students throughout school are currently dealing with, and more specifically, what groups could benefit from the development of a human service program. The population of students in grades three to eight were segmented to form a target population with the following characteristics:

- Students are in third to fifth grade.
- The population includes only females.
- The students in the target population range in age from eight to eleven years old.

- They all reside in Cranford, New Jersey, a middle-class, suburban town.
- The ethnic breakdown of female students in this school is approximately as follows: 0% American Indian/Alaskan, 3% Asian/Pacific Islander, 2% Hispanic, 1% Black (non-Hispanic), and 94% White (non-Hispanic).

There is no further information regarding the ethnic breakdown, so this estimate is the most information that was obtainable at this time.

In terms of the number of students that would be involved in the program, there are currently 52 females enrolled in third grade, 47 females enrolled in fourth grade, and 42 females enrolled in fifth grade; this number was obtained from school records, which provided the exact numbers of students per grade. At the most, there will be 141 individuals involved in the program, though this number may decrease slightly based on parents who do not consent for their children to participate, since parents will be given that option for any such program. I discussed with the assistant principal and the SAC whether or not the group should be segmented further by grade, based on the needs that are to be addressed by the program. However, we determined that the characteristics of the students at the different grade levels are not distinct enough that their needs should require different program designs, and so further segmentation would not be useful at this time.

Academic achievement is reported by grade level and in terms of performance on the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK), a standardized test, measuring how well students are mastering specific skills defined for each grade by the state of New Jersey. The results for third to fifth grade females can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1  
NJASK Results of Female Students in Grades 3, 4, and 5

<b>Grade Level</b>	<b>Content Area</b>	<b>Percentage of students at or above proficient</b>	<b>State Average</b>
3	Language Arts Literacy	95%	82%
	Math	92%	87%
4	Science	91%	82%
	Language Arts Literacy	94%	80%
	Math	90%	82%
5	Language Arts Literacy	95%	86%
	Math	88%	82%

It is worth noting that in each content area, the percentage of females either ranking as proficient or advanced proficient was above the state average. Additionally, roughly 12% of the population receives special education and related services.



*Needs Assessment**Structure of Needs.*

Table 2  
Structure of Needs

<b>Needs Assessment Question</b>	<b>Current State of Affairs (CSA)</b>	<b>Desired State of Affairs (DSA)</b>	<b>Data Collection Variables</b>
<i>Socialization Domain:</i>			
1. To what extent are peer relationship skills of female students adequately developed?	Female students do not possess adequate peer relationship skills.	Female students possess adequate peer relationship skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Being able to form and maintain friendships</li> <li>▪ Being able to be prosocial and social with peers</li> <li>▪ Being included by peers</li> </ul>
2. To what extent do female students engage in teasing or bullying of other students?	Female students engage in teasing or bullying of other students.	Female students do not engage in teasing or bullying of other students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Being able to interact without using relational aggression</li> <li>▪ Being able to interact without using overt aggression</li> <li>▪ Being able to engage in prosocial acts with one another</li> </ul>
3. To what extent to female students get teased or bullied by other students?	Female students get teased or bullied by other students.	Female students do not get teased or bullied by other students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How often student is a victim of relational aggression</li> <li>▪ How often student is a victim of overt aggression</li> <li>▪ How often student receives prosocial acts from another student</li> </ul>

*Needs Assessment Protocols.*

There are multiple ways to measure the needs of the target population given the structure of needs described above, and these are described in the following three protocols. The first way that needs were assessed was through an interview with the assistant principal to find out in what areas he believes there are needs and how they can be measured. Together, it was determined that it would be useful to interview other relevant individuals, the SAC and the Recess Coordinator. An interview will also be arranged with the school nurse, who can provide a more medical perspective on the educational and psychological needs facing the female students in this school. Each of these individuals can provide subjective information regarding the needs of students that can be synthesized with the results of the other instruments and methods.

## PROTOCOL #1

Target Population to be Assessed: The setting for which this program is being designed is a public school that educates students in grades 3-8. The students in the target population range in age from eight to eleven years old and are all female. They all reside in Cranford, New Jersey, which is a middle-class, suburban town. In terms of ethnicity, students in the target population are approximately 3% Asian, 2% Hispanic, 1% Black, and 94% White. About 141 students will be involved in the program; there are currently 52 females enrolled in third grade, 47 females enrolled in fourth grade, and 42 females enrolled in fifth grade. Academically, the percentage of females either ranking as proficient or advanced proficient was above the state average in each content area on the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK). Additionally, roughly 12% of the population receives special education and related services.

Needs Assessment Domain: Socialization Domain

Needs Assessment Question: To what extent are peer relationship skills of female students adequately developed?

Structure of Needs:

*CSA:* Female students do not possess adequate peer relationship skills.

*DSA:* Female students possess adequate peer relationship skills.

Data Collection Variables:

- Being able to form and maintain friendships
- Being able to be prosocial and social with peers
- Being included by peers

Data Collection Methods, Instruments, and Procedures: To assess the peer relationships of the female students, students will complete the Loneliness and Social Dissatisfaction Questionnaire (LSDQ) will be given to students (see Appendix A). This is a 24-item measure on which students are asked to rate their experiences regarding school and friends on a 3-point Likert scale from 0 (No) to 2 (Yes). The questionnaire can be administered in a group format. It includes a sample question to ensure students' understanding and eight filler questions that do not contribute to the total score.

It also has very good psychometric properties; the original sample has good internal consistency reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha values of 0.79 to 0.84. The children's self-report on the questionnaire also correlates significantly with peer status, which was derived from sociometric measures and teachers' report of the children's behavior. The rating scale was normed on a large sample ( $n = 452$ , 222 of which were females) of African American, Asian, and Caucasian children. The precise validity of the measure is unclear at this time, although the authors reported good construct validity with the Teacher's Estimation of Child's Peer Status form.

This questionnaire will be given to students in the target population on one day at the end of recess when students return to their classrooms. The teacher will administer the questionnaires by handing them out to students and reading the directions aloud as the students read along silently, to ensure that the instructions are understood. He or she may answer any questions regarding instructions, but not content.

In terms of the data collections variables for this needs assessment question, there are specific questions on both of the measures that correspond to each variable. For the

data collection variable “Being able to form and maintain friendships,” the following items on the Loneliness and Social Dissatisfaction Questionnaire are used as a measure:

1. Is it easy for you to make friends at school?
6. Is it hard for you to make friends at school?
8. Do you have a lot of friends at school?
12. Is it hard to get kids in school to like you?
22. Do the kids at school like you?
24. Do you have friends at school?

For the data collection variable “Being able to be prosocial and social with peers,” the following items on the Loneliness and Social Dissatisfaction Questionnaire are used as a measure:

3. Do you have other kids to talk to at school?
4. Are you good at working with other kids at school?
16. Do you get along with other kids at school?
20. Is it hard for you to get along with other kids at school?

For the data collection variable “Being included and helped by peers,” the following items on the Loneliness and Social Dissatisfaction Questionnaire are used as a measure:

9. Do you feel alone at school?
10. Can you find a friend when you need one?
14. Do you have kids to play with at school?
17. Do you feel left out of things at school?
18. Are there kids you can go to when you need help in school?
21. Are you lonely at school?

Methods and Procedures for Data Analysis and Interpretation: To analyze the results of the Loneliness and Social Dissatisfaction Questionnaire, I will enter the data into SPSS, omitting the filler items and reverse scoring items 1, 3, 4, 8, 10, 14, 16, 18, 22, 24. I will code the data based on grade (0=3<sup>rd</sup> grade, 1=4<sup>th</sup> grade, 2=5<sup>th</sup> grade) and then run descriptive statistics to determine the central tendency and variability of each question. A total score will be derived from the remaining 16 questions, with a higher total score indicating a greater degree of loneliness and lower quality of peer relations.

Inferential statistics will not be computed at this time, but will later be used to examine the relationship between peer relations and bullying behaviors.

Guidelines for Communication and Use of Needs Assessment Information:

Following the collection and interpretation of the needs assessment information, a meeting will be scheduled with the assistant principal. It will also be important to include the SAC and Recess Coordinator, who are key informants in the beginning stages of the process. To communicate the results of the surveys, a summary sheet of the data will be compiled that includes descriptions of the questions and a graph to display the distribution of scores. The number of students with high scores on this measure will indicate a need for the purposes of this assessment. The participants in the meeting will receive a written report including these results and the results will also be discussed orally.

This information is expected to be shared within two weeks of the data collection. To use this information to further the process of developing a program, we will discuss the information and determine what other individuals should be included in the next planning meeting.

Roles, Responsibilities, Timelines: The methods of the needs assessment will be presented to the assistant principal. Pending any necessary approval, the teachers will be given packets with the questionnaires. The teachers will be given a date on which the questionnaires must be administered following lunch and recess. The current timeline for this data to be collected is no later than April 15.

## PROTOCOL #2:

Target Population to be Assessed: The setting for which this program is being designed is a public school that educates students in grades 3-8. The students in the target population range in age from eight to eleven years old and are all female. They all reside in Cranford, New Jersey, which is a middle-class, suburban town. In terms of ethnicity, students in the target population are approximately 3% Asian, 2% Hispanic, 1% Black, and 94% White. About 141 students will be involved in the program; there are currently 52 females enrolled in third grade, 47 females enrolled in fourth grade, and 42 females enrolled in fifth grade. Academically, the percentage of females either ranking as proficient or advanced proficient was above the state average in each content area on the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK). Additionally, roughly 12% of the population receives special education and related services.

Needs Assessment Domain: Socialization Domain

Needs Assessment Question: To what extent do female students engage in teasing or bullying of other students?

Structure of Needs:

*CSA:* Female students engage in teasing or bullying of other students.

*DSA:* Female students do not engage in teasing or bullying of other students.

Data Collection Variables:

- Being able to interact without using relational aggression
- Being able to interact without using overt aggression
- Being able to engage in prosocial acts with one another

Data Collection Methods, Instruments, and Procedures: To measure the extent that students bully and tease other students, the teachers will complete the Children's Social Behavior Scale – Teacher Report (CSBS-T, Crick, 1995) (see Appendix B). This is a 15-item measure of children's social behavior that has three scales: 1.) relational victimization, which measures children's reports of the frequency with which peers attempt or threaten to harm their peer relationships; 2.) overt victimization, which measures the frequency with which other children attempt or threaten to harm their physical well-being; and 3.) receipt of prosocial acts, which measures the frequency with which children are the targets of peers' caring acts. Teachers are asked to rate the frequency with which each item occurs on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (This is never true of this child) to 5 (This is always true of this child) for each individual child.

It has very good psychometric properties; the three subscales in the original sample are internally consistent, with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.94 (seven items) for the Relational Victimization scale, 0.94 (four items) for the Overt Victimization scale, and 0.93 (four items) for the Receipt of Prosocial Acts scale. Additionally, the correlations among these subscales were 0.77 for the relation between overt and relational aggression, 0.65 for the relation between overt aggression and prosocial behavior, and 0.55 for the relation between relational aggression and prosocial behavior. The rating scale was normed on a large sample ( $n = 245$ , 106 of which were females) of African American and Caucasian children. The precise validity of the measure is unclear at this time, though the authors suggest that the measure has been shown to positively predict future peer rejection. They also indicate good construct validity with other teacher reports of overt and relational aggression among children.



This questionnaire will be given out to the teachers with the instructions to rate each child on the 15 items. The teacher will complete one questionnaire with regard to each female student in the class; each teacher will complete approximately 12-13 questionnaires in total. Given that each student only has one teacher for all major subjects, it is appropriate to obtain this data from the classroom teacher assigned to each female student.

In terms of the data collections variables for this needs assessment question, there are specific questions on the CSBS-T that correspond to each variable. For the data collection variable “Being able to interact without using overt aggression,” the following items are used as a measure:

8. This child bites, shoves, or pushes peers.
9. This child initiates or gets into physical fights with peers.
10. This child threatens to bite or beat up other children.
11. This child tries to dominate or bully peers.

For the data collection variable “Being able to interact without using relational aggression,” the following items are used as a measure:

1. When this child is mad at a peer, she gets even by excluding the peer from her clique or peer group.
2. This child spreads rumors or gossips about some peers.
3. When angry at a peer, this child tries to get other children to stop playing with the peer or to stop liking the peer.
4. This child tries to get others to dislike certain peers by telling lies about the peers to others.
5. When mad at a peer, this child ignores the peer or stops talking to the peer.
6. This child threatens to stop being a peer's friend in order to hurt the peer or to get what she wants from the peer.
7. This child tries to exclude certain peers from peer group activities.

For the data collection variable “Being able to engage in prosocial acts with one another,” the following items are used as a measure:

12. This child says supportive things to peers.
13. This child tries to cheer up peers when they are sad or upset about something.
14. This child is helpful to peers.
15. This child is kind to peers.

Methods and Procedures for Data Analysis and Interpretation: To analyze the results of the CSBS-T, I will enter the data into SPSS. I will code the data and run descriptive statistics to determine the central tendency and variability of each question. I will also examine the frequency with which each rating was given to each question. Each of the 15 questions will be examined independently and as it relates to the other items in its scale. For each question, a mean of 3 or higher will indicate a problem in that area. Inferential statistics will not be computed at this time.

Guidelines for Communication and Use of Needs Assessment Information: Following the collection and interpretation of the needs assessment information, a meeting will be scheduled with the assistant principal. It will also be important to include the SAC and Recess Coordinator, who are key informants in the beginning stages of the process. To communicate the results of the surveys, a summary sheet of the data will be compiled that includes descriptions of the questions and a graph to display the distribution of scores. The number of students with high scores on this measure will indicate a need for the purposes of this assessment. The participants in the meeting will receive a written report including these results and the results will also be discussed orally.

This information is expected to be shared within two weeks of the data collection. To use this information to further the process of developing a program, we will discuss

the information and determine what other individuals should be included in the next planning meeting.

Roles, Responsibilities, Timelines: The methods of the needs assessment will be presented to the assistant principal. Pending any necessary approval, the teachers will be given packets with the questionnaires. The teachers will be given a date on which the questionnaires must be administered following lunch and recess. The current timeline for this data to be collected is no later than April 15.

### PROTOCOL #3

Target Population to be Assessed: The setting for which this program is being designed is a public school that educates students in grades 3-8. The students in the target population range in age from eight to eleven years old and are all female. They all reside in Cranford, New Jersey, which is a middle-class, suburban town. In terms of ethnicity, students in the target population are approximately 3% Asian, 2% Hispanic, 1% Black, and 94% White. About 141 students will be involved in the program; there are currently 52 females enrolled in third grade, 47 females enrolled in fourth grade, and 42 females enrolled in fifth grade. Academically, the percentage of females either ranking as proficient or advanced proficient was above the state average in each content area on the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK). Additionally, roughly 12% of the population receives special education and related services.

Needs Assessment Domain: Socialization Domain

Needs Assessment Question: To what extent do female students get bullied or teased by other students?

Structure of Needs:

*CSA:* Female students get teased and bullied by other students.

*DSA:* Female students do not get teased and bullied other students.

Data Collection Variables:

- How often student is a victim of relational aggression
- How often student is a victim of overt aggression
- How often student receives prosocial acts from another student

Data Collection Methods, Instruments, and Procedures: The student measure, the Social Experience Questionnaire – Self Report (SEQ-S; Crick & Grotpeter, 1996), will provide information from the students' perspective about how others bully them (see Appendix C). This is a 15-item measure of children's social experiences that has three scales: 1.) relational victimization, which measures children's reports of the frequency with which peers attempt or threaten to harm their peer relationships; 2.) overt victimization, which measures the frequency with which other children attempt or threaten to harm their physical well-being; and 3.) receipt of prosocial acts, which measures the frequency with which children are the targets of peers' caring acts. Students are asked to rate the frequency with which each item occurs on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (never) to 5 (all the time). The SEQ-S can be administered in a group format. It also has very good psychometric properties; the three scales in the original sample are internally consistent, with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.91 (seven items) for the Relational Victimization scale, 0.89 (three items) for the Overt Victimization scale, and 0.90 (five items) for the Receipt of Prosocial Acts scale. Additionally, the scale has been shown to have good test–retest reliability over 4 weeks ( $r = 0.90$ ), also measured in the original sample. The rating scale was normed on a large sample ( $n = 474$ , 215 of which were females) of African American and Caucasian children of low and middle class socioeconomic status. The precise validity of the measure is unclear at this time, although the SEQ-S has been cited by other studies as having good convergent validity with measures of depressive symptoms, loneliness, and social anxiety.

These questionnaires will be given out to all students in the target population along with the Loneliness and Social Dissatisfaction Questionnaire on one day at the end

of recess when students return to their classrooms. The teacher will administer the questionnaires by handing them out to students and reading the directions aloud as the students read along silently, to ensure that the instructions are understood. He or she may answer any questions regarding instructions, but not content.

In terms of the data collections variables for this needs assessment question, there are specific questions on the SEQ-S that correspond to each variable. For the data collection variable “How often student is a victim of overt aggression,” the following items on the SEQ-S are used as a measure:

8. How often do you get hit by another kid at school?
11. How often do you get pushed around or shoved?
15. How often do other kids say they will beat you up if you don't do what they want you to do?

For the data collection variable “How often student is a victim of relational aggression,” the following items on the SEQ-S are used as a measure:

1. How often are you left out on purpose when it is time to do an activity?
2. How often does a kid who is mad at you try to get back at you by not letting you be in their group anymore?
4. How often has another kid told lies about you to make other kids not like you or be mad at you?
5. How often does another kid say they won't like you unless you do what they want you to do?
7. How often does another kid try to keep others from liking you by saying mean things about you?
13. How often does another kid yell at you and call you mean names?
14. How often do kids yell and curse at you?

For the data collection variable “How often student receives prosocial acts from another student,” the following items on the SEQ-S are used as a measure:

3. How often does another kid give you help when you need it?
6. How often does another kid try to cheer you up when you feel sad or upset?
9. How often do other kids share things with you?

11. How often does another kid do something that makes you feel happy?
12. How often does another kid say something nice to you?

Methods and Procedures for Data Analysis and Interpretation: To analyze the results of the SEQ-S, I will enter the data into SPSS. I will code the data based on grade (0=3<sup>rd</sup> grade, 1=4<sup>th</sup> grade, 2=5<sup>th</sup> grade) and run descriptive statistics to determine the central tendency and variability of each question. I will also examine the frequency with which each rating was given to each question. Each of the 15 questions will be examined independently and as it relates to the other items in its scale. For each question, a mean of 3 or higher will indicate a problem in that area. Inferential statistics will not be computed at this time, except to compare these results with those of the peer relations measure.

Guidelines for Communication and Use of Needs Assessment Information:

Following the collection and interpretation of the needs assessment information, a meeting will be scheduled with the assistant principal. It will also be important to include the SAC and Recess Coordinator, who are key informants in the beginning stages of the process. To communicate the results of the surveys, a summary sheet of the data will be compiled that includes descriptions of the questions and a graph to display the distribution of scores. The number of students with high scores on this measure will indicate a need for the purposes of this assessment. The participants in the meeting will receive a written report including these results and the results will also be discussed orally.

This information is expected to be shared within two weeks of the data collection. To use this information to further the process of developing a program, we will discuss the information and determine what other individuals should be included in the next planning meeting.

Roles, Responsibilities, Timelines: The methods of the needs assessment will be presented to the assistant principal. Pending any necessary approval, the teachers will be given packets with the questionnaires. The teachers will be given a date on which the questionnaires must be administered following lunch and recess. The current timeline for this data to be collected is no later than April 15.



## CHAPTER V

### RESULTS

#### *Introduction*

In the following section, two sets of results will be reported. First, a context assessment was conducted in the setting for which the program was designed. This component of the results is qualitative. Second, the results of the measures completed by the students and teachers are reported. This component of the results is more quantitative and was collected approximately six months following the context assessment. The results from both the context assessment and the measures were used to develop a relational aggression prevention program outlined in Chapter VI.

#### *Context Assessment - A VICTORY*

##### *Overview of A VICTORY Framework.*

As described previously, the A VICTORY framework for context assessment (Maher, 2000) was used in order to collect information about the organization and personnel in the school setting. The contextual variables being used in this context assessment are as follows: ability to commit resources, values of the organization, ideas regarding the program, circumstances of the setting, timing of the program planning process, obligation of individuals in the setting, resistance of individuals to programmatic efforts, and the yield to participants.

The following information was gathered through interviews with the assistant principal and observations in the school setting. The use of this framework describes a specific setting for which the program will be developed. To implement the program in other settings, the context should be assessed before implementation, to ensure a good fit between program and setting.

*Ability.*

Prior to this year, the school adopted the evidence-based Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, targeting physical bullying, as discussed in Chapter II. The methods of this program may be considered a technological resource, since they have been successful so far. While the current program is not modeled after the Olweus Program, it is important to develop a program that will compliment the existing program in terms of content and methodology. Besides that, there appear to be no other technological resources likely to be available for use.

In terms of human resources, the client suggested that the recess coordinator in the school building would be a helpful a resource, in that she can coordinate the lunchtime activities as needed. He is also willing to commit the time of the lunch aides, which is a temporal resource, during the times that they are already at the school; no additional time can be required of them due to contract stipulations, unless they are compensated. A focus group was not conducted with the lunch aides due to time constraints at the time of the context assessment. However, the assistant principal indicated that the lunch aides were very interested in the activity groups that had been discussed as a lunchtime activity, and believed that they would also be interested in the components of this program.

At this point, the assistant principal is uncertain regarding the amount of money that is available in the budget for implementing the new program since this context assessment was conducted mid-year and funds have already been allocated. As a result, a meeting will be scheduled with the principal to discuss the allocation of future resources, in order to determine what financial resources will be available. This meeting will determine what resources, if any, are available for use and the amount the district is willing to commit to the project. Although this information is unknown at the outset, there should be minimal costs associated with this program. The personnel are already hired by the district and do not need additional compensation; other activities require some arts and crafts supplies, which the school likely already has in inventory.

In terms of informational resources, the assistant principal has been willing to discuss the program freely, as well as the concerns regarding bullying behaviors at lunch time. He has also facilitated contact with key informants, specifically the recess coordinator and SAC, in order to gather as much accurate information as possible. The information provided by key informants is available throughout the process; additionally, he has approved the use of the ODR files, to measure the conflicts that occur.

The assistant principal is willing to provide physical resources in terms of classroom space, if necessary, for the program to take place. This may not be required if the program occurs outside at recess, but classrooms are available, should they be needed.

Overall, it appears that temporal, informational, and physical resources are available, but monetary resources are not likely to be accessible at this time. At this time, the lunch aides' commitment has been offered by the assistant principal, but it is unclear how much they will buy into the program once it is adopted.

*Values.*

The school's mission statement describes the school's commitment to nurturing students while involving students, parents, and teachers in an educational environment that emphasizes cooperation, discovery and enjoyment of learning. The school community strives to develop responsible citizens who possess positive self-esteem, respect for others and an interest in lifelong learning. The school is described by administrators as not only recognizing the importance of academic achievement, but also fostering critical-thinking skills while helping students to build self-esteem and self-confidence. A safe school environment has traditionally been important and valued for the growth of students throughout their education.

A non-violent, positive social climate appears to be a value held by administrators and staff in this school. In the past, physical bullying has been handled through the implementation of a bullying prevention program. It is clear from the Olweus program described above that school personnel are willing to put time, effort, and money into programming that will target bullying behaviors. Once it was identified as an area of need, the school was responsive, in a programmatic way, to addressing physical bullying. According to the assistant principal, this has decreased the number of office discipline referrals for physical bullying behaviors. Teachers and administrators are invested in the program, as evidenced by their consistent response to bullying, which they learned through program training. Similarly, teachers integrate elements of the program into classroom lessons and provide a positive social climate in the classroom in order to decrease aggressive behaviors.

*Idea.*

At this stage, the assistant principal is clear about the general aspects of the program design based on information gathered by interview. He knows that the task is to design a program that targets the specific needs of the students, but is only somewhat clear about what that program will entail since it has not yet been designed. The needs are related to the overarching goal of the program, which is to reduce relational aggression. While most information regarding this behavior was obtained through meetings with key informants, the client has been informed of progress throughout each step. Both the client and key informants believe that the school has partially responded to the target population's needs through the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program which focuses on physical, not relational, aggression. However, since part of the assistant principal's role is to ensure the safety and well-being of students, and relational aggression has become a more pressing concern over the past year, he sees the need to respond as part of his role.

*Circumstances.*

It is difficult to tell how long key administrators will remain in their positions, due to the frequently high turnover rate of principals and assistant principals. However, the principal was tenured in her position a year and a half ago, and has expressed interest in remaining in her building. The assistant principal, who is the client, began last year and has also expressed interest in remaining at the school. Both key individuals indicated their intention to remain in the setting through interviews. Although there is always the chance that involuntary transfers will take place, the current acceptance of the principal and assistant principal is so positive that this chance is slim.

In terms of key informants, their stability is questionable; the SAC, for instance, serves over 1,000 students in the district and may become burned out from this responsibility. From observation, he exhibits clear dedication to the students and manages his time efficiently so that he can serve this large number of students effectively. The school itself is a relatively stable environment. According to the NJ School Report Card, the percentage of staff that entered or left employment in the building was under 10% for the 2005-06 school year and 3% for the 2004-05 school year.

The mission statement, adapted by the current principal, is one that has been consistent as long as the school has been in existence. It is possible that additions may be made, but it is highly unlikely that any components will be removed. There will always be a focus on academics and self-esteem, respect for self and others, and love of learning.

#### *Timing.*

The timing of this program has both advantages and disadvantages. To begin with, administrators are invested in the program in that they have given (and will continue to give) time, information, and physical resources for the design and implementation. They have indicated that they see a need that must be met and are willing to put time into meeting that need. In that sense, the timing is appropriate, because all key administrators are on board with the project. However, funding for the program may not be available, which will undoubtedly play a role in the development of the program. Since funds have been allocated to programs and projects for the year, the availability of funds for the next academic year will need to be discussed with relevant stakeholders, such as the principal and the superintendent. Funding may eventually be made available, but it is unlikely that this will be the case for the current school year.

*Obligation.*

It is clear through interviews and observation of the climate of the school that administrators and key informants have an obligation to this programmatic effort. They are invested in improving the lives of students, as evidenced by the mission statement as well as participant observation. Similarly, support was obtained from the superintendent, so he can be considered another active supporter of this approach. One group whose obligation may be questionable is the teachers. They, too, are invested in the well-being of the students and are likely to want to help to improve their lives. However, they are already overburdened by curriculum and additional programs that have been incorporated into their classrooms, such as the Olweus program, as reported through an interview with the assistant principal. This may mean that they have little time or inclination to incorporate anything else into the school day.

Teachers may not need to be involved if the program takes place at lunchtime. Instead, this would involve the lunch aides. They may have an investment in the program because if the behavior of students improves, they will encounter fewer conflicts at recess. However, this program, if implemented at recess, would imply more work on their part. Many lunch aides may not be well trained, and they may not feel obligated to support a program that will increase their responsibility, even if such a program is not more time consuming. Because the focus groups have not occurred, it is unclear at this stage prior to the focus group whether or not the lunch aides would support the approach. If the program is designed to be easy to implement, then the incentive of seeing fewer conflicts among students may be enough to gain their support.

*Resistance.*

Resistance is closely related to the obligation of certain individuals described above. The lunch aides could potentially resist the program. They typically earn very modest salaries, and may view program implementation as outside of their job descriptions. This resistance may appear as not showing up to the focus group or any booster sessions or not following through with the program. However, there is also the chance that they may see the program as being worthwhile, and if they are able, then they may actively participate in the process. Because the focus group has not yet occurred, this resistance has not yet been assessed. The budget may also be a way in which resistance occurs. If funding is not available, even for the next academic year, then the program may not be able to be implemented, if funding is deemed necessary.

*Yield.*

The program currently being designed can have a great benefit for students; the expected benefits were discussed with key informants through interviews. By targeting relational aggression that occurs during recess, students may experience more positive peer relationships and less peer rejection. This has the potential to build children's self-esteem and help them grow and develop healthy relationships. Similarly, it will help them in future relationships because they will learn respect for other people, including those who are different from them. This will add value to the organization because the less aggression and conflict there is among students, the more positive the social climate will be. Students will be able to better focus on their academic studies rather than be concerned about being teased or left out in social relationships, which will also improve the setting.



Finally, administrators, staff, and lunch aides will also benefit, in that they will spend less time resolving conflicts between students. They will spend less time with paperwork related to referrals, which will leave them more time for other activities. The recess experience will be more positive for all involved, including students and staff alike.

A drawback to the program is the time it takes to develop and implement this program. The responsibility to implement during recess will fall on the lunch aides, and the distribution to such a small group may be perceived as a problem by the members of that group.

#### *Needs Assessment Results*

The context assessment results, in conjunction with the needs assessment results described below, will serve as a foundation for the program to be designed. The following section outlines the results of the needs assessment data. These results are critical in the process of program design because understanding the needs of the students in the target population is imperative to designing a useful program (Maher, 2000).

#### *Descriptive Statistics.*

Copies of the parental consent form (see Appendix D) were provided to the client, the assistant principal, who distributed them to each teacher in grades three, four, and five at the school in June 2008. It was estimated that there were approximately 27 students per class in each of the three grades; there were four classes per grade. Of the 324 parental consent forms that were distributed, 132 were returned giving consent for the student to participate, which is a 41% response rate. The questionnaires were administered within a

week of obtaining parental consent. All students completed the questionnaires on the same day, and all were read the same message prior to participating (see Appendix E).

Of those students that participated, 60% were female and 40% were male. Since the purpose of this study was to investigate relational aggression in females, it was initially intended that only female students would complete the questionnaires. However, it was easier for the classroom teachers to administer the questionnaires to their entire class, rather than designate another activity for male students to complete while female students participated in the needs assessment. Students in grades three, four, and five were asked to complete the survey. Of those who participated, 39% were in Grade 3, 22% were in Grade 4, and 39% were in Grade 5. The breakdown of male and female students in each of the grade levels can be seen in Table 3 below.

Table 3  
Total Number of Students by Grade and Gender

	<b>Grade 3</b>	<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>Grade 5</b>
<b>Female</b>	34	15	30
<b>Male</b>	17	14	22

The sample of students returning the survey was different in terms of distribution from the population. The return rate for the fourth grade was very low; only 32% of students completed the needs assessment questionnaires, in comparison with 65% and 71% return rates for the third and fifth grades, respectively.

Results of the individual measures are reported below. Intercorrelations between the subscales within and between measures can be found in Table 4 below.

Table 4  
Intercorrelations of LSDQ, CSBS, and SEQ-S subscales

		LSDQ Total	CSBS Overt	CSBS Relational	CSBS Prosocial	SEQ-S Overt	SEQ-S Relational	SEQ-S Prosocial
<b>LSDQ Total</b>	<b>Pearson r</b> N	1.00 132	---	---	---	---	---	---
<b>CSBS Overt</b>	<b>Pearson r</b> N	0.20 72	1.00 72	---	---	---	---	---
<b>CSBS Relational</b>	<b>Pearson r</b> N	0.02 72	0.40** 72	1.00 72	---	---	---	---
<b>CSBS Prosocial</b>	<b>Pearson r</b> N	-0.12 72	-0.25** 72	-0.25** 72	1.00 72	---	---	---
<b>SEQ-S Overt</b>	<b>Pearson r</b> N	0.35** 132	0.14 72	0.11 72	-0.01 72	1.00 132	---	---
<b>SEQ-S Relational</b>	<b>Pearson r</b> N	0.39** 132	0.06 72	0.07 72	-0.06 72	0.71** 132	1.00 132	---
<b>SEQ-S Prosocial</b>	<b>Pearson r</b> N	-0.21** 132	-0.08 72	0.01 72	0.06 72	-0.17 132	-0.25** 132	1.00 132

LSDQ=Loneliness and Social Dissatisfaction Questionnaire, CSBS=Children's Social Behavior Scale, SEQ-S=Social Experience Questionnaire-Self Report

\* =  $p < 0.05$

\*\* =  $p < 0.01$

#### *Peer Relationship Skills.*

The extent to which students' peer relationships were adequately developed was assessed through the Loneliness and Social Dissatisfaction Questionnaire (LSDQ). On this measure, students were provided with 24 questions related to school and friends; eight items were filler items and omitted from any data analysis. Students had the option to answer each question with "no," "sometimes," or "yes" responses based on how they felt each question could best be answered.

The mean of female students on the LSDQ in this sample is 25 (SD=4.30) and responses ranged from 20 to 38. In the original sample, the authors tested the measure and reported scores for popular and rejected female social status groups, which were formed based on a peer nomination sociometric measure. The mean of the popular group on this measure was 18.3 and the mean for the rejected group on this measure was 23.6.

The mean of the present sample was tested using a one sample t-test to determine differences from these groups, and results showed that the mean was significantly different from both groups ( $p < 0.01$ ). Given that a higher score on this measure indicates greater loneliness and social dissatisfaction, the findings show that on average, girls in the current sample reported a greater level of dissatisfaction with their social experiences as compared to the norm group.

The mean of male students on the LSDQ in this sample is 22.87 ( $SD = 4.13$ ) and responses ranged from 11 to 35. For males, the mean of the popular group on this measure was 18.7 and the mean for the rejected group was 22.2. The mean of the present sample was also tested using a one sample t-test, and results showed that the mean was significantly different from the popular group ( $p < 0.01$ , but not from the rejected group ( $p = 0.20$ )). This indicates that the male students likely feel a similar level of loneliness and social dissatisfaction as the children who were rejected by their peers in the original sample. This greater mean is indicative of a greater level of loneliness compared to the norm group.

Students in the three grades were also compared to one another in terms of their scores on the LSDQ. A one-way ANOVA (grade x LSDQ total) was used to compare the means of both female and male students in each grade on this measure. For female students, none of these differences were significant ( $F = 3.09$ ,  $p = 0.06$ ). Likewise, for male students, none of the differences between grade levels were significant, meaning that there were no significant differences between students in each grades, regardless of gender ( $F = 1.12$ ,  $p = 0.335$ ).

A two-way ANOVA (grade x gender x LSDQ total) was computed to test whether or not there is a grade-by-gender interaction, despite the lack of significant main effect for gender. However, the interaction between grade and gender was not significant ( $F=0.11, p=0.90$ ).

*Student Aggression - Engaging in Bullying.*

The extent to which students engage in teasing or bullying of other students was measured by their teachers' ratings on the Children's Social Behavior Scale – Teacher Version (CSBS-T). For this measure, teachers were only asked to rate their female students on their levels of overt and relational aggression, as well as how often they engage in prosocial acts. It was anticipated at the time of data collection that only female students would be used in the needs assessment. As a result, only 72 students were rated on this measure; while there were 79 participating females, there was missing data for some of those students on this measure.

The subscale means for female students are as follows: overt aggression ( $M=1.12, SD=0.44$ ), relational aggression ( $M=1.76, SD=0.90$ ), and prosocial acts ( $M=3.81, SD=1.16$ ). There are no reference points for these means, because the developers did not include them in their studies. Students were also compared to test for grade level differences on each subscale of the measure. A one-way ANOVA (grade x overt aggression) found that there were no significant differences between the three grades ( $F=2.62, p=0.08$ ). A one-way ANOVA (grade x relational aggression) also found that there were no significant differences between the three grades ( $F=1.86, p=0.16$ ). However, a one-way ANOVA (grade x prosocial acts) found that there were significant differences between grades. A post-hoc comparison revealed a significant difference

between ratings of students in grade three and grade four ( $p < 0.05$ ) as well as grade four and grade five ( $p < 0.05$ ). Results indicated that students in grade three were rated as engaging in the greatest number of prosocial acts, closely followed by grade five. Students in grade four engaged in significantly fewer prosocial acts than their peers in grades three and five peers.

Intercorrelations between the three subscales were also computed (see Table 2). Results indicated that all three subscales were significantly correlated with one another. Teacher ratings of students' overt aggression was positively correlated with ratings of students' relational aggression ( $r = 0.40, p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that students who engaged in overt aggression also engaged in relational aggression. Overt aggression was negatively correlated with ratings of students' prosocial behaviors ( $r = -0.25, p < 0.05$ ) as was relational aggression ( $r = -0.25, p < 0.05$ ). This also indicates that, as expected, higher ratings of both overt and relational aggression were negatively correlated with prosocial behaviors.

#### *Student Aggression - Being Bullied.*

The extent to which students were bullied by other students was measured by their responses on the Social Experience Questionnaire – Self Report (SEQ-S). For this measure, students were asked how often a variety of things happened to them over the past month on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (all the time). The scale, in essence, asked students to rate the extent to which they were the recipients of overt and relational aggression, as well as recipients of prosocial acts from their peers. Responses clustered on the same three scales as the CSBS: overt aggression, physical aggression, and prosocial acts. All 79 participating females completed this measure.

The subscale means for female students are as follows: overt aggression ( $M=1.51$ ,  $SD=0.94$ ), relational aggression ( $M=2.75$ ,  $SD=1.30$ ), and prosocial acts ( $M=4.10$ ,  $SD=0.75$ ). There are no reference points for these means, because the developers did not include them in their studies. Students were also compared to test for grade level differences on each subscale of the measure. A one-way ANOVA (grade x overt aggression) found that there were no significant differences between the three grades ( $F=2.43$ ,  $p=0.09$ ). A one-way ANOVA (grade x relational aggression) also found that there were no significant differences between the three grades ( $F=1.74$ ,  $p=0.18$ ). Additionally, a one-way ANOVA (grade x prosocial acts) found that there were no significant differences between grades ( $F=1.31$ ,  $p=0.27$ ).

Intercorrelations between the three subscales were also computed (see Table 4). Results showed that students' ratings of their experiences of overt aggression were positively correlated with their experiences of relational aggression, suggesting that students who experience greater levels of overt aggression from their peers experience greater levels of relational aggression ( $r=0.71$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). However, overt aggression was not associated with receipt of prosocial acts ( $r=-0.17$ ,  $p=0.52$ ). Relational aggression was negatively correlated with receipt of prosocial acts, indicating that the more relationally aggressive acts a student experiences, the fewer prosocial acts they receive from their peers ( $r=-0.25$ ,  $p<0.01$ ).

#### *Student Aggression - Overall Experiences.*

The data that were collected reflects students' experiences of being bullied and objective ratings of their own bullying behaviors. To assess the extent to which children who are bullied tend to bully others, correlations between the three scales of the CSBS

and the LSDQ total score were computed. Results showed that only the overt aggression subscale of the CSBS was significantly correlated with the LSDQ total score ( $r=0.23$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). The relational aggression subscale was not significantly correlated ( $r=0.16$ ,  $p=0.07$ ), nor was the prosocial acts subscale ( $r=0.13$ ,  $p=0.13$ ). This indicates that children's experience of loneliness was related to teachers' ratings of their overtly aggressive behaviors.

Additionally, the correlations between the CSBS subscales and the SEQ-S subscales were calculated. Results showed that the overt aggression subscale on the CSBS and the overt aggression subscale on the SEQ-S were not significantly correlated with one another ( $r=0.14$ ,  $p=0.22$ ). Results showed that the relational aggression subscale on the CSBS and the relational aggression subscale on the SEQ-S were not significantly correlated with one another ( $r=0.07$ ,  $p=0.54$ ). Results showed that the prosocial acts subscale on the CSBS and the prosocial acts subscale on the SEQ-S were not significantly correlated with one another ( $r=0.06$ ,  $p=0.64$ ). Additionally, none of the other correlations between the CSBS and SEQ-S subscales were significantly correlated. Overall, these findings suggest that the students' experiences of bullying and the teachers' perspectives on those children's bullying are very different.



## CHAPTER VI

### PROGRAM DESIGN

Following an analysis of the needs assessment conducted with third to fifth grade female students in the school, it was determined that there was a need to design a program to target relational aggression among students, during lunch and recess. In the following sections, the program's design will be outlined to include the purpose and goals of the program; a description of the rules, policies, and procedures necessary to implement the program; the projected roles of personnel in the program's implementation; and detailed lesson plans for each session. In addition to the lesson plans, teambuilding activities will be outlined to provide students with opportunities to practice the skills they have learned through the lessons and work together during these activities.

#### *Purpose and Goals*

##### *Statement of Purpose.*

The program has two main components, a didactic component and a behavioral rehearsal component. Female students in grades three to five at the school will participate in the program, contingent on parental consent for participation. Through a series of interactive, classroom based lessons as well as lunch activities tailored to the students' interests, the participants will learn peer relationship skills to help them build and maintain healthy friendships. Students will also be taught the skills needed to problem-

solve social problems. Through this program, students will engage with others in a prosocial manner, and learn new skills that they will be able to use in social situations in the future. The classroom based lessons will provide students with a more didactic experience for learning the skills; the activity groups, following these lessons, will provide students with opportunities to practice and sharpen skills. It is expected that teaching students the skills and providing opportunities to practice them will help students to engage with others in a positive way. Importantly, these skills will help them in the future, because relationship and problem-solving skills are necessary in many situations extending beyond school.

*Goals.*

The following goals for the program are written as SMART goals, since they are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and occur within a specified timeframe (Maher, 2000). The goals are not listed in an order of importance, as each goal is equally valuable.

1. Female students will engage in fewer peer conflicts, specifically relationally aggressive conflicts, during the recess period.
  - 1.1. This information will be measured using the Children's Social Behavior Scale – Teacher Version, which is a questionnaire that provides teachers' ratings of students' physical and relational bullying behaviors. The data obtained in the needs assessment phase will be considered the pre-intervention data and data collected at the end of the program will be considered post-intervention data.
  - 1.2. It is expected that, based on this measure, there will be a 25% reduction in teacher reported bullying and relational aggression behaviors.

2. Female students will experience improved peer relationships.
  - 2.1. This goal will be measured using the Loneliness and Social Dissatisfaction Questionnaire, which is a questionnaire designed to measure students' experiences with school and friends. The data obtained in the needs assessment phase will be considered the pre-intervention data and data collected at the end of the program will be considered post-intervention data.
  - 2.2. It is expected that, based on this measure, at least 25% of students will show an improvement in this area following participation in the program.
3. Female students will engage in less teasing and bullying behavior on the playground by the end of the school year.
  - 3.1. This will be based on reports by the school lunch aides as well as responses to the Social Experience Questionnaire, which is a structured questionnaire that assesses students' social experiences in relation to physical and relational bullying. The data obtained in the needs assessment phase will be considered the pre-intervention data and data collected at the end of the program will be considered post-intervention data.
  - 3.2. It is anticipated that at least 25% of students will show a decrease in their experience of either physically or relationally aggressive behaviors when measured at the end of the program as compared to before the program began.

The goals were derived from the needs assessment. Because the frequency of peer conflict was the reason for the consultation and program design, it was important for one goal to target a decrease in conflicts. Improvement in peer relationships was chosen as a

second goal because healthier peer relationships can decrease peer conflicts; as students become better friends, conflict will be less frequent. A third goal of decreasing bullying during recess was also developed, because one of the main issues discussed in the initial planning stages was the issue of peer bullying. It is expected that implementing this program will decrease the amount of bullying that occurs among students, in addition to the other goals described above.

#### *Eligibility Standards and Criteria*

A student is eligible to participate in the program if she meets the following standards and criteria:

- Is female
- Is between grades three and five in the school
- Has parental consent for participation

These three elements have been considered throughout the program planning process.

The first part of the eligibility requirements targets only females. While they do eat lunch and have recess with male students, females have the greatest need at this time. The client indicated that female students were in need of improved peer relationship skills, and that they demonstrated bullying behaviors on the playground. While males demonstrate these behaviors as well, the client felt that at least at the beginning it would be more important to focus on females.

To participate, students must also be enrolled in grades three to five in the school. The school educates students from grades three to eight, but only the elementary section of the school will be involved, namely because they are the only grades that have recess each day and also because they have been identified as having the greatest need.

Additionally, the younger students are exposed to the bullying behaviors of the older students very early on. As a result, they need exposure to bullying prevention programming early on. Additionally, many of the problems that the client identified occurred at recess. Because grades six, seven, and eight do not have recess, they would not be eligible for a program that targeted that period of time.

Finally, parental consent is an important criterion for any program that the school implements. The school is a public school that requires consent for all activities. Without parental consent, students will not be eligible to participate, and an alternative to the program must be discussed. It is important to note this as an eligibility standard, because it is required for the student's participation.

#### *Policies and Procedures*

##### *Policy Statement.*

Each female student between grades three and five in the school with written parental consent is eligible to participate in the designated classroom lessons and teambuilding activities during lunchtime. Following participation in the program, students are expected to treat others with respect and refrain from engaging in bullying behaviors, specifically during recess activities.

This policy statement provides administrators and implementers with the basic facts about how the program will operate. The target population is identified, indicating that individuals participating in the program are females, between grades three and five. It is necessary to state that parental consent is required, because it is only with consent that students may participate in the program. Finally, a description of the expectations of

the students following the program was provided, because it provides key individuals with an overview of the goals.

*Procedures.*

The procedure for this program will begin with an introduction and explanation of the purpose of the program to all students. Students will participate in classroom lessons during the school day. They will also participate in a weekly teambuilding activity during their lunch period, during which time they will have to work together toward a common goal. Working together in this manner should diminish bullying and teasing and reinforce positive interactions among students. The process will be discussed with students in the classroom and at lunchtime on a monthly basis and their feedback will be used to modify the program as appropriate; this discussion will be led by classroom teachers and will involve the assistant principal. It appeared that his involvement in the needs assessment phase was helpful, because as an administrator he strongly encouraged teachers and students to participate. It is important to be careful, however, of increasing his involvement so that teachers do not feel obligated to participate. Teambuilding activities will continue even after the lessons have been completed, so that students continue to have opportunities to practice the skills they learned.

The procedure is an overview of how the program will run. It is important to begin with an introduction to students, because the program is new and the implementers can field any questions that they have in the beginning. Student feedback sessions were incorporated into the program procedures, in order to make modifications. Students may have useful feedback as participants in the program, which allow for changes to be made to improve the program.

## *Inventory*

### *Methods and Techniques.*

There are two main methods to be used in this program. The first involves classroom based lessons. In this program, there are ten classroom lessons. Each lesson will include a presentation of information in the form of a film, book, or lecture. Subsequently, there will be a discussion of the material with students; the facilitator will ask questions and the students will be expected to answer them. There may be homework for the students to complete between lessons, but this is dependent on the lesson itself and the facilitator's preference.

The other method involves lunchtime teambuilding groups. The group, which will be facilitated by one or two lunch aides, will engage in activities with a common goal decided by the facilitator(s) prior to beginning. Students will be required to work together as a team in their group to reach the goal.

In terms of methods, it was important to break down the methods into two parts: classroom based lessons and teambuilding groups. The former will provide students with the tools they need to successfully participate in the latter. Having a multimedia approach that uses books, videos, and lecture methods is expected to meet the learning needs of all participants. Although the groups provide socialization, the goal of the groups is to practice the skills learned in the classroom lessons that help them to interact with classmates in a prosocial manner and avoid using relationally aggressive behaviors.

### *Materials.*

Materials necessary for this program to run effectively include the books, videos, and worksheets that will be used for the program. At this point, the video "He's a Bully,

Charlie Brown” has been selected, as well as the book, “My Secret Bully.” Other classroom materials such as chalkboard, chalk, paper, and writing implements will also be used.

The teambuilding groups that will be implemented during lunchtime require specific materials for each project, such as art supplies including paper, crayons, markers, paint and paintbrushes, and scissors.

In terms of materials, the items that may be used for the teambuilding groups were discussed; this is a sample of what will be used, since there is flexibility in terms of the actual activities. In this section, the books and videos that have been selected were also included; this provides a sample of the materials that will be used in the classroom.

#### *Equipment.*

The program will use minimal equipment. For the classroom based lessons, a television with a VHS or DVD player will be necessary to show the videos that are part of the lessons. At this time, no other equipment has been identified for use in this program.

#### *Facilities.*

The facilities required for this program will consist of the students’ classrooms during lunch, as well as the entire blacktop in the outdoor area where students are allowed to play during recess. The classrooms are not used when the students are at recess, so they will be available for indoor activities. Groups may be conducted in the classroom, on the blacktop, or in the cafeteria. These areas are already reserved for the students’ use during recess. Therefore, neither special permission nor changing rooms will be necessary.



## *Personnel*

### *Roles.*

In both the classroom based lessons and teambuilding group components, there are three roles, each of which has the following functions to help the program operate in order for students to achieve the goals outlined:

1. Supervisor of personnel: The role of the supervisor of personnel is to ensure that the program is implemented according to the program design document. Additionally, observations of the lessons will have been conducted.
2. Direct service provider: The role of the direct service provider include having taught the students the material outlined in the eight lessons. Another accomplishment is that students will be overseen during their lunch groups and problems will have been solved effectively.
3. Consultant: The role accomplishment of the consultant is that questions that arise during implementation will have been answered effectively and efficiently.

### *Responsibilities.*

In both the classroom based lessons and teambuilding group components, the responsibilities of individuals in major roles are as follows:

1. Supervisor of personnel: This person is responsible for overseeing both components of the program implementation and ensuring that the program is run properly and according to its intended design. The supervisor will also provide feedback to the direct services provider, as needed.
2. Direct services providers: The direct services providers will instruct the students in the ten classroom lessons geared toward bullying prevention and peer

relationship building. The direct services providers will also be responsible for overseeing the students in their teambuilding groups. They will meet with the consultant prior to implementation to be trained to implement the lessons. The consultant will also be available for troubleshooting if problems arise during the implementation of the program.

3. Consultant: The consultant's responsibilities include problem solving with the client as problems arise, as well as being available for technical assistance in the implementation of the program. The consultant will also collaborate with the client throughout all steps of the program planning.

#### *Relationships.*

For this program, the supervisor of personnel will have a relationship with the direct services providers in the sense that he will be observing the process to ensure its fidelity and providing feedback as needed. The supervisor will also have a relationship with the consultant in that they will speak regularly about implementation and those parts of the program that need adjustment. Similarly, they will problem-solve issues together as well. The direct services providers will have a close relationship with the participants as they implement the program in the classroom. As needed, the consultant will also have contact with the direct services providers, if the need for guidance is such that the consultant would be the most appropriate person to provide this assistance.

#### *Interactions Between the Three R's.*

The supervisor of personnel was chosen as a role because this person is asked to oversee the entire project, and has a clearly crucial function in the implementation of the program. The supervisor is responsible for implementing the program according to the

program design. Similarly, this person will also have completed random observations of some of the lessons before the program has been completed. In terms of responsibilities, the main activity of this person is to oversee the process; this task does not involve direct contact with the students. By overseeing the program implementation, the supervisor will be able to provide feedback to the direct services provider, to improve the quality of implementation. He will have access to the consultant as well, which gives him a source of information which can help him to determine if the program is being run effectively. This is the essence of the relationship between these two individuals.

The direct service providers play a key function in the program because they have contact with students. They oversee the material being taught and the students in their groups. The major tasks of the direct service providers are to deliver the eight lessons and to monitor the special interest groups.

Because this is the first time this program is being implemented, it would be wise to keep the consultant on board so that the program can be modified as it continues. In terms of responsibilities, it is important to note that the consultant will be constantly collaborating with the client, because the program is not just the project of the consultant. Rather, the process is collaborative, making it a joint effort. The consultant will be available for troubleshooting with the client, to maintain fidelity of implementation throughout the process.

Finally, in terms of the relationships of these three personnel, each of the individuals will have a relationship with one another, and each relationship serves to improve the program as it is implemented. It is important to show that the supervisor has an administrative role as compared to the direct services providers because the supervisor

will be overseeing the process and has that level of authority. However, as the supervisor may need assistance, the relationship with the consultant is important because this person will help troubleshoot and problem solve regarding the program when the supervisor is unable to do so. Also, the consultant can be contacted by a provider directly so that issues do not have to be expressed through the supervisor.

### *Incentives*

Part of what makes this program design innovative is that it is partially implemented during lunchtime, when the need is quite prevalent, whereas other programs tend to be implemented during instructional times during the school day. Designing the program in this way requires lunch aides to assist with implementation. More typically, certified teachers or other school personnel are responsible for implementation. In this case, one incentive for the lunch aides to administer the teambuilding activities is that it will give them experience working in the classroom with students. However, while there may be lunch aides who are interested in gaining classroom teaching experience, others may view the program as additional work for them, and so other incentives should be identified. As a result, another incentive for the lunch aides will be the feedback and attention that they receive from administration. This is often an incentive for individuals to participate in a program, because people generally appreciate attention for their efforts. Additionally, implementation of the program is expected to decrease the relationally aggressive behaviors of students during lunch, which would make the lunch aides' job easier, in that they will have to mediate conflict less frequently. Diminishing aggressive behaviors would also decrease the amount of paperwork that the lunch aides would need to complete, if referrals decrease as well. These, in combination with other incentives,

may provide the necessary motivation for lunch aides to administer the program. It is unclear at this point if monetary resources will be available, but it should be considered, as money would likely be a significant motivator for these individuals. Since lunch aides earn a very modest salary, money would be a desirable incentive for them to participate.

Incentives to the classroom teachers are important as well. The implementation of the program will require time for lessons during the school day, so teachers must have incentives since it takes away from their instructional time in the classroom. As with the lunch aides, an incentive is the decrease in relational aggression in the classroom; the less time spent dealing with conflicts among students and the consequent paperwork if the incident warrants a referral, the more time can be devoted to teaching. Additionally, positive feedback from administrators is an incentive as well, especially for non-tenured teachers.

In terms of the administration, it is highly motivating that less of their time and effort will be spent addressing bullying. Administrators will spend less time completing paperwork and mediating conflicts between students if the program is effective. This will allow administrators to devote their time to other activities that students may benefit from, such as additional programming. This incentive was important to discuss because saving time is something that is of great importance to administrators, since time is highly valued. They are also responsible for securing the resources required for the program, and so it is essential that they are motivated to keep it functioning.

#### *Program Evaluation Plan*

Since there are two components to this program, it is essential to collect evaluative information from the students regarding each component (see Appendix F).

Using an evaluation measure that assesses each component individually is especially useful because it allows judgments to be made regarding both the classroom lessons and the lunchtime teambuilding activities independently, as well as in conjunction with one another. In this evaluation, it was important to find out if students felt like they learned new information through their participation in this program. Since the program is designed to be implemented at lunchtime, it is also important to get feedback regarding students' willingness to participate in the program, or if they may have been resentful or resistant given that it used a large part of their brief lunch period. Additionally, the measure is designed to assess students' perceptions of how the program helped make their peer relationships more positive and how the activities helped improve their teamwork skills.

Once this data has been collected and evaluated, the results will be shared with the assistant principal and other key informants. At this point, there can be discussion about the qualitative feedback received from the students, as well as the quantitative data comparison between the baseline and post-intervention results of the SEQ-S, CSBS-T, and LSDQ. With this information, it will be possible to make changes to the program as they appear necessary.

### *Components and Lessons*

#### *Components.*

There are two main components to this program, involving classroom lessons and teambuilding groups. The first component involves a series of ten classroom-based lessons. Each lesson will require approximately 30 minutes to complete and will take place during lunchtime twice per week for four consecutive weeks. In terms of method,

the lessons are comprised of presentations to the class in the form of film, book, or lecture. There will also be activities and/or questions for discussion as well as small, activity based homework assignments for the students to complete between lessons. Classroom lessons will be administered by their classroom teachers.

Ideally, the lessons will take place close to lunchtime because that is the time at which the skills that students learn are expected to be applied. Since classroom teachers have a free period when students have lunch and legally, it would not be possible to have those teachers conduct the lessons, the lessons will be taught immediately prior to lunch. Although the lessons are very specific and include questions for discussion and activities, it would not be feasible to lunch aides administer the lessons.

The lessons will be given in 30 minute increments. Given the students' 45-minute lunch period, 30 minutes should allow students to purchase lunch or get settled with their bagged lunch and be ready to begin the lesson.

The topics of the lesson plans, or the specific elements, are as follows:

- Lesson 1: Understanding Bullying: Part I
- Lesson 2: Understanding Bullying: Part II
- Lesson 3: Dealing with Bullying: Part I
- Lesson 4: Dealing with Bullying: Part II
- Lesson 5: Keeping Your Cool: Part I
- Lesson 6: Keeping Your Cool: Part II
- Lesson 7: Being a Good Friend
- Lesson 8: Including New People in Groups
- Lesson 9: Preventing Bullying

- Lesson 10: Problem-Solving Steps

The specific lesson plans can be found in the following section. Each lesson plan includes objectives, materials, time needed, and the activities and questions for discussion that will be used in the lesson.

The second component to the program involves the teambuilding groups that will meet once per week for six weeks, following students' participation in the classroom lessons. Students will be placed in groups based on their classroom assignment, and group members will work together toward a common goal within their group setting.

In terms of the lessons themselves, each has some relation to bullying. It is important to begin with an understanding of what constitutes bullying and different kinds of bullying behaviors, so that students have a basis for what they will learn in the upcoming sessions. Once they understand the types of bullying, it is important to teach students strategies to deal with bullying when it does occur. However, since one of the goals of this program is to reduce or eliminate bullying, the next two sessions will be focused on staying calm and anger management. Students need to learn how to identify what triggers their anger as well as strategies to control it. As students learn these coping strategies, they are less likely to engage in bullying.

Bullying prevention programming should involve enhancement of peer relationship skills. A lesson on being a good friend was included because children often need more concrete ideas regarding how to be friends with peers. Through this lesson, they will be able to identify ways that children can be good friends. Similarly, including new people in their groups is also an important skill. This will target the manner in which children are purposely excluded from activities. Especially in the earlier grades, there are



frequently new students in their classes and students must learn how to appropriately welcome them. The final two lessons make students responsible for their own behavior. Students will learn bullying prevention strategies, including how *not* to bully others as well as how to stop others from bullying. Finally, students will be presented with steps to problem solving, giving them the concrete skills they need to problem solve independently. This will be especially useful in their special interest groups, when they are expected to reach a common goal as a group.

*Lesson and Activity Development.*

The design of this program is based on the Social Cognitive Model (Lochman & Dunn, 1993). The main focus is on interactions between child and environment. Children are given the opportunity to learn about aggressive behaviors, as well as ways to cope when they are a victim. Likewise, students are educated about ways in which they can keep themselves calm, in an effort to prevent bullying from occurring. Embedded in this is the interpretation of social cues, which often trigger aggressive behavior. Following the Social Cognitive Model, students are also taught skills for social problem solving and given many opportunities for practice.

The majority of the lessons that are included in this program were designed specifically for this program. Two of the lessons, *Lesson Five: Being a Good Friend*, and *Lesson Six: Including New People in Groups* were adapted from the Peer Relations Curriculum co-authored by Gina Marie Restivo and the principal investigator (2007). The Peer Relations Curriculum is a program that uses literature as the basis for each lesson. These two lessons fit with the multi-media approach used for this program design. As a result, they were adapted for use with this program.

The remaining lessons were designed specifically for use with this program based on a review of literature in the field of aggression prevention programming. Intervening directly with students has been shown to be the most effective method of aggression prevention, which is the model followed in this program design (Young et al., 2006). The lessons were first designed to provide students with a background on bullying. The literature also suggests that aggression prevention programming should include instructional components that target social skills, anger management, and friendship skills (Yoon et al., 2006). Focusing on this skill set will allow for an increase in prosocial skills among students.

Another important aspect of aggression prevention programming that was targeted in the development of this program is fostering a positive school climate. This was introduced in the didactic component of the program and followed up within the teambuilding activities. Teaching students to work together in an effective and efficient manner also teaches them the value of positive relationships, working together, and respect for one another. Similarly, it teaches tolerance and acceptance of others, as well as the value of collaboration.

The lessons were designed to be developmentally appropriate for students in grades three to five. However, it is possible that the lessons may be too advanced for younger students or too simplified for older students. Lessons should be implemented according to design, to ensure the greatest fidelity. Following the initial implementation, modification of the lessons is at the discretion of the classroom teacher, but the modified lessons should be as close to the original lessons as possible.

## COMPONENT #1: LESSON PLANS

### PRE-LESSON

#### PROGRAM INTRODUCTION

**Objective:** This is a pre-lesson to be implemented prior to the start of the program. Students will learn the purpose of the program, which is to decrease relational aggression among students. The program's methods and the duration of the program will also be made clear. Students will be able to ask any questions they have about the upcoming program.

**Time:** 15-20 minutes

The program will be introduced to students by their classroom teacher prior to the start of the program. Introductions of personnel, the teacher and lunch aide, will not be necessary, because they are already familiar to the students. The teacher will explain the purpose of the program to the students and outline the sessions of the group, namely the topics that will be covered throughout the course of the program. The duration of the program will also be outlined.

Teachers will explain to students that bullying is common among students; however it can have a number of harmful effects, which is why this program has been designed. Throughout the program, students will learn all about how and why children bully others, as well as ways to stay calm when others are making them angry, without resorting to bullying. They will also learn strategies to be a good friend and how to solve problems when they arise in their lives.

Teachers will also tell students that they will then engage in a series of teambuilding activities, which will allow them to practice the skills that they learn in the nine lessons. They will be able to work as a team with their classmates to work through a given problem, without using bullying strategies or ineffective problem-solving.

Any questions should be answered at this time as well.

## LESSON 1

## UNDERSTANDING BULLYING: PART I

**Objective:** Students will be able to define the word “bully” and understand the ways in which children can be bullied. They will be able to apply this knowledge to a video and discuss bullying in the context of the film.

**Materials:**

- *He’s A Bully, Charlie Brown* DVD/VHS (Runtime: 30 minutes)
- Chalkboard and chalk

**Time:** 30 minutes

**I. Introduce current topic**

Tell the class that over the next few weeks, they are going to be learning about something called bullying. Ask the class if anyone can define the word “bully.” Make a list on the chalkboard of the words that students use to describe a bully. (Definition: A bully is someone who purposely tries to hurt other people.)

There are many ways that someone can be a bully. Ask the class in what ways a person can be bullied. Make a list on the chalkboard of the different ways a bully can hurt someone.

Examples:

*Physical:* tripping, pushing, breaking things, hitting

*Social:* gossiping, spreading rumors, leaving people out so they are alone, name calling, teasing, making fun of a person

*Scaring other children:* saying they will beat you up, taking things from students or eating their food at lunch

**II. Watch the film *He’s a Bully, Charlie Brown***

Introduce the video by telling the class that you are going to watch a television show in which one of the characters is a bully. Watch as much of the video as time allows. Inform students that the remainder of the film will be viewed in the next lesson.

**III. Discuss the film**

Discuss the following questions with the students:

- Who was the bully in the film?
- Who was being bullied (also known as the victim)?
- What kind of bullying did you see in the film?

- What did Charlie Brown do to help Rerun van Pelt?
- What could you do if you see someone being bullied by another person? (tell the teacher or other adult nearby, yell for help; do not get in the middle of the problem)

#### **IV. Relate the activity to students' lives**

For homework, have students write out a story of the kind of bullying they see most often in their own school. Ask students not to include real names if they have a specific person in mind; instruct them to make up names for their characters, if necessary.

*Optional:* Students may also draw a picture of the bullying situation to accompany their picture.

## LESSON 2

## UNDERSTANDING BULLYING: PART II

**Objective:** Students will be able to define the word “bully” and understand the ways in which children can be bullied. They will be able to apply this knowledge to a video and discuss

**Materials:**

- *He’s A Bully, Charlie Brown* DVD/VHS (Runtime: 30 minutes)
- Chalkboard and chalk

**Time:** 30 minutes

**I. Watch the film *He’s a Bully, Charlie Brown***

Watch the remainder of the film; *He’s a Bully, Charlie Brown*.

**II. Discuss the film**

Discuss the following questions with the students:

- Who was the bully in the film?
- Who was being bullied (also known as the victim)?
- What kind of bullying did you see in the film?
- What did Charlie Brown do to help Rerun van Pelt?
- What could you do if you see someone being bullied by another person? (tell the teacher or other adult nearby, yell for help; do not get in the middle of the problem)

**III. Relate the activity to students’ lives**

For homework, have students write out a story of the kind of bullying they see most often in their own school. Ask students not to include real names if they have a specific person in mind; instruct them to make up names for their characters, if necessary.

*Optional:* Students may also draw a picture of the bullying situation to accompany their picture.

## LESSON 3

## DEALING WITH BULLYING: PART I

**Objective:** Students will learn about a specific type of bullying, relational bullying.

**Materials:**

- My Secret Bully, by Trudy Ludwig
- Chalkboard and chalk

**Time:** 30 minutes

**I. Review of previous lesson**

Ask students to review the different kinds of bullying that they learned in the last lesson by listing the types again (physical, social, scaring other children). Ask for volunteers to read aloud the stories that they wrote for homework (Note: This should not be required.) For each story, have the class discuss what kind of bullying they heard.

Explain to students that this week they will be learning about one of the specific types of bullying, social bullying. Ask students to list some examples of what they think social bullying is.

**II. Read the book My Secret Bully**

Tell students that just like the stories that they wrote for homework, you have a story that includes one of the forms of bullying, called My Secret Bully.

Throughout reading the story, check periodically for understanding. For example, ask students to name some of the things that Katie does to hurt Monica.

After finishing the story, proceed with questions and activities.

**III. Introduce current activity**

After finishing reading the story, ask students to list what kinds of things Katie does to hurt Monica. Discuss the following questions with the students:

- How did Monica respond to the bullying?
- How did the bullying make Monica feel?
- Who could you talk to if someone was bullying you?
- How did Monica's mother help her overcome the bullying?
- What could you say to someone who was bullying you?

One of the ways in which Monica's mother helped her to cope with the bullying was to address Katie when she was bullying her, by saying things like "Does it make you feel

good to say mean things to me in front of other people?” For this activity, engage in role plays with the students, facilitating positive responses to being bullied. The following scenarios are suggested for use:

- **Scenario 1:** Someone in your class writes a mean note about you, and passes it to everyone in your class. Eventually, it gets to you and you read it.
- **Scenario 2:** Your group of friends decides one day that they will no longer be your friend. They don’t explain why, but they begin to tease you.
- **Scenario 3:** You and your friend always play together on the playground. Suddenly, she stops including you and begins playing with new friends. When you try to play with them, they ignore you.

#### **IV. Relate the activity to students’ lives**

Ask students if they ever witnessed or experienced social bullying. For homework, have students write down the best ideas that they heard in their class for handling relational bullying. Ask students to go home and talk with a parent, sibling, or other adult about if they were bullied in this way when they were younger. Have students find out how these trusted adults coped with bullying, and ask them to add any *good* ideas that they learned to their list.



## LESSON 4

## DEALING WITH BULLYING: PART II

**Objective:** Students will discuss a real-life scenario and have a chance to consider the perspectives of the bully and the victim, and think about what they might do in a bullying situation.

**Materials:**

- Copies of scenario handout
- Discussion questions
- Chalkboard and chalk

**Time:** 30 minutes

In this activity, students will read a scenario as a group that deals with relational aggression in the schools and be able to discuss their own experiences related to this topic. They will work in teams to discuss the scenario and answer the discussion questions that follow. Then, a team leader will present the team's responses to the rest of the group.

*Scenario:*

A fourth grader named Stephanie had two best friends, Anna and Jasmine. One day, when Stephanie got to school, Anna seemed to be acting weird. She ignored her when she tried to talk to them, whispered behind her back, and wouldn't hang out with her during recess. It turned out that Anna had turned all the other girls in the class against Stephanie, but she didn't know why. Stephanie tried to talk to Jasmine, but Jasmine was nervous and said that she couldn't hang out with her or Anna wouldn't talk to her anymore either.

After school, Julia told her parents what had happened and asked what she should do. Her parents told her not to worry and that by the next day, everyone would have forgotten what happened. This was not the case. The next day, not only were other students ignoring her, but they were spreading rumors about her that were not true.

Stephanie asked the teacher if she could go to the bathroom, and when she got there she locked herself in a stall and cried. After a few minutes, she wiped her eyes and went back to class. Her teacher asked her what was wrong and why she was crying. Stephanie didn't know what to do. If she told the teacher that everyone was spreading rumors about her, her whole class would know that she told and they would think she was a tattletale. But if she didn't say anything, when would it stop? Besides, she couldn't lie to the teacher, she might get in trouble.

*Discussion Questions:*

- What do you think Stephanie should do now? Should she tell her teacher or keep quiet?
- Why do you think Jasmine didn't stick up for Stephanie? Have you ever been in Jasmine's position where you couldn't defend a friend because you were afraid everyone would be mean to you, too?
- Have you ever seen or heard of a scenario like this happening in your school?
- Do you think this situation would be different if the main characters were boys instead of girls? In what ways do boys treat each other differently than girls treat each other?
- Why do you think people pick on other students who may even be their friends, and why do others join in?
- Have you ever felt that a friend turned his or her back on you? What did it feel like?

## LESSON 5

## KEEPING YOUR COOL: PART I

**Objective:** Students will learn about what makes them angry and how to identify warning signs that they are getting angry. They will learn the connection between thoughts and feelings, which sometimes can lead them to bully others.

**Materials:**

- Chalkboard and chalk

**Time:** 30 minutes

**I. Review of previous lesson**

Remind students that in the last lesson, they discussed relational bullying, which happens when people leave out, teases, ignore, or say mean things about others. At the end of the lesson, students were told to go home and ask an adult or sibling how they coped with being teased. Ask them to share any new ideas that they added to their list of coping strategies. If students raise strategies that are inappropriate, such as hitting the person or calling them a name back, discuss with the class how this does not end bullying, it continues it.

**II. Introduce current activity**

Ask students if they know why it is that some people bully others. After hearing their ideas, elaborate on the idea that sometimes we get angry about something that happened, and it leads us to do mean things. Often it helps to identify these angry feelings before we do something mean, like bully another student.

Ask students to think about a time when they were very, very angry.

- What was the situation?
- How did you handle being angry?
- What did your body feel like?

Explain to students that when we start to get angry, we can feel it in our bodies. Draw the outline of a body on the chalkboard, and ask students to identify where in their bodies they can feel it when they get angry. (Some examples include racing heart, sweaty palms, etc.) Write the words in over the body part described.

Not only do our bodies tell us that we're getting angry, our brains can tell us, too. The thoughts that go through our heads are the things that we say to ourselves and out loud that keep us angry; they don't make things better. These thoughts encourage us to continue to be upset so that we might be tempted to do be bullies. Explain to students that what they're thinking can affect how they're feeling.

Give students the following scenario:

“Johnny walked past you in the hallway, bumped into your shoulder, and kept walking.”

Ask students what thoughts they might have about Johnny bumping into them. Explain that how they think about this situation will affect how they feel about it.

- If they think “Johnny hit me on purpose, he must hate me,” then they will feel hurt, upset, angry.
- If they think “Johnny didn’t see me, it was just an accident,” then they will feel confident and positive.

Discuss the different responses to the one situation and how being hurt and angry can lead the person to take out their anger on Johnny, by teasing or pushing him later on in the day.

### **III. Relate the activity to students’ lives**

For homework, ask students to come up with two more examples like the one above, one scenario with two different possible responses. Have them prepare in groups of two or four to act out their scenarios in the next lesson.

## LESSON 6

## KEEPING YOUR COOL: PART II

**Objective:** Students will learn anger management skills that will help them to “keep their cool,” in the classroom, on the playground, or in other situations. They will be able to get rid of their angry feelings and not take them out on other students.

**Materials:**

- Paper
- Markers or crayons
- Chalkboard and chalk

**Time:** 30 minutes

**I. Review of previous lesson**

Remind students that in the last session you talked about how to recognize when you’re feeling angry based on how your body feels. They also learned how what they are thinking can affect how they are feeling. Ask for student volunteers to present their role-plays of different responses to a situation. Ask students how each response would make them feel and ultimately act.

**II. Introduce current activity**

Congratulate students on being able to identify their angry feelings and understanding that how they think will affect how they feel. Ask children how they currently “let things go” when they are feeling angry. Make a list on the chalkboard of all of their strategies. Some ideas include:

- Exercising
- Playing a sport
- Hitting a pillow
- Talking to someone, like a parent or friend
- Listening to music
- Reading or writing
- Using the computer
- Drawing

Explain that in addition to thoughts making you feel angry, thoughts can also calm you down. Ask students to think about what they can do with their thoughts to make them go away. For example, they can picture the angry thought in a thought bubble and watch it float away. Ask students for their best and even silliest ideas for where they can put their thoughts.

Another idea is to throw away your thoughts. Have students write down their angry thoughts, rip up the paper and throw it in the garbage. (Be sure to throw the garbage away immediately). Ask students how it felt to throw away their thoughts. Did it help them go away?

### **III. Relate the activity to students' lives**

Remind students that there are many ways to keep their cool, even when they are really angry or upset. Have students draw a picture of either how they keep their cool or how they can get rid of angry thoughts.

## LESSON 7

## BEING A GOOD FRIEND

**Objective:** Students will be able to read behavior clues and be able to identify whether or not a person is acting as a friend. They will learn that how they act, as a friend or not, is something that they have control over and something they need to self manage.

**Materials:**

- How to Lose All Your Friends, by Nancy Carlson
- Easel paper
- Markers
- Sheets of paper with “friend or not friend” scenarios

**Time:** 30 minutes

**I. Review of previous lesson**

Remind the group that in the last lesson, you talked about ways to “keep your cool.” They learned that even when they get upset about something, they do not have to lose their temper.

Explain to the students that keeping your cool is a big part of being a good friend. Ask students why this might be.

**II. Introduce the current reading activity**

Tell the group that you are going to read a book named, How to Lose All Your Friends. Ask them some things other people could do that would make them want/not want that person as a friend and list them in two columns on the easel paper. Put the paper aside while you read the story.

Throughout reading the story, check periodically for understanding. For example, ask students some of the things that the characters do that lead to losing friends.

After finishing the story, proceed with questions and activities.

**III. Introduce the activity**

- *Question 1:* How can you tell if you want to be friends with someone or not?
- *Activity 1:*
  - Have pieces of paper folded with scenarios of friend or bully behavior. Put them in a pile in the center of the circle, and have each student choose one.

- Go around the circle and have each student act as the detective, read the clues of the behavior in the scenario, and decide as a group “friend” or “not friend.”
- *Question 2:* Knowing the qualities of good friends, what can you do, starting right now, that will show other people that you can be a good friend?
- *Activity 2:*
  - Provide students with a blank sheet of paper.
  - Ask them to write three ways that they can control themselves by being a good friend over the next week.

#### **IV. Relate the lesson to the students’ lives**

Explain that how we conduct ourselves around other people gives them clues as to whether or not they want to be our friend. Ask them to make a note of the times that they were a good friend over the week (handout on the following page), and continue reading clues and acting as the “friend or not friend detective” throughout the week.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Date</b>	<b>I was a good friend because I...</b>

## LESSON 8

## INCLUDING NEW PEOPLE IN GROUPS

**Objective:** Students will learn about the challenges that people face being new to a situation that others are accustomed to. They will extend this understanding, combined with their knowledge of accepting others' differences, to have tolerance for others, and see differences as positive rather than negative.

**Materials:**

- The Brand New Kid, by Katie Couric
- Easel paper
- Markers
- Outline of a child's body on a piece of easel paper
- Blank paper (one per student)
- Crayons

**Time:** 30 minutes

**I. Review of previous lesson**

Remind the group that in the last session, you talked about being a good friend, and what that meant. They learned strategies to be good friends, and are able to distinguish good friend behavior. Ask students to report examples of when they were good friends throughout the week.

**II. Introduce the current reading activity**

Tell the group that you are going to read a book named, The Brand New Kid. Ask the students the following questions:

- Have you ever been “the new kid”?
- What did people do to make you feel welcome? What did you do to make someone else who was new feel welcome?

Introduce the word “tolerance.” Explain that most of the lessons that they've had so far have examined things that make people different from one another, and that these differences should be accepted and appreciated. Discuss how being different from one another is a positive thing, and how having different experiences and perspectives makes the world a more interesting place to live.

Throughout reading the story, check periodically for understanding. For example, ask the students some of the things that made Lazlo different from the other students in the classroom (where he came from, etc.)

After finishing the story, proceed with questions and activities.

### III. Introduce the activity

- *Question 1:* What are some of the things about Lazlo that people knew about him? What are some things that people did not know about him?
- *Activity 1:*
  - Record the students' responses on a piece of easel paper, in two columns.
  - On the outline of Lazlo's body, write the things that people knew about him on the outside and the things that people did not know about him on the inside.
  - Ask the students to recall the lesson in which they had to tell others the things that made them different. How did that make you different? What does that difference add to the group?
- *Question 2:* If a new student came into the room right now, what would you do to make him or her feel welcome?
- *Activity 2:*
  - Give each student a blank sheet of paper and crayons.
  - Ask them to draw a new student that will be joining their class and have them create a name and personality for this character.
  - On the back of their paper, ask them to write 3 ways that they would make this new person feel welcome in their class.
  - Discuss the ideas that the students have, and encourage them to use them anytime that someone new joins them, either in class, on the playground, or anywhere else.

### IV. Relate the lesson to the students' lives

Remind students that being new and different is valuable to the group of people that you join, because differences add new perspectives and opinions to the existing group. Unfortunately, students don't always welcome new students into their peer group. Ask students to make a list of "unwelcoming behaviors" that students deliberately do in an effort to exclude others, and reasons why students may engage in these behaviors. (Examples: jealousy of new student, fear of losing popularity status, fear of a new student's "different" qualities, etc.). In another column, students should make a list of "welcoming behaviors," possibly drawing from the list generated in the previous activity.

For instance, if a student is ignoring the new student because he or she thinks the new student is weird because they are different, then a welcoming behavior may be to include the new student at their lunch table in an effort to get to know them. (See handout on the following page.)

Have the students take their drawings and suggestions for how to include a new student to their teacher. Have them ask their teacher to keep a list in the classroom of all of the ways that they came up with to welcome a new person to their class, and review it the next time that someone new joins them.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Unwelcoming behaviors	Reason for this behavior	Welcoming behaviors

## LESSON 9

## PREVENTING BULLYING

**Objective:** Students will learn how they can stop bullying from happening in their classroom or school. They will learn strategies to keep the school a peaceful place.

**Materials:**

- Poster paper
- Markers or crayons
- Chalkboard and chalk

**Time:** 30 minutes

**I. Review of previous lesson**

Remind students that last time, you talked about including new students into your classroom. They learned how important it is to make other people feel welcome, and how easy it is to feel left out of something.

**II. Introduce the activity**

Explain to the students that their class is being transformed into the school's new "Bully Patrol Squad." Their job is to help prevent bullying in their classroom and their school, and they can help in lots of different ways. Ask students to brainstorm how they can help and write these ideas on the board. If the following ideas are not mentioned, add them to the list:

- Don't bully! The first step to preventing bullying is to not do it yourself.
- Talk it out. If you feel like someone's bullying you, try to talk out the problem with them.
- Find an adult. This can be a parent, teacher, lunch aide, or any other adult who can help stop the bullying. **DO NOT** stand up to the bully yourself.
- Include other people. Sometimes people can feel lonely if they are left out. If you see someone is left out, include them in what you're doing. Make sure everyone is involved in an activity, like at recess.

Explain to students that another thing you could do in a bullying situation is try to problem solve, which they'll learn in the next lesson.

Next, divide students up into groups with no more than four people per group. Have students, as a group, make posters with the bullying prevention rules discussed in the lesson. Assign each group a location in the room or hallway that they will be responsible for decorating with their posters (e.g. classroom wall, bulletin board in hallway).

**III. Relate the lesson to the students' lives**

Ask students to act as detectives. Have students make a note of any bullying they see during recess (but they can't report specific names!). Ask them to note what the situation was and how it was handled. Also ask them to write down how *they* would have handled it had it happened to them.

## LESSON 10

## PROBLEM SOLVING STEPS

**Objective:** Students will learn the steps to solving problems. This will help them to solve problems independently and avoid conflict with other people. This will also help them to make healthy choices in their lives.

**Materials:**

- Chalkboard and chalk

**Time:** 30 minutes

**I. Review of previous lesson**

Remind students that in the last session, they talked about how they could prevent bullying in their own school. One step that they took was to make posters to hang in various parts of the school to remind people of the bullying prevention rules. Congratulate the class for being an outstanding Bully Patrol Squad and have them present the class with their posters.

**II. Introduce the current activity**

Explain to students that when making a decision to solve a problem, it's a little bit like math – there's a formula. However, there is no right or wrong; students can be much more creative when solving their own problems.

Write the following steps of problem-solving on the chalkboard:

1. Describe and clarify the problem.
2. List your possible solutions.
3. For each solution, think about how it will work and how people will respond to it.
4. Choose a solution.
5. Use the solution.
6. Evaluate how the solution worked.

Explain each step. Tell students that it's important to clarify what the problem is before beginning to deal with it, because that will affect the solutions you come up with. For each solution, students should make sure that it is something that wouldn't hurt another person, and that the solution is fair to everyone involved.

Ask for a volunteer to provide an example of a problem. Go through the steps as a class, brainstorming as many solutions as you can; ask the class for pros and cons of each solution. Take a tally of how many students vote for each solution and pretend to evaluate how it worked. Repeat the exercise with another example, if time allows.

**III. Relate the lesson to the students' lives**

Explain to students that while they are learning these steps, adults will help them through the process if they need it. For homework, have students think about a story from a book, television show, or movie that they have already read/seen in which one character needs to solve a problem. Have the students write down what the problem is as well as how the character solved it. Ask students to also use the six steps to determine what *they* would do in that situation.



## COMPONENT #2: TEAMBUILDING GROUPS

### PRE-ACTIVITY

#### TEAMBUILDING ACTIVITY INTRODUCTION

**Objective:** This is a pre-activity to be implemented following the implementation of the nine lessons but before beginning the teambuilding groups. Students will be assigned groups by the teacher and learn the purpose of the group, which is to practice the skills they learned in the classroom. Students will be able to ask any questions they have about the upcoming program.

**Time:** 15-20 minutes

The teambuilding groups will be co-introduced by the teacher and lunch aide. Introductions of personnel, the teacher and lunch aide, will not be necessary, because they are already familiar to the students. The teacher will explain the purpose of the groups to the students and tell them that they will have the opportunity to do fun activities with their classmates during lunch time. Students will be told that the groups will meet once each week for six weeks, so that students do not lose their free time at recess.

Teachers will explain to the students that the skills they worked so hard to learn in the classroom lessons help them to work better with their peers. They know how to keep their cool and react appropriately to others when there is a disagreement. They know how to problem-solve very well, and are experts at keeping aggression out of their classrooms. However, as with any skill, practice makes perfect! Each week, they will be able to work as a team with their classmates to work through a given problem, without using bullying strategies or ineffective problem-solving.

Any questions should be answered at this time.

## TEAMBUILDING ACTIVITY 1

**Objective:** Students will be able to define teamwork and describes how teamwork fits into their own lives.

**Materials:**

- Paper
- Poster board
- Markers

**Time:** 30 minutes

Students will be divided into groups of four and asked to sit with their group. Once the groups are formed, begin by asking students to list as many words that they can think of that are related to teamwork. These can be adjectives that describe what teamwork is, public figures who engage in teamwork, or any other words that come to mind. Allow 5 minutes for this part of the activity.

Next, each group will come up with a unique definition of teamwork and write it on the poster board. Allow 5 minutes for this part of the activity.

Each team will draw a picture that describes their definition of teamwork on the poster board. Each student on the team must participate in some way, encouraging the students to work together. Allow 10 minutes for this part of the activity.

Finally, as a large group, students will generate a list of rules that should be followed in order for teams to work well together. These rules will be written by the facilitator on a large poster board and posted in the classroom.

## TEAMBUILDING ACTIVITY 2

**Objective:** Students will work together to design and create anti-bullying slogans and posters to be hung throughout the school building.

**Materials:**

- Scrap paper
- Poster board
- Markers
- Tape

**Time:** 30 minutes

In this activity, students will be paired in groups of four; the facilitator should deliberately group students who are not friends with one another or do not speak to one another often. Each group of students will be provided with a piece of poster board and markers, and asked to create a poster with an anti-bullying slogan and drawings that relate to the slogan.

After the activity has been completed, the posters will be hung outside of each classroom. Teachers in the building can vote to choose the most creative/clever poster, and the winners in each classroom can earn a special prize (i.e. lunch with the principal, etc.)

## TEAMBUILDING ACTIVITY 3

**Objective:** Students will practice engaging in prosocial behavior and gain experience using “put-ups” and having positive attitudes toward all other students in the class.

**Materials:**

- Construction paper
- Markers

**Time:** 30 minutes

Students will begin by sitting in a circle in the center of the room; all desks should be pushed aside. Once seated, students should be reassigned seats so they are not sitting next to someone that they are good friends with. The object of the first part of the activity is to learn about “put-downs” and “put-ups.” Begin by asking students if they know what “put-downs” and “put-ups” are. Explain that a put-down is a negative comment about a person and ask students for examples. Based on that definition, ask students what they think a put-up could be and ask them for examples. Explain that in the classroom, put-downs are not allowed, but put-ups are more than welcome; the more put-ups, the better!

Once these words have been defined, students will go around the circle and say a put-up about the student to their right. This will continue until all the way around the circle.

Following this “put-up chain,” students will write their names on construction paper. These papers will then be passed around the room so that each student can write a “put-up” corresponding with the letters of the students’ names. The finished products may be hung up around the room as a reminder of all of the positive qualities each student possesses.

## TEAMBUILDING ACTIVITY 4

**Objective:** Students use their communication skills to guide one another through the classroom of obstacles.

**Materials:**

- Classroom furniture/objects (e.g. chairs, desks, books, tables)

**Time:** 30 minutes

The classroom can be used as it is currently set up, since the desks and chairs make for excellent obstacles. If there are too few obstacles, scatter the desks, chairs, books, and other objects in the room to make an obstacle course.

Group the students in pairs. One person is blindfolded and must make their way through the obstacle course by listening to their partner. Their partner walks next to them but cannot touch them, and verbally talks them through the course. Each student should have a chance to be blindfolded and a guide.

At the end of the game, ask the students what they learned about communication and trust. The following questions can guide the discussion:

- How was your partner helpful as a guide?
- What was the most helpful communication? What was least helpful?
- Did you trust your guide? Why or why not?
- How did you feel when you were blindfolded?
- How did you feel as the guide?

## TEAMBUILDING ACTIVITY 5

**Objective:** Students will work together to create an anti-bullying commercial.

**Materials:**

- Scrap paper
- Props

**Time:** 60 minutes (two 30-minute sessions)

This activity will take place over two sessions.

In the first session, students will be assigned to groups of four. These groups should be different from their group in the last activity. In their groups, students will be asked to create a commercial that reflects an anti-bullying campaign. For the theme, they can either use the slogan that they created in the previous activity or generate a new one as a group. Students will work as a team to come up with a general idea for their commercial, including characters and script ideas. While children in the younger grades may have more difficulty with the script, they can come up with general ideas and improvise.

## TEAMBUILDING ACTIVITY 6

**Objective:** Students will work together to create an anti-bullying commercial.

**Materials:**

- Scrap paper
- Props

**Time:** 60 minutes (two 30-minute sessions)

In the second session, students will reconvene to discuss their ideas from the first session. They will assign parts for each of the characters and practice their commercial. Each group will take turns presenting their commercials in front of their classmates.

Following these presentations, children will engage in a discussion of the following questions:

- How did your group come up with the ideas for the commercial? How did you decide on the final idea?
- Do you feel that these commercials send an important message? What do you think people viewing them would say and feel?
- How did it feel to work with as a team?

## CHAPTER VII

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this dissertation was to design and develop a lunchtime program targeting relational aggression among female elementary school students in Cranford, New Jersey. Although the Cranford Public School District had already adopted the Olweus Program to target physical aggression, the principal had identified relational aggression among girls as a significant concern. This program is intended to teach students peer relationship and anger management skills, as well as teach them appropriate social problem solving steps that will allow them to more effectively handle conflict with their peers without resorting to aggressive behaviors. The program developed for this specific target population can be adapted for use with other elementary school students with appropriate modifications.

Findings of the needs assessment conducted with third to fifth grade students at the school further supported the identification of this need. The results of the data analyses indicated that students lacked peer relationship skills and often felt lonely and dissatisfied with their social experiences. Results also indicated that while teachers did not report high levels of relational aggression among students, students felt differently. Students reported that their peers had demonstrated relational aggression towards them, and those who had such experiences had experienced fewer positive, prosocial acts. The



following sections will discuss the results of the needs assessment and the implications of those data.

### *Discussion of Needs Assessment Results*

Results of the needs assessment led to the design of a program that would target relational aggression. The variables on which the data were collected were peer relationship skills, girls' experiences of being bullied, and girls' bullying behaviors. The measure that assessed peer relationship skills, the Loneliness and Social Dissatisfaction Questionnaire (LSDQ), indicated that overall, girls were dissatisfied with their social experiences, compared with the population on which this scale was normed. The students in this school may have found it difficult to make friends at school and maintain those friendships. They generally felt more alone and unable to find a friend when they needed one. This may occur because students are uprooted from their primary school and placed in a setting that serves elementary and middle school students; rather than being among the older students in school, they are the youngest students in the building, and that may impact their feelings of loneliness. However, it is worth noting that while these scores are elevated as compared to the norm group, the norm groups' means were fairly average, so this may not be indicative of a high enough level of social dissatisfaction to cause concern.

Male students also completed the LSDQ and results indicated that they experienced a similar level of loneliness and social dissatisfaction as female students. This finding indicates that while the principal identified female students as the target of this program, it may be worthwhile to include male students. The fact that male students experienced a similar level of loneliness and social dissatisfaction is a surprising finding,

given the assumption in the literature that relational aggression is more common among females. However, it is important to note that the fact that male students are lonely and socially dissatisfied may not necessarily mean that they are experiencing relational aggression; they could be experiencing relational or physical aggression that makes them feel lonely in school. It is also possible that since male students are more likely to engage in physical aggression and these behaviors are addressed by school administrators, the administrators' may be more likely to perceive males as engaging in physical, and not relational, aggression. To that end, the relationally aggressive behaviors that males experience go unnoticed and are not dealt with appropriately, leading them to feel lonely and unhappy with their social experiences. It is also possible that school climate needs to be improved. If both males and females feel lonely, then the climate of the school may not be fostering sufficient positive social relationships. This may be a large part of the problem; if there is a lack of opportunities for positive interaction, then perhaps the issue is that there is too great an emphasis on academics and too little of a focus on character development and social-emotional learning. The literature has shown that there are negative effects on females when relational aggression is not addressed; it would be expected that similar negative effects would occur for male students as well.

There were no differences in levels of loneliness and social dissatisfaction between the three grade levels. This result suggests that students in all of the elementary grades in the school may experience these issues to some degree. Similar to the finding that males experience loneliness and social dissatisfaction, this finding may indicate that the school climate needs improvement. If children in all three grades experience loneliness and social dissatisfaction, then perhaps there needs to be a greater emphasis on

the development of healthy peer relationships among students. As a result, the program that is being developed is likely to be useful with students in all grades. Additionally, there is no interaction between grade and gender. This, too, indicates that a large population of students may benefit from the program. It would be advantageous for male and female students in all three grades to participate in a program that includes peer relationship skill building.

Teacher ratings of the girls' bullying behaviors were assessed by the Children's Social Behavior Scale – Teacher Version. Based on mean scores, it appears that teachers did not observe many overt or relationally aggressive behaviors in students. However, a limitation of this measure is that it lacks normative data to interpret the means. The results did indicate that students engaged in prosocial acts on a regular basis. It is possible that students avoid engaging in aggressive behaviors in the presence of their teachers, but are more likely to be seen by teachers as acting in prosocial ways with their peers. Additionally, if the behaviors are occurring at unstructured times, then teachers will not witness the behaviors. It is also interesting to consider whether the Olweus program helped to enhance displays of prosocial acts, but did not reduce the incidence of relational aggression. One interesting finding is that according to their teachers, students in grade four engaged in significantly fewer prosocial acts. The reason for this is unclear; it could be a difference in the teachers as raters. It is unclear from the data if a specific type of relational aggression would be easier to observe than others. This measure contributes useful information to the needs assessment, but is also interpreted with caution since it is subject to rater bias. Teachers often have students that they favor and other students that they may not.

The Social Experience Questionnaire – Self Report assessed girls’ experiences of bullying. This measure allowed students to directly report their experiences with their peers’ aggression. As with the LSDQ, there were no significant differences in experiences of overt and relational aggression between students in all three grade levels. While the literature suggests that as children become more verbal, they engage in fewer physically aggressive acts and more relationally aggressive acts, it is possible that students of upper elementary school age are similar in terms of how verbal they are, leading them to be similar in terms of their aggression. Prosocial behavior was also not found to differ depending on grade level. Students who experienced overt aggression also reported being the victim of relational aggression, but it appeared that relational aggression was significantly more frequent than overt aggression. These students were the recipients of significantly fewer prosocial acts than their peers who did not have frequent experiences of aggressive behavior.

It is likely that relational aggression was much more evident in the self-report measure that students completed because relational aggression tends to occur in more private ways. Overt aggression is easier to observe, even if the students are not directly in front of the teacher, and students are more likely to report overt aggression to the teacher because of the physical harm that occur. Students often do not report relational aggression because they may be embarrassed, or because teachers’ traditional lack of response is discouraging. Due to lack of training in this area, teachers may actually be unable to identify when relationally aggressive behavior is occurring. Even if it does occur in their presence, they may not be adequately prepared to identify it as such, which could indicate a training need for the teachers. Relationally aggressive behaviors can

occur through whispering and gossip, which are not as observable as physical aggression, leading these behaviors to often go unnoticed. These results are somewhat difficult to interpret because the teachers' understanding of the construct of relational aggression is unclear from the needs assessment data. In the future, it would be helpful to have open ended responses from teachers that indicate their knowledge about the different types of relational aggression, so that it is clear how much of an understanding they have as the individuals who rate the students on these measures.

While the data from the individual measures is informative, Table 2 includes intercorrelations of the three measures and provides additional information regarding the relationships between them. While the CSBS and SEQ-S were used for data collection because they measured the appropriate constructs, they also have the same three subscales allowing direct comparisons between subscales to be made. Interestingly, the overt aggression subscales, relational aggression subscales, and prosocial acts subscales were not at all correlated. This may be a result of the differing perspectives of teachers and students. As described above, students may feel scared or embarrassed to report overt aggression to their teachers, and it often occurs when no one is looking. Additionally, relational aggression is a very subtle form of aggression; gossiping and exclusion of other students is difficult to notice because it may be gradual or done very quietly among students. A needs assessment that gathers data from both teachers and students is critical for program development because it provides a more complete picture of the extent of aggressive behaviors.

These results indicate that while teachers rated overt and relational aggression as fairly low among their students, the students themselves rated these behaviors as

occurring much more frequently. This discrepancy between teachers' perspectives and students' perspectives has implications for teachers and other school personnel, namely that the teachers are often unable to identify when relational aggression is occurring and therefore may not identify a need for programmatic intervention. Teachers must also be aware that relational aggression may take place when they are not present or alert, so when they rate students' behaviors, they need to multiply their rating in order to get a more accurate account of what is happening among students. Teacher buy-in to such a program is essential since they implement the lessons.

Another implication of these findings is that while relational aggression is commonly viewed as "typical" childhood behavior, especially among girls, it has detrimental effects on girls' feelings of safety. Both boys and girls reported struggling with peer relationship skills and experiencing loneliness and social dissatisfaction. However, teachers were generally unaware that students felt this way. Teachers tend to normalize the behavior and view it as a part of the growing up process (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006; Yoon et al., 2004). This implies that it is important for teachers to be educated about the warning signs of relational aggression and to intervene when they witness it or learn that it is occurring.

The findings also showed that the overt and relational aggression subscales on the SEQ-S were positively correlated with the LSDQ total scores of the participants. This suggests that students who experienced higher levels of loneliness and social dissatisfaction also experienced overt and physical aggression from their peers. This is a logical connection because it is often the students who are bullied that feel lonely in school. Conversely, students who are lonely and socially isolated may be more of a target

for aggression to begin with. Additionally, there was a negative correlation between the prosocial scale on the SEQ-S and the LSDQ total score, suggesting that students who experienced higher levels of loneliness and social dissatisfaction received few prosocial acts from their peers. While causation cannot be determined from this data, it is possible that the lack of receipt of prosocial acts may be a factor in the level of loneliness that students reported.

These needs assessment results, in conjunction with the context assessment, were used in the design and development of the lunchtime relational aggression program. Dodge's (1986) Information Processing Model suggests that children that engage in aggressive behaviors misinterpret others' social cues (Lochman & Dunn, 1993). While the intent behind children's relationally aggressive behaviors was not addressed in this needs assessment, it is clear that students report experiencing relationally aggressive behaviors in school. It is possible that children engage in these behaviors in reaction to social cues that they perceive; for instance, if a child perceives another student as leaving her out of an activity, she may respond by acting in a relationally aggressive way, using exclusion or gossiping about that student. These intentions were important to consider in the development of this program.

Developing a program that specifically targets the needs of a population has a greater chance of achieving positive results than implementing a program that did not take those needs into account. This program will address students' peer relationship skill deficits, as well as aim to decrease relational aggression among students. The results of the needs assessment and the completed program will be shared and discussed with the

assistant principal of the school. The questions that he has will be answered at that time and a plan will be made for future implementation.

### *Limitations*

One constraint of the study relates to the sample of participants included in the needs assessment. Specifically, there was a lack of parental involvement, which would have been a useful component. Parents were solely involved in that they were responsible for signing the consent form that allowed their children to participate in the needs assessment data collection. The primary reason for the exclusion of parents was time constraints. Data were collected at the end of the academic year, leaving a narrow window of opportunity for data collection, so parents were not included. If time permitted, it would have been useful to get parents' perspectives of bullying in school, based on what their children report at home. Children may be more likely to express concerns to parents at home than in the school setting, where they might feel more vulnerable. However, while parents may be likely to be informed about relational aggression that is occurring at school, this information should also be evident in the results of the self-report measures. While the collection of data from the parents would have been informative, it is not a major limitation of this study.

The issue of representativeness of the sample is also a limitation of this study. Different districts have different racial, ethnic, and socio-economic demographics, which may limit the representativeness of this sample. Additionally, there is no way to know if the sample of participants was skewed in that parents who gave consent are more aware of relational aggression as a problem, possibly because their children discuss it with them. A limitation of this study is that we do not know if higher rates of bullying were



found because the parents that consented for their child's participation were more concerned about this behavior occurring.

There was also a lack of lunch aide involvement in the data collection process. A focus group with lunch aides was initially part of the plan for the needs assessment. However, because the data collection was delayed due to school closings, there was not enough time to collect data from students, teachers, and lunch aides. A decision was made to eliminate the lunch aide focus groups and to gather data from as many students and teachers as possible. This is a limitation because the lunch aides' perspective with regard to program development would have guided components of the design, since they have a significant involvement in the implementation of the program and have significant opportunities to observe the students in informal situations.

Another limitation is that the program was developed to target third to fifth grade students. In this particular setting, those are the three grades within the elementary school. It was logical to implement a program with all three grades, given the similar levels of need in each grade. Every effort was made to design lessons and activities that are appropriate for all three grades. However, while all participants in the program will be elementary school aged, there are differences in developmental level between the three grades. As a result, the lessons will likely need to be modified when necessary. This is a limitation because modifications will need to be determined by classroom teachers. This may add to the amount of work for teachers, and will depend on teachers' judgment. There is a developmental approach as part of this program, allowing students to be considered for intervention in multiple years but they will not experience the same program every time.

Teacher resistance may also be a limitation, given that the administrators have chosen to implement the program and teachers are not given a choice. It would have been desirable to assess teachers' and lunch aides' buy-in to the program as a part of this study. The role of these individuals is critical in the implementation of the program, and if they are resistant, then the program will not be implemented according to design. Since teachers did not rate aggression as being high among their students, it is possible that they may not see the need and therefore be uninterested or unwilling to implement the program. Additionally, teachers may be mistrustful of the process if the assistant principal, in the role of supervisor, has to observe them teaching lessons. It is possible that they will view this as a natural role for him since he is an administrator and likely evaluates them throughout the year; however, it is necessary to consider that it may make teachers resentful if they will be observed by him more regularly than he currently does.

The principal investigator's role as the consultant to the assistant principal is somewhat limited because it is unclear at this time how long the connection between consultant and consultee will last. Ideally, the principal investigator will remain in contact with the school personnel during the first implementation of the program, but it is doubtful that the consultation will continue following that, due to time constraints. As a result, part of the consultation will involve discussion between the consultant and consultee regarding the district's plan to take over the program once the consultant is no longer involved. It is possible that the role of consultant can transfer to the school psychologist or social workers, who have the background to consult with the assistant principal. Since the school is one within the district that has a practicum student from the

Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology, this student may also work with the school to assist with implementation of the program.

Time constraints are also a limitation in terms of the implementation of the lessons. Lunchtime groups are often time limited because there are many activities occurring simultaneously. Many of the lesson plans are somewhat involved and can take longer than the 30 minutes that were allotted for each. While it would have been possible to shorten the lessons or divide them to create more lessons, there was concern that they would not be as effective if broken up or shortened. Additionally, different teachers move at different paces and many may find it helpful to have enough material to fill the 30 minutes if they need it. This indicates another limitation, which is that students may resent missing part of their lunchtime during the period of time that this program is being implemented. While the lessons were designed to be fun and engaging for students, missing part of their unstructured social time may lead to resistance on the part of some students.

One final limitation is that the program was not implemented and evaluated in the setting for which it was developed. These activities are outside of the scope of this dissertation. Thus, the effectiveness of the program and its compatibility with the school's culture could not be assessed. If these factors were known, the program could be modified as necessary, and this may be a direction to take in the future.

### *Conclusion*

Relational aggression is an issue that many students encounter in school. While this was previously viewed as normative childhood behavior, it has become clear that there are many damaging effects on children both in school and beyond. Being a victim

of relational aggression should not be considered a rite of passage or a part of growing up; instead it is a form of bullying that must be addressed and never ignored. Too many young children have grown up as victims of relational aggression in a society that has a high tolerance for its existence. With the recent focus on prevention and intervention in the schools, it is fitting that a program be designed to target this growing issue.

This dissertation aimed to create a program that addresses multiple areas of need among elementary aged students. The use of Maher's (2000) program planning and evaluation process provided a framework which allowed for the needs assessment and program design to proceed in an efficient manner. The process of designing and developing a program that was derived from a needs assessment was intended to aid the district in addressing an identified need. Future evaluation of the program's implementation in the school setting would clarify the program's benefit and value in terms of reduction of relational aggression and increase in prosocial behaviors.

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## APPENDIX A

## Loneliness and Social Dissatisfaction Questionnaire (LSDQ)

Cassidy &amp; Asher, 1992

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender (*please circle one*):            Male            Female

**Directions:** The following are some questions about school and friends. For each question, **circle** "YES," "SOMETIMES," or "NO," depending on whichever best tells how you feel.

- |   |            |                  |           |
|---|------------|------------------|-----------|
| 1. Is it easy for you to make friends at school?      | <b>YES</b> | <b>SOMETIMES</b> | <b>NO</b> |
| 2. Do you like to read?                               | <b>YES</b> | <b>SOMETIMES</b> | <b>NO</b> |
| 3. Do you have other kids to talk to at school?       | <b>YES</b> | <b>SOMETIMES</b> | <b>NO</b> |
| 4. Are you good at working with other kids at school? | <b>YES</b> | <b>SOMETIMES</b> | <b>NO</b> |
| 5. Do you watch TV a lot?                             | <b>YES</b> | <b>SOMETIMES</b> | <b>NO</b> |
| 6. Is it hard for you to make friends at school?      | <b>YES</b> | <b>SOMETIMES</b> | <b>NO</b> |
| 7. Do you like school?                                | <b>YES</b> | <b>SOMETIMES</b> | <b>NO</b> |
| 8. Do you have a lot of friends at school?            | <b>YES</b> | <b>SOMETIMES</b> | <b>NO</b> |
| 9. Do you feel alone at school?                       | <b>YES</b> | <b>SOMETIMES</b> | <b>NO</b> |
| 10. Can you find a friend when you need one?          | <b>YES</b> | <b>SOMETIMES</b> | <b>NO</b> |

11. Do you play sports a lot?	<b>YES</b>	<b>SOMETIMES</b>	<b>NO</b>
12. Is it hard to get kids in school to like you?	<b>YES</b>	<b>SOMETIMES</b>	<b>NO</b>
13. Do you like science?	<b>YES</b>	<b>SOMETIMES</b>	<b>NO</b>
14. Do you have kids to play with at school?	<b>YES</b>	<b>SOMETIMES</b>	<b>NO</b>
15. Do you like music?	<b>YES</b>	<b>SOMETIMES</b>	<b>NO</b>
16. Do you get along with other kids at school?	<b>YES</b>	<b>SOMETIMES</b>	<b>NO</b>
17. Do you feel left out of things at school?	<b>YES</b>	<b>SOMETIMES</b>	<b>NO</b>
18. Are there kids you can go to when you need help in school?	<b>YES</b>	<b>SOMETIMES</b>	<b>NO</b>
19. Do you like to paint and draw?	<b>YES</b>	<b>SOMETIMES</b>	<b>NO</b>
20. Is it hard for you to get along with kids at school?	<b>YES</b>	<b>SOMETIMES</b>	<b>NO</b>
21. Are you lonely at school?	<b>YES</b>	<b>SOMETIMES</b>	<b>NO</b>
22. Do kids at school like you?	<b>YES</b>	<b>SOMETIMES</b>	<b>NO</b>
23. Do you like playing card games?	<b>YES</b>	<b>SOMETIMES</b>	<b>NO</b>
24. Do you have friends at school?	<b>YES</b>	<b>SOMETIMES</b>	<b>NO</b>

## APPENDIX B

Children's Social Behavior Scale – Teacher Report (CSBS-T)  
Crick, 1995

Teacher's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** First, please write the names of all female students in your class on the next page in the column on the left with the heading "Student Name." Then, carefully read the following three questions. For each of these questions, please circle the number that best describes each child's behavior, from **1 (This is never true of this child)**, **3 (This is sometimes true of this child)**, to **5 (This is always true of this child)**.

1. To what extent does the student interact with her peers using overt aggression (e.g. biting, shoving, pushing, initiating physical fights, threatening to beat up other students, dominating other students, or bullying peers)?
2. To what extent does the student interact with her peers using relational aggression (e.g. excluding others, gossiping, spreading rumors, trying to get others to stop playing with another student, telling lies about others to get people to dislike him/her, ignoring peers, or threatening to stop being a peer's friend in order to get what she wants)?
3. To what extent does the student engage in prosocial acts (e.g. saying supportive things to peers, trying to cheer up peers when they are sad or upset, or generally behaving in helpful and kind ways to peers)?

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!**

<b>Student Name</b>	<b>Question #1 (Overt Aggression)</b>	<b>Question #2 (Relational Aggression)</b>	<b>Question #3 (Prosocial Acts)</b>
1.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
2.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
3.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
4.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
5.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
6.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
7.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
8.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
9.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
10.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
11.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
12.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
13.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
14.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
15.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
16.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
17.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
18.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5



## APPENDIX C

Social Experience Questionnaire (SEQ-S)  
Crick & Grotpeter, 1996

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender (*please circle one*):            Male            Female

**Directions:** The following are some things that happen to some kids. For each question, **circle** the number that describes how often this happened to you over the last month, from **1 (never)** to **5 (all the time)** by circling your answer. You may also choose “N/A” if the item does not apply to you.

	Never	Almost never	Some times	Almost all the time	All the time	
1. How often are you left out on purpose when it is time to do an activity?	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
2. How often does a kid who is mad at you try to get back at you by not letting you be in their group anymore?	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
3. How often does another kid give you help when you need it?	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
4. How often has another kid told lies about you to make other kids not like you or be mad at you?	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
5. How often does another kid say they won't like you unless you do what they want you to do?	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
6. How often does another kid try to cheer you up when you feel sad or upset?	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

	<b>Never</b>	<b>Almost never</b>	<b>Some times</b>	<b>Almost all the time</b>	<b>All the time</b>	
7. How often does another kid try to keep others from liking you by saying mean things about you?	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
8. How often do you get hit by another kid at school?	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
9. How often do other kids share things with you?	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
10. How often do you get pushed around or shoved?	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
11. How often does another kid do something that makes you feel happy?	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
12. How often does another kid say something nice to you?	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
13. How often does another kid yell at you and call you mean names?	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
14. How often do kids yell or curse at you?	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
15. How often do other kids say they will beat you up if you don't do what they want you to do?	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

## APPENDIX D

## Parental Consent Form

June 2, 2008

Dear Parent/Guardian,

My name is Lauren Elkinson, and I am a doctoral student in the School Psychology program at Rutgers University, Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology. During my training I worked as a practicum student in Cranford Township Public School District, and in that experience I got to learn a great deal about the school and the students in it.

I am beginning to collect data for my doctoral dissertation, and would like to ask your permission for your child's participation. I plan to examine students' peer relationships and bullying behaviors in elementary school aged students. Specifically, I am interested in using this data to design a program to be implemented during recess that will help to increase the quality of the students' peer relationships and prevent aggression that hurts other by damaging their peer relationships.

Participation in this study consists of completing four questionnaires. **The study should take about 15-30 minutes to complete and will be completed during the school day on Monday, June 9, 2008.** Participation is voluntary. Your child's name will be recorded on the questionnaires in order to allow me to match the teachers' perspectives of bullying with those of the students. However, her responses will be kept confidential and no identifying information will be shared with the school or used in the dissertation document itself. I will be the only person who has access to the questionnaires and will keep them completely confidential. Your child may refuse to answer any questions if she feels uncomfortable for any reason.

**Please complete and detach the parental consent form below by Friday, June 6, 2008.** Feel free to contact me at any time if you have any questions, at [elkinson@eden.rutgers.edu](mailto:elkinson@eden.rutgers.edu). Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Lauren Elkinson, PsyM  
School Psychology Doctoral Candidate

## Parental Consent Form

Please check one of the following:

- I **do** give my child permission to participate in this study.  
 I **do not** give my child permission to participate in this study.

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Child's grade \_\_\_\_\_ Child's teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX E

## Letter to Students

Hi everyone!

Students have so many important things to say about their school! By filling out these surveys, you'll be helping me to make your school a better place. Like you, I'm a student attending Rutgers University. I'm interested in learning how you think your school can become a better, friendlier place.

Your responses will be completely confidential, which means that no one will see them except for me. Most importantly, no one from your school will see the forms that you complete. So, please answer as honestly as possible.

Thank you so much for completing these surveys. Have a great day!

## APPENDIX F

## Program Evaluation

**Directions:** Please think carefully about the lunchtime program that you have participated in over the past months and answer the following questions as honestly as you can.

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*Part 1: Classroom Lessons*

1. What was the most important thing that you learned from the lessons taught by your classroom teacher?

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2. Was there any lesson from which you felt like you did not learn anything new? Please explain.

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3. Please circle “Yes” or “No” for the following questions about the classroom lessons:

- |   |     |    |
|---|-----|----|
| 1. I looked forward to participating in the lessons.            | Yes | No |
| 2. I thought the lessons were fun.                              | Yes | No |
| 3. I learned new things about how to behave with my classmates. | Yes | No |
| 4. The lessons I learned helped to make my friendships better.  | Yes | No |
| 5. I feel more comfortable making new friends in school.        | Yes | No |

*Part 2: Teambuilding Groups*

1. Of the 6 teambuilding activities that you participated in during lunch, which was your favorite and why?

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2. Of the 6 teambuilding activities that you participated in during lunch, which was your **least** favorite and why?

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3. Please circle “Yes” or “No” for the following questions about the teambuilding activities:

- |   |     |    |
|---|-----|----|
| 1. I looked forward to participating in the activities at lunch.            | Yes | No |
| 2. I thought the activities were fun.                                       | Yes | No |
| 3. I got better at working as a team with my classmates.                    | Yes | No |
| 4. The activities helped to make my friendships better.                     | Yes | No |
| 5. I <b>did not</b> like having to give up my lunchtime for the activities. | Yes | No |

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Overall, which part of the program did you enjoy the most? (*circle one*)

Classroom Lessons      Teambuilding Activities      I liked both equally.

Please explain your answer:

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