

AN INVESTIGATION OF TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT RELATIONAL AGGRESSION
AMONG GIRLS

by

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Abstract

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Relational aggression, a specific kind of aggression seen among children and adolescents, is characterized by the primary intention of strategically damaging and/or manipulating social relationships (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). The dynamics of relational aggression are so subtle and complex in nature that they are difficult for teachers and school officials to identify, and are often dismissed as normative social behavior, or ignored because of lack of knowledge about appropriate interventions (Yoon & Kerber, 2003). Given the dearth of initiative from teachers and school officials surrounding acts of student relational aggression, further understanding of their beliefs about the behavior is warranted.

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' beliefs about the seriousness of relationally aggressive behaviors, their likelihood and degree of intervention, and the type of intervention they would impose (if any). Eighty-four middle school teachers participated in a confidential online survey. Three different types of relationally aggressive behaviors (social exclusion, threats to relationships, and gossip) were presented to teachers through vignettes developed for the study. The study then considered how situational and global empathy, self-efficacy for teaching, and degree of teacher/student emotional involvement, were related to

teacher responses. Results of this study give a detailed analysis of what teachers do and do not do when faced with relationally aggressive behavior among their students.

Correlational and regression analysis statistically analyzed the relationships among variables in the study. Results from the study found that teachers tended to be most emotionally impacted by the RA vignettes that involved social exclusion. However, teachers were more likely to intervene in the situations that involved gossip when compared to social exclusion. As predicted, the more situational empathy a teacher feels for the victim of relational aggression, the more likely the degree of intervention. Self-efficacy for teaching was found to be related to the degree to which a teacher would intervene in a situation that involved gossip behavior. Additionally, positive relationships were found among some dimensions of global empathy, situational empathy for the victims of RA, as well as perceived closeness to students.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The subject of bullying and aggression among children in school has been widely investigated in the psychological literature (Boulton, 1997; Olweus, 1978, 1993). Research has demonstrated that overt bullying, which can include physical aggression, name calling, verbal threats or taunts, or physical or psychological intimidation, can have significant negative effects on the victim and the school community as a whole (Rigby, 2001; Wolke, Woods, Bloomfield, & Karstadt, 2000). In an effort to combat bullying behavior and protect victims, schools around the world have instituted anti-bullying policies and programs. However, more recent studies, particularly research on girls' peer groups, have found that a specific kind of victimization among children differs from the typical overtly aggressive behavior that teachers and school officials recognize (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995, 1996). This kind of behavior, known as relational aggression, tends to be hidden within peer groups with the primary intention of strategically damaging and/or manipulating social relationships. The dynamics of relational aggression are so subtle and complex in nature that they are difficult for teachers and school officials to identify, and are often dismissed as normative social behavior, or ignored because of lack of knowledge about appropriate interventions (Yoon & Kerber, 2003). Given the dearth of initiative from teachers and school officials surrounding acts of student relational aggression, further understanding of their beliefs about the behavior is warranted.

The profile of a victim of relational aggression varies. She may be the target of a social threat from a peer, such as the threat to withdraw a friendship if she does not comply with specific demands. Or, she may be socially excluded from events or gatherings when a peer is angry with her. Further, in an attempt to motivate others to reject her, she may be the target of nasty rumors spread within a peer group (Crick, Casas, & Nelson, 2002). What makes these

behaviors uniquely relationally aggressive is that the perpetrators use social relationships as the vehicle for harm. Put in other words, the objective of the aggression is to damage the victim's relationships with the aggressor and/or other peers. While these kinds of aggressive behaviors are likely to be normative for most children to some degree, Crick, Casas, and Nelson (2002) consider a child to be a victim of relational aggression when the behavior is persistent and extreme when compared to what is average in a relevant same-age peer group.

While aggression across both genders may be defined as the intention to hurt or harm others (Vander Zanden, 1993), Crick and Grotpeter (1995) proposed that a child's act of aggression is dependent upon the most effective way in which to thwart or damage the goals that her respective peer group values. The researchers hypothesized that aggressive behavior among girls would be consistent with their social concerns. Specifically, when girls attempt to harm others, their behavior revolves around the intention to damage another child's friendships or feelings of inclusion by the peer group significantly. Results of their study indicated that relational aggression is indeed a discrete kind of aggression, distinct from other types of aggression.

Victimization from relational aggression has been associated with many psychosocial difficulties including social anxiety, loneliness, depression, and social avoidance (Crick & Grotpeter, 1996; Storch, Brassard, & Masia-Warner, 2003). Often the harm that relational aggression causes is unrecognizable. For example, a teacher may not realize the pain that a student experiences due to social exclusion – the suffering tends to be internalized (Yoon & Kerber, 2003). Therefore, it is no easy task for a teacher to identify and intervene in an act of relational aggression. The teacher must be both keenly aware of the nuances and dynamics

within the complex social networks of a peer group, as well as be alert to changes in affect and behavior by students who may be experiencing victimization.

Indeed, research has suggested that because relational aggression is typically more covert in nature than overt aggression (i.e., physical aggression or verbal abuse), it is more difficult to identify and more challenging for teachers to intervene effectively (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). Studies indicate that teachers are more likely to respond punitively to physical or overt acts of aggression as opposed to relational aggression. Teachers are more likely to ignore acts of relational aggression and think they are less serious (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006; Yoon & Kerber, 2003). Furthermore, research has shown that teachers tend to have less empathy for victims of relational aggression when compared to victims of physical aggression (Yoon & Kerber, 2003).

Taken together, the research indicates that relational aggression is a distinct form of aggression that is prevalent in pre-school and school-age children. Investigators have reported that it escalates during adolescence, but relational aggression is seen in early childhood as well (Bjorkqvist et al., 1992; Ostrov & Crick, 2007). Although the research has indicated that relational aggression is dominant in girls' peer groups, some studies have found that it is equally prevalent in boys' social interactions, but it may be overshadowed by acts of overt aggression (Kuppens, Grietens, Onghena, Michaels, & Subramanian, 2008; Prinstein, Boergers, & Vernberg, 2001). Nevertheless, the outcomes for victims of relational aggression are negative and include many psychosocial difficulties (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Storch et al., 2003). It is therefore imperative for teachers to be able to identify acts of relational aggression and provide effective interventions for the victim and aggressor. In an effort to train teachers to be cognizant of the complexity and subtlety of relational aggression, school psychologists need to have a better understanding of their beliefs about the level of jurisdiction they should have over the different

types of behaviors that constitute the construct. Each type of relationally aggressive behavior (e.g., social exclusion, social threats to withdraw or impair a friendship, and gossip) is both individually complex and unique from other types and therefore may warrant a distinct intervention.

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' beliefs about the seriousness of relationally aggressive behaviors among female students, their likelihood and degree of intervention, and the type of intervention they would impose (if any). Three different types of relationally aggressive behaviors (social exclusion, threats to relationships, and gossip) were presented to teachers through vignettes developed for the study. The study then considered how situational and global empathy, efficacy for teaching, and degree of teacher/student emotional involvement, were related to teacher responses. Results of this study give a detailed analysis of what teachers do and do not do when faced with relationally aggressive behavior among their students.

In sum, based on the above discussion, this study proposed to answer the following research questions:

1. What type of relational aggression (RA) do teachers believe is most serious?
2. How likely and to what degree are teachers willing to intervene when witnessing RA?
3. How does teacher situational empathy for the victims of RA relate to their likelihood of intervening?
4. How does efficacy for teaching relate to a teacher's likelihood and degree of intervention in an RA situation?

5. How does a teacher's global empathy relate to his/her likelihood and degree of intervention, as well as to situational empathy for the victim in an RA situation?
6. Does a teacher-perceived positive/close relationship with students relate to the likelihood and degree of intervention, as well as to situational empathy for the victim in an RA situation?
7. Does efficacy for teaching relate to a positive/close teacher-student relationship?
8. Does global empathy in teachers relate to a positive/close teacher-student relationship?

Correlational and regression analysis statistically analyzed the relationships among variables in the study. Results from the study found that teachers tended to be most emotionally impacted by the RA vignettes that involved social exclusion. However, teachers were more likely to intervene in the situations that involved gossip when compared to social exclusion. As predicted, the more situational empathy a teacher feels for the victim of relational aggression, the more likely he/she is to intervene. Efficacy for teaching was found to be related to the degree to which a teacher would intervene in a situation that involved gossip behavior. Additionally, positive relationships were found among some dimensions of global empathy, situational empathy for the victims of RA, as well as perceived closeness to students.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, I will present a review of the literature pertaining to the major topics and constructs that are the focus of this dissertation. The review includes definitions and examples of relational aggression and an examination of its place in the larger literature on bullying. The chapter then focuses on assessment procedures for relational aggression. After presenting literature that formulates relational aggression from a developmental perspective, the review presents literature on characteristics of both aggressors and victims that leads to a discussion of interventions for this behavior. Then, the chapter reviews teachers' perceptions of and involvement in student aggression (both relational aggression and more broadly, bullying). I then present the literature on factors that may relate to teachers' response to relational aggression: degree of closeness to students, empathy, and teacher efficacy. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the dissertation pilot study followed by research questions and hypotheses.

Dimensions of Relational Aggression

Definition of Relational Aggression

Relational aggression (RA) is a calculated manipulation to injure or to control another child's ability to maintain friendships with peers (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). Typical relationally aggressive behaviors include excluding the person from one's social peer group or withdrawing a friendship, spreading malicious rumors, or manipulating or threatening a relationship. Some of these behaviors are more indirect than others; however, none of these behaviors includes physical aggression or overt name-calling (Swearer, 2008). According to Crick and Grotpeter (1995), relational aggression involves both direct (e.g., telling someone "you can't come to my sleepover unless you stop talking to that girl") and indirect acts (e.g., getting even with someone by giving them the silent treatment or by spreading rumors), and always uses a personal

relationship or friendship as the vehicle of harm. This study uses Crick and Grotpeter's (1995) definition when referring to RA.

Although Crick and Grotpeter's (1995) definition enjoys widespread use in the literature, a variety of terms describe behaviors similar to RA: indirect aggression, social aggression, and social manipulation to name just a few (Swearer, 2008). As the term implies, indirect aggression involves hostile acts that are non confrontational in nature (e.g., Bjorkqvist, Lagerspetz, & Kaukiainen, 1992). While this definition includes some covert behaviors that overlap with relationally aggressive behaviors (e.g., spreading rumors), it does not capture relationally aggressive acts that are more direct (e.g., saying "you can't come to my birthday party unless you give me your ice cream"). Further, in contrast to RA, indirect aggression can include covert behaviors that do not involve manipulation of relationships (e.g., posting an embarrassing picture on Facebook). Underwood (2003) suggested that the act of harming another person's social status and/or self-esteem demonstrates social aggression. RA differs from social aggression. For example, one could consider verbal insults (calling someone mean names) as social aggression, because insults typically damage self-esteem; however, these acts would not be considered relationally aggressive, because they do not use relationships as the agent of harm.

Function of relational aggression. Merten (1997) attempted to analyze the function of relational aggression from a sociological perspective. He explored how popular girls use covert forms of aggression to manipulate peer networks and how "meanness" is an expression of competition. Specifically, he conjectured that when a high value desire (such as social power) cannot be openly expressed (due to social conventions that girls have to be "nice"), girls use alternative forms of expression (e.g., covert aggression). He indicated that meanness provides a vehicle for girls to covertly express and experience the feelings of personal power and

superiority that make popularity so coveted: “Meanness, as an exercise of power, regulates girls’ social networks and how it is gendered through the heteronormative conventions of Popularity. (p. 189)”.

Relational Aggression as a Form of Bullying

RA is considered to be a type of psychological bullying that affects social relationships (Swearer, 2008). Similar to the discussions surrounding the definition of RA, the definition of bullying continues to be debated. However, Dan Olweus developed the most widely accepted definition of bullying in the early 1970s (Olweus, 1978, 1993). Olweus defined the act of bullying as aggressive behavior that is carried out repeatedly in an interpersonal relationship characterized by an imbalance of power. Physical bullying may include hitting, pushing, or kicking another individual. Psychological bullying most commonly includes name-calling and social exclusion (Olweus, 1978).

Prevalence of bullying. Because RA is typically covert in nature, it is difficult to have a clear estimation of the prevalence of its occurrence. Additionally, discrepancies in the definition of RA complicate our ability to know its rate of occurrence. Current literature tends to lump prevalence rates of RA with other bullying behaviors, both physical and psychological. For example, in their study, Cohn and Canter (2007) reported that 3.2 million students are the victims of bullying, while 3.7 million students participate in bullying behaviors annually. A 1997/1998 study by the World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that 19.5% of U.S. students perpetrated bullying at least three times a year, and 16.9% of students reported being a victim of bullies at least three times a year. The same study found that 8.8% of students reported bullying others at least once a week, while 8.4% reported being a victim at least once a week. Nansel and colleagues (2001) conducted the only large-scale bullying study in the United States. They

surveyed over 15,000 students in the 6th through 10th grades and found that nearly 30% were involved in bullying to a moderate or frequent extent. The researchers concluded that about 5.7 million children in the United States are involved in bullying behaviors in some way.

Assessment of Relational Aggression

Currently, there is no empirically supported measurement for RA exclusively. The assessment of RA may or may not be included in general measures of bullying or aggressive behavior. Researchers tend to measure general bullying or aggressive behavior through surveys with questions about the occurrence, rate, and type of behavior (e.g., The Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (Olweus, 1996) and The Peer Relations Questionnaire (Rigby & Slee, 1993)). Additionally, some surveys ask respondents (e.g., students, teachers, or parents) to describe what sort of action they took when the bullying incident occurred, as well as if they had any training or education in bullying prevention. The Bullying Attitude Questionnaire (Craig et al., 2000) measures teacher attitudes toward different bullying behaviors. Some researchers have presented modified vignettes taken from this questionnaire and asked respondents questions about their beliefs and actions regarding the specific scenarios (e.g., Bauman & Del Rio, 2006; Goldstein & Tisak, 2006; Yoon, 2004).

Child Development and Relational Aggression

Beyond being an indicator of dysfunction, aggression serves an important role in the development of emotion regulation in social interaction and is normative to a degree during most of early childhood (Ostrov et al., 2008). Past research has focused mostly on physical aggression (i.e., hitting and pushing), and until recently there has been little distinction between RA and other forms of aggression.

Relationally aggressive behavior is apparent during early childhood (as young as 3 years old) and continues into middle childhood and adolescence (Crick, Ostrov, & Kawabata, 2007). However, manifestations of RA may change across development. For example, behaviors such as gossip tend to occur later in development. Studies have found that more simplistic forms of RA occur in early childhood (e.g. “I won’t play with you today.”) (Ostrov, Woods, Jansen, Casas, & Crick, 2004). In early childhood, research has found that girls tend to be more relationally aggressive than boys and tend to focus this aggression on other girls (Bonica, Arnold, Fisher, Zeljo, & Yershova, 2003; Crick, Casas, & Mosher, 1997). Further, Murray-Close, Ostrov, and Crick (2007) found that RA increased for girls during middle childhood.

Research has found that RA is comparatively stable over short and long-term periods of time. Put in other words, RA tends to not be a phase, which, if ignored, will go away (Cillessen & Mayeux, 2004; Crick, 1996). Despite the fact that violence and bullying behaviors generally decrease with age (Olweus, 1993), RA may be more salient in middle childhood and adolescence because of the nature of the developmental period. Social rapport with peers takes on a new and heightened importance, and these developmental changes should be taken into consideration in understanding the covert and manipulative nature of RA. Independence from parents is a priority for adolescents as well as an increased interest in peers. To this end, social status and acceptance from peers are of high value. An important developmental task at this age is to increase levels of social competence. In order to do so, adolescents must learn to successfully resolve interpersonal conflicts. Specifically, peer relationships that involve emotional closeness and intimacy become an important part of adolescents’ social sphere. Given this importance, an attempt to hurt a friendship or social reputation would likely be perceived as a significant threat (Espelage & Holt, 2001).

Risk Factors Associated with Victimization of Relational Aggression

Victimization from aggression is one of the best known predictors of future social, psychological, behavioral, and academic problems including peer rejection, risky sexual behavior, delinquency, depression, poor school achievement, and peer victimization (Coie & Dodge, 1998). Until recently, most studies on aggression have been limited because they excluded girls as initiators of aggression, and because they focused on forms of aggression that are salient to boys, but less so to girls (e.g., overt *vs.* relational aggression).

A certain degree of exposure to these behaviors is likely to be normative for most children (and adults). The children who are targeted at extreme and persistent levels relative to what is average in a relevant same-age peer group are of concern. We consider these children to be relationally victimized (Crick, Casas, & Nelson 2002). Victimization is associated with many different types of adjustment problems, including social anxiety (Storch et al., 2003), loneliness, and depression (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Prinstein et al., 2001), as well as peer relationship difficulties (Cillessen & Mayeux 2004). Owens, Shute, and Slee (2003) found that, for a group of 15-year old girls, RA was a major concern in their daily lives at school. These students were pessimistic about the potential effectiveness of interventions because of the covert nature of the behaviors and the invisibility of the effects. Crick, Ostrov, and Werner (2006) found that the combination of being a victim of both relational and physical aggression in the third grade was the strongest predictor of future social-psychological adjustment problems in the fourth grade, as well as increases in such problems. They also found that the combination of relational and physical aggression appears to be a particularly potent risk factor for future social difficulties. A study by Crick and Bigbee (1998) found victims of RA had high levels of internalizing problems (e.g., emotional distress and loneliness). The researchers found a reciprocity between

maltreatment and internalizing tendencies (e.g., being victimized leads to feeling sad, which then makes one more vulnerable to further victimization). Relationally victimized children reported more self-restraint problems (more difficulty inhibiting anger and greater impulsivity) than did their peers. Victims of RA were also more submissive than peers.

Characteristics Associated with Relationally Aggressive Youth

Relationally aggressive youth tend to be more socially and emotionally maladjusted in comparison to peers who do not engage in RA. For example, studies have shown that frequent engagement in RA related significantly to concurrent and future peer rejection for both boys and girls (Crick, 1996; Crick, Casas, & Mosher, 1997; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Grotpeter & Crick, 1996). However, a study by Rose, Swenson, and Waller (2004) considered the differences between levels of perceived popularity of overt and relationally aggressive students in seventh and ninth grade classrooms using a peer nomination scale. Their findings indicated a strong positive relationship between perceived popularity, overt aggression, and relational aggression. This suggests that there are a sizable number of students perceived as popular who are both relationally and overtly aggressive. An example of such a profile would be a student who both verbally abuses and socially manipulates his or her peers. Such findings are important for teachers who have students who are both relationally aggressive and overtly aggressive, because they may ignore or not notice the relationally aggressive behavior and sanction only the observable overt aggression. Additionally, if a teacher or parent believes that a student is perceived as popular by his or her classmates, the teacher may be less likely to intervene because of the aggressor's social status.

Crick and Grotpeter (1995) found that relationally aggressive individuals report significantly higher levels of loneliness, depression, and decreased self-esteem compared to their

peers. Another study by Ostrov, Ries, Stauffacher, Godleski, and Mullins (2008) found that relational and physical aggression were significantly associated with concurrent and future increases in deceptive behavior (lying and manipulation). Further, a study by Cullerton et al. (2008) found that sexual abuse predicted RA behavior for girls, while maltreatment predicted physical aggression for boys and RA for girls. RA is also associated with attribution bias. That is, initiators of RA may be biased in the ways that they interpret social information (Crick, 1995; Goldstein & Tisak, 2004).

A study by Grotper and Crick (1996) hypothesized that while overtly aggressive children do have friends, they tend to be involved with other aggressive children and therefore do not place importance on the reciprocal qualities and supportive functions typically ascribed to friendships. Results of the study found that relationally aggressive children reported that they engage in highly intimate friendships (more than nonaggressive peers). The overtly aggressive children appeared to have lower levels of intimacy in friendships, more social interaction (e.g., playing basketball), and less personal disclosure.

Although RA occurs throughout the lifespan, it is most critical to study this behavior with respect to adolescent psychosocial development because of the heightened salience of peer relationships at this developmental stage (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992). Although generally well-adjusted individuals may use tactics similar to RA, research has demonstrated that engagement in a variety of these behaviors at relatively high levels is often pathological. Researchers found that some bullies had a diagnosis of Oppositional Defiant Disorder or Conduct Disorder at twice the rate of their non-aggressive peers (Kumpulainen, Rasanen, & Puura, 2001). Studies have also found that bullies lack empathy in comparison to their non-aggressive peers, and one-fifth of some subtypes of bullies had a diagnosis of depression

(Kokkinos & Panayiotou, 2004). Exposure to overt forms of aggression (hitting, pushing, name-calling) increases chances of negative outcomes such as aggression, delinquency, substance abuse, anxiety, and stress (Farrell & Sullivan, 2004; Gorman-Smith & Tolan, 1998).

Coping strategies. A study by Roecker Phelps (2001) looked at children in grades 3-6. They completed a survey designed to assess how students cope when they are the targets of peer aggression. Children expressed greater use of internalizing and distancing strategies for coping with RA and greater use of externalizing strategies for coping with overt aggression. In addition, older children reported greater use of externalizing and less use of internalizing strategies than younger children. Boys reported more overt aggression, but there was no difference in RA between girls and boys. The researcher found different types of coping mechanisms for different children. Approach coping included such responses as active problem solving (e.g., “change something so things will work out”) and seeking social support (e.g., “ask a friend for advice”); avoidance coping included such responses as distancing (e.g., “tell myself it doesn’t matter”), internalizing (e.g., worry too much about it), and externalizing (“get mad and hit or throw something”). Children may use a combination of approach and avoidance responses within a given situation. Additionally, in a study of self-reported coping across situations, Roecker, Dubow, and Donaldson (1996) found that children responded differently when coping with conflict between peers than in coping with conflict between adults. Thus, it is important to study the different characteristics of a stressor to determine what may be the most effective coping pattern.

A study by Remillard and Lamb (2005) considered the relationship between girls between whom relationally aggressive acts occurred. The researchers were also interested in how girls utilized certain coping mechanisms to deal with the effects of RA. They hypothesized that if

relationships continue after relationally aggressive acts, this would support the idea that these acts are part of girls' normative female development (i.e., "business as usual") no matter how hurtful they may be. Results indicated that 40% of the girls who participated in this study remained friends and became even closer friends with the aggressor of the incident they described. This may indicate that girls have developed coping mechanisms to deal with such aggression and work out differences within a friendship or that the preservation of a negative relationship is paramount to its loss. They found that the more hurt a girl felt after the act of RA, the more likely she was to engage in wishful thinking, blame herself, engage in tension reduction, and keep to herself. Results also indicated that *social support-seeking* is the most significant coping strategy in resolving conflict within a friendship in a way that keeps the friendship close. Girls who sought out support after being relationally aggressed against were more likely to consider the aggressor a friend and were more likely to perceive that their friend still considered them to be a friend. These findings are particularly significant for parents and teachers who may be confused as to why and how girls remain friends with their aggressors. It may be particularly perplexing to see an aggressor and her victim remain friends. Parents and teachers wonder, "should we intervene when we see RA?" The authors of this study (Remillard & Lamb, 2005) suggested that the best kind of intervention is to increase girls' awareness of available resources and to help enhance the effectiveness of seeking social support.

Research by Prinstein, Boergers, and Vernberg (2001) found that high levels of close friendship support mitigate the association between relational victimization and social-psychological maladjustment. The researchers studied a sample of 566 ethnically diverse high schools students and found that social support from close friends was the most effective way in which to buffer the effects of victimization on adjustment. These findings corroborate those of

past research that highlighted the importance of close friendships as a protective factor for youth. Thus, the researchers advise teachers and parents to support healthy alternative friendships for kids who are victims of RA. However, this strategy may be difficult when both relational victimization and social support occur within the context of the same friendship. Flaspohler, Elfstrom, Venderzee, Sink, and Birchmeier (2009) also found that support from peers seems to play a significant role in buffering the negative effects of bullying victimization. The researchers found that peer social support in tandem with teacher support provided the strongest buffer against the negative effects of bullying.

Goldstein and Tisak (2006) studied adolescents' beliefs about parental and friend jurisdiction over RA when compared to their beliefs about parental and friend jurisdiction over overt aggression. One hundred three early adolescents participated in the study. The authors individually interviewed the students at school and asked them to rate and justify parental and friend jurisdiction over three categories of behavior: (1) RA (gossip and peer exclusion), (2) physical aggression (hitting and shoving), and (3) personal behaviors. Findings indicated that the adolescents in the sample did not believe that parents and friends should regulate their relationally aggressive behavior. They did believe, however, that parents should be able to regulate physical aggression. Adolescents thought that parental jurisdiction over exclusion was less acceptable than parental authority over personal behaviors like getting a new haircut or deciding when the adolescent should go to sleep. In general, adolescents considered parental jurisdiction more acceptable over gossip than peer exclusion. This is likely because adolescents may believe that gossip is more harmful than peer exclusion. These findings are particularly important in light of the current study because they suggest how protective adolescents are of the complex dynamics of their social relationships. Adolescents may consider an act of RA to be an

autonomous choice and “up to them” (Goldstein & Tisak, 2006). Given adolescents’ beliefs about the lack of jurisdiction that parents and teachers should have over these acts of RA, we may wonder how likely it is for victims to seek help from support networks, and we may wonder if adolescent’s beliefs are similar regarding teacher intervention.

Relational Aggression and Gender

Research results on gender and RA vary. Some studies said that girls tend to engage in RA more than boys do, while others reported no gender differences (Crick & Grotpeter, 1996; Delveaux & Daniels, 2000; Peets & Kikas, 2006; Salmivalli & Kaukiainen, 2004). These discrepancies may be due to the variability of the developmental period, the method of assessment (more inconsistencies in self-report), or cultural differences. One study found that girls were just as relationally aggressive as boys, while boys were consistently found to be more overtly aggressive than girls (Crain, Finch, & Foster, 2005) When person-centered statistical approaches were used, results demonstrated that highly aggressive individuals who used primarily RA tended to be girls (Salmivalli & Kaukiainen, 2004). When within-gender patterns were examined, results showed that when aggressive, girls tended to use RA rather than physical aggression. In contrast, among boys, RA was the least likely form of aggression to be used (Osterman et al., 1998). Most important, perhaps, is that males and females interpreted RA differently. Females tended to perceive relational aggression to be more hurtful, harmful, and detrimental to their personal relationships than did males (Crick 1995; Goldstein & Tisak, 2004).

Given that, compared to boys, girls are more relationship oriented and place a higher value on intimacy (Tannen, 1990), experiences of RA pose greater threats to girls resulting in more negative outcomes. This finding is further supported from one study that found that girls were more likely to view relationally aggressive acts as more serious than physical aggression,

and boys were more likely to view physically aggressive acts as more serious than RA (Goldstein, Tisak, & Boxer, 2002). A study by Goldstein, Young, and Boyd (2008) found that victims of relational aggression in middle and high school felt less safe in school. The researchers found that males who were exposed to RA were more likely to carry a weapon to school. Females tended to witness more RA than males did. The study also found that middle school students experienced more overt aggression and RA compared to high school students.

Relational Aggression and Peer Relationships

The peer context of RA is unique, because the aggressive behaviors focus on manipulating or damaging interpersonal relationships in peer groups. For example, friends who are highly intimate and exclusive often behave more aggressively within the friendship than they do towards peers who are not close friends (Grotperter & Crick, 1996). Nevertheless, the victim of the aggression may suffer from the withdrawal of social acceptance. Crick, Casas, and Nelson (2002) eloquently touched on this point when they stated:

Relationally aggressive acts deprive children of opportunities to satisfy their social needs for closeness, acceptance and friendship in peer relationships, social psychological experiences that have been shown to be critical for children's development and well-being. (p. 98)

Crick and Dodge (1994) found that children's peer experiences (either being mistreated by peers or being the frequent recipient of peers' prosocial acts) may serve as the foundation for a social database that is used by children to evaluate themselves and others. If a child is continually victimized, this may provide "data" or feedback to him/herself or others that he/she does not fit into the group. This may be the basis for victimized children to develop internalizing problems. For example, if a child draws the conclusion, "No one is nice to me. I must be a terrible person",

this conclusion may develop into a view that he/she is deserving of mistreatment and he/she may become depressed, or display submissive behavior or problems with self-restraint, all indicators of significant developmental risk for children (Troy & Sroufe, 1987). These adjustment difficulties may exacerbate victimized children's difficulties within the peer group (e.g., being depressed may reduce the attractiveness as a fun friend).

Grottpeter and Crick's 1996 study found that, within a group of 12-year-olds, friendships of relationally aggressive children were characterized by high levels of intimacy, exclusivity/jealousy, and RA within the friendship context. In contrast, the friendships of overtly aggressive children were characterized by engaging together in aggressive acts toward those outside of the friendship. In addition, overtly aggressive children placed relatively high importance on coalitional acts and on companionship with their friends. Relationally aggressive children did not report high levels of self-disclosure to their friends, but rather that their friends self-disclosed to them. This provides support for the hypothesis that relationally aggressive children may elicit private information from their friends – or may choose friends who are relatively open with their secrets. Overtly aggressive children used aggression outside their friendships and expected their friends to engage in the same acts with them. Overtly aggressive children reported lower levels of intimacy and less personal disclosure – findings which suggest that overtly aggressive children may value companionship or simply spending time together over intimacy. For both types of aggression, it appears that status and power are the objectives.

Environmental Influence and Relational Aggression

Research has found that bullying behavior (including RA) tends to happen most frequently in school (Craig & Pepler, 2003). Minimally supervised locations such as playgrounds, hallways, restrooms, and the school bus are the most frequent locations for the behavior to occur.

Bullying behavior may also occur within a community setting. For instance, victimization may happen at home among siblings or friends, at the mall, on the internet, or around the neighborhood (e.g., playground) (Craig & Pepler, 2003).

Home life and parental influence can play a role in the development of RA. Parental conflict, coercion, and psychological control have been examined as possible links to the development of RA. Nelson and Crick (2002) found that maternal coercive control and maternal corporal punishment were significantly associated with RA for boys. For girls, paternal psychological control was positively associated with RA.

RA in sibling relationships is linked to conflicts, depressive symptoms, and low self-worth (Updegraff et al., 2005). A study by Updegraff and colleagues (2005) considered the relationship between sibling RA and other sibling relationship qualities (i.e., intimacy, negativity, and temporal involvement) and also considered these variables within a broader family dynamic. The researchers hypothesized that RA would be more strongly linked to the qualities of the sibling relationship for younger than for older siblings because younger siblings tend to model their older siblings and place greater value on the sibling relationship. They also were interested in understanding the links between RA and sibling relational quality for same- versus mixed-sex sibling pairs. They hypothesized that, given the emphasis girls place on relationships, RA may be linked to more negative relationship experiences among sisters. Last, the researchers hypothesized that parental intervention and coaching (conflict resolution) would be negatively associated with sibling RA. Additionally, the researchers expected that parental influences would be more closely linked to girls' experiences of sibling RA given the greater developmental emphasis that parents place on girls' social relationships.

The results (Updegraff et al., 2005) found that RA was a distinct dimension in sibling relationships and that it occurred within the context of less emotional support and more negativity between siblings, regardless of gender. Further, the study found consistent connections between parent-adolescent relationship qualities (i.e., warmth and involvement) and older and younger siblings' experiences of RA. When the siblings reported lower levels of warmth and acceptance from both mothers and fathers, they experienced more RA. Additionally, parental interventions (punishment) in sibling conflict (not coaching) were associated with RA, although coaching was not an effective strategy in reducing RA.

Relationally aggressive behavior can also be modeled by actors through media outlets. Coyne and Archer (2004) found that RA occurs more often on television than do acts of physical or overt aggression. The study also found that the initiators of the aggression were typically attractive females, for whom the behavior was rewarded.

Interventions

To date, there are very few school-based intervention and prevention programs specifically targeted to relationally aggressive behavior. One program, that preliminary research has found to be successful, is called PRAISE – Preventing Relational Aggression in Schools Everyday (Leff et al., 2010). The program was developed with the intention of reducing relationally aggressive behavior among middle school girls and boys in urban school settings. The manualized program is made up of 20 sessions and focuses on social-cognitive retraining (e.g., interpreting the intentions of others, understanding a range of feelings, and developing strategies for coping with anger); applying social-cognitive strategies to rumors; empathy building and perspective taking; and helping recognize that everyone plays a role in aggression reduction and friendship promotion. The program was first tested on third and fourth grade

students, with peer nominations determining the relationally and overtly aggressive girls and boys in the classes. Preliminary findings of PRAISE indicate that for all the relationally and overtly aggressive girls in the treatment classrooms, knowledge of social information processing increased. Further, levels of RA decreased. For the boys, there was no decrease in levels of overt or RA, but knowledge of social information processing did increase. This study provides preliminary evidence that PRAISE can be used successfully for girls in urban school settings and that it can, perhaps, be modified for students in other demographics.

Another school-based prevention program targeting RA is called CASS – Creating a Safe School (Nixon & Werner, 2010). The program was tested on 405 sixth grade students from five different middle schools in three geographic areas in the United States. The CASS model is a universal, whole-school, mentor-delivered (trained high school students) intervention that is designed to promote socio-emotional competence and decrease RA using a systems approach. The CASS intervention includes three major program components: raising awareness and increasing knowledge of RA, building empathy, and addressing/challenging existing normative beliefs about RA (e.g., beliefs endorsing or tolerating exclusion and rumor-spreading). Results revealed significant reductions in RA among students who reported initially high levels of involvement in RA behavior. Findings also showed a decrease in the amount of approval of RA from pre-test to post-test. Taken together, these results provide initial evidence of the effectiveness of the CASS intervention model in reducing RA among early adolescents.

At this time, many self-help books on the subject of RA exist, written for a parent and teacher audience (e.g., *Odd Girl Out* (Simmons, 2002) and *Queen Bees and Wannabes* (Wiseman, 2003)). Further, organizations (e.g., The Ophelia Project) are dedicated to supporting students, teachers, and school administrations in an effort to combat RA. Bullying research has

suggested that one of the most effective way to curtail bullying behavior is with continuous teacher training as well as the implementation of and adherence to anti-bullying policies.

Administrations that provided bullying intervention practices, individualized support and consultation, and notified teachers of problematic students had fewer incidents of bullying or aggression among their students (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 1985; Newman-Carlson & Horne, 2004; Stephenson & Smith, 1989). Shapiro, DuPaul, Bradley, and Bailey (1996) found that in-service training alone was not enough to produce lasting change in teachers and the school environment. However, their research did find that in-service training combined with follow-up consultation was related to effective change in overall school climate. Such training may be imperative for new teachers, because Bauman and Del Rio (2005) found that first-year teachers reported a lack of confidence in their ability to handle bullying situations and expressed a need for more training. Boulton (1997) found that 87% teachers surveyed (at all levels of experience) expressed a lack of confidence in their ability to handle bullying situations and wanted more training.

Howard et al. (2001) postulated that a successful intervention to combat bullying in the school setting must be comprised of the following factors: 1) acquiring the appropriate knowledge of the problem; 2) improvement of teachers' level of self-efficacy; and 3) understanding of the importance of intervention. Rose, Swenson, and Waller (2004) suggested that targeting behaviors that are rewarded by a heightened social status (e.g., social exclusion) may be one method to address group dynamics. However, it is important to keep in mind that, typically, teachers are not privy to student group dynamics and therefore may be limited in how much they can alter them. Students report that teachers are typically unwilling to get involved in relationally aggressive situations, although some studies found that students believe that teachers

should intervene (Casey-Cannon, Hayward, & Gowen, 2001). Teachers' low level of involvement may reflect a widely accepted belief that some RA behaviors are normative for adolescents.

Teachers and Relational Aggression

Teachers' Responses to Relational Aggression

The covert nature of RA is one reason why it is not readily visible to teachers and adults in the way that physical aggression is. It may account for why many educators do not see it as a serious form of aggression. Research by Yoon and Kerber (2003) considered how teachers viewed different forms of aggressive behavior (direct vs. indirect) and their level of involvement in curtailing this behavior. They found that teachers were less likely to intervene in acts of RA when compared to more overt forms of aggression. The researchers hypothesized that lack of intervention may be due to the fact that teachers may feel discomfort with the ambiguity of the behavior. Specifically, when a teacher views physical violence or even obvious verbal aggression, the need for intervention is clearer. Additionally, most schools have zero tolerance for this type of behavior and provide strict guideline for sanctions that the teacher must impose. RA is more ambiguous and harder to detect. Behavior used in RA is less likely to be expressly forbidden in school policy, and teachers are far less likely to be trained in how to manage relationally aggressive behavior in the classroom. What is most deceiving about the effects of RA is that the harm that it may cause is often unrecognizable. A teacher may not realize the pain that a student is experiencing due to social exclusion – the pain is often internalized. The researchers posed very important questions and hypotheses in light of this ambiguity: When dealing with social exclusion, is it productive to force a group to include another child? Will this demand make a

child feel accepted? A teacher may insist that students stop spreading a hurtful rumor, but by the time the teacher is aware of the rumor, the damage has already been done.

In a similar study, examining preservice teachers' responses to physical, verbal, and relational aggression in the classroom, preservice teachers proposed the least severe actions for both perpetrators and victims of RA compared to students involved in other forms of bullying. Yoon (2004) examined the attitudes of 98 elementary school teachers by giving them specific vignettes describing different bullying situations. The researcher found that teacher characteristics such as perceived seriousness of the bullying behavior, empathy for the victim, and self-efficacy for managing classroom behavior predicted teacher intervention in bullying situations. Research by Dedousis-Wallace and Shute (2009) supported these findings for acts of RA; however, they also found that teachers' knowledge of mental health issues had no impact on likelihood of teachers intervening in such behaviors.

Teachers' responses to bullying. Because all teachers are not the same, they are likely to have different responses to RA based on individual differences. Bullying research gives us some insight into such differences. For example, Smith (1984) found that male teachers were more likely to disapprove of aggression in the classroom. Rigby and Slee (1993) found that students reported that teachers were less supportive of male victims of aggression. Further, researchers found that female teachers were more likely to report higher percentages of aggressive behavior in comparison to male teachers. Finally, Kokko and Porhola's (2009) findings indicated that teachers' own experiences of victimization may enhance their ability to effectively combat bullying.

Craig and Pepler (1997) conducted naturalistic observations of bullying behavior in schools, and found that most bullying occurred without adult supervision and that school staff

was unaware of about 80% of the bullying incidents. One reason that episodes of bullying may be overlooked is because they are underreported by students (either by victims or bystanders). Studies have indicated that victims of bullying tend to not tell teachers that they are being victimized (e.g., Bentley & Li, 1995; Borg, 1998). Further, research by James et al. (2008) found that 30% of students surveyed in a study of Irish secondary students reported that they were bullied or victimized by their own teachers, while 28% of students reported bullying teachers themselves.

A lack of understanding of the effects of bullying may contribute to teachers' failure to intervene. Research by Crothers, Kolbert, and Barker (2004) found that teachers either underestimate or overestimate the rate of bullying when compared to reports from their students. Hazler and colleagues (2001) found that some teachers were unable to correctly distinguish bullying behavior from play fighting. Finally, a study conducted by Stockdale and colleagues (2002) found that students in rural schools in Illinois reported a higher prevalence of bullying than did parents or teachers.

Some teachers may not intervene in bullying situations even if they are aware of them. Various studies have reported that teachers did not consider themselves to be effective in handling bullying situations in the school setting (e.g., Boulton, 1997; Nicolaidis, Toda, & Smith, 2002). Student reports from different studies have corroborated these findings. For example, students have reported that their teachers are generally ineffective at handling bullying situations and do not feel confident that their teachers know how to stop bullying behaviors from occurring (Hazler et al., 1992). Lack of support from fellow teachers and school administration may be another reason why teachers do not effectively intervene in bullying situations. Yoon and Gilchrist (2003) found that teachers preferred school administrators' direct involvement in

disciplining difficult students, with a preference for removing students from the class and having them be punished for bullying behaviors. Such findings point to teachers' lack of self-efficacy for behavioral management in the classroom, which will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter. Several studies have found that teachers tend to not intervene in bullying situations despite being aware of them because they viewed bullying as normative behavior (e.g., Elinoff, Chafouleas, & Sassu, 2004; Goldstein, 2001; Hazler et al., 1992). Further, some teachers reported that they chose to not intervene in bullying situations in an effort to make the children tougher, or in an effort to help children resolve conflicts on their own (Goldstein, 2001). Kuppens et al. (2008) found that students in classrooms with teachers that supported RA used more relationally aggressive strategies. This suggests that the way in which the teacher runs the classroom creates conditions for a student to engage in relationally aggressive behaviors.

Teacher Attributes

Student-Teacher Relationships

In an effort to understand teachers' beliefs about RA among their students, it may be beneficial to have a deeper understanding of the nature of teachers' relationships with their own students, and their cognitive appraisals and beliefs about their students' behaviors. Respect, trust, mutual acceptance, understanding, warmth, closeness, care, and cooperation characterize positive student-teacher relationships (Good & Brophy, 2000; Krause, Bochner, & Duchesne, 2006; Larrivee, 2005; Noddings, 2005). Research has found that other factors contribute to a positive student-teacher relationship such as, the level of positive verbal involvement of the teacher (e.g., asking open-ended questions and elaborating on their comments) (Kontos & Wilcox-Herzog, 1997), and the level of positive nonverbal involvement (e.g., sitting or standing close to the student and interacting through play or through some kind of nonverbal collaboration) (Kontos &

Wilcox-Herzog, 1997). Pianta (1999) found that the success of such a relationship depends on input from both the student and the teacher. However, it is the teacher who has the true opportunity and responsibility to initiate and nurture a positive relationship with his or her students (Pianta, 1999). Children who have close relationships with their teachers have higher rates of pro-social behavior and social competence during early childhood (Copeland-Mitchell, Denham, & DeMulder, 1997). Positive teacher-student relationships have an impact on classroom management and overall student satisfaction, and such relationships tend to impact positively on a student's sense of self and may promote resiliency (Pianta & Walsh, 1996). Finally, research has shown that a positive student-teacher relationship increases the likelihood of job satisfaction for teachers (Dinham, 1995).

Alternatively, children who have conflictual relationships with early childhood teachers often have problems in multiple domains (Pianta, Steinberg, & Rollins, 1995), including academic problems in Kindergarten (Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004), and academic and achievement problems through eighth grade (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Jerome, Hamre, and Pianta (2009) conducted a longitudinal study that followed general trends in teacher-reported conflict and closeness among 878 kindergarten through sixth grade students. The researchers found that children identified as African American and those with less sensitive mothers were at greater risk for increased conflict over time with their teachers. Levels of teacher-reported closeness were lower for male children, as well as for children with lower quality home environments and lower academic achievement scores. These findings call into question how student-teacher relationships are related to teachers' beliefs about and reactions to relationally aggressive behavior among students. Would a teacher be more likely to intervene in an act of RA if he/she had a positive relationship with the victim?

Teacher Empathy

The experience of empathy (or lack thereof) may be another factor influencing how teachers view both victims and perpetrators of RA. Empathy refers to a person's ability to identify with another person's feelings from their point of view (Brunel, Dupuy-Walker, & Schleifer, 1989). As Karush (1979) stated, "empathy is a means of communication and of understanding another's mental processes and mental contents that is very different from our relational means of observation and interference (p. 63)." Empathy can be measured through a global measure that considers empathy as a dispositional trait (e.g., Davis, 1980, 1983) or as situational empathy that considers the level of empathy one might feel when faced with a specific situation. For example, Yoon (2004) presented a series of vignettes of bullying behaviors to teachers and asked how likely they were to feel sympathetic towards the victim. This question was considered a measure of situational empathy.

Nevertheless, in the field of education, the role of empathy has been under studied, despite the fact that it has been shown to be a crucial factor in the student-teacher relationship (Aspy, 1972). A study by Morgan (1984) found that teachers with high levels of empathy were able to effectively express their feelings, and showed moderate levels of self regard (neither extremely high nor extremely low). Further, the high empathy teachers did not have difficulty establishing warm interpersonal relationships.

Teacher characteristics, such as gender, may play a role in their experience of empathy. Hoffman (1977) found that female teachers tended to score higher on measures of empathy in comparison to male teachers. Further, when teachers (both male and female) scored higher on feminine sex-role attributes, they also scored higher on empathy scales (Spence & Helmreich, 1978). A teacher's level of empathy may be a factor contributing to attitudes about RA. As

discussed earlier in this chapter, studies by Yoon (2004) and Dedousis-Wallace and Shute (2009) found that higher levels of teacher empathy predicted greater likelihood of teacher intervention in bullying situations.

Teacher Self-Efficacy

The construct of self-efficacy. According to Bandura (1996), “perceived self-efficacy is defined as people’s judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performance” (p. 391). According to Bandura, there are four primary ways in which self-efficacy can be generated in an individual. First, *mastery of experiences* is considered the most effective method of gaining self-efficacy. If a person can master something, it is an indication that he or she has developed the cognitive, behavioral, and self-regulatory devices for generating and implementing appropriate ways of coping with life events (Bandura, 1995). Second, exposure to *vicarious experiences* provided by social models helps to produce and reinforce efficacy beliefs. When an individual observes someone with similar characteristics mastering a task, he or she may feel more confidence in the ability to master the task (or similar tasks) as well (Bandura, 1986, 1995). The third method, *social persuasion*, is a way of increasing an individual’s level of self-efficacy through verbal communication. Telling a person that he or she possesses the capabilities to master a given task is likely to activate and sustain better effort than if the individual has self-doubts (Bandura, 1995). Finally, *physiological responses* is the fourth way in which to generate self-efficacy. The experience of one’s heart rate, level of sweating, and fatigue all may be associated with prior failure and send signals to people that would affect their efficacy expectations in a given situation (Bandura, 1995).

Efficacy for teaching. Teacher self-efficacy refers to teachers' beliefs in their own ability to influence positive student outcomes (Soodak & Podell, 1996). According to Bandura's definition of self-efficacy, authors have developed several measures to assess teacher self-efficacy as a single dimension (e.g., Bandura, n.d.; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Numerous studies have found that general and special education teachers who see the greatest student improvement over the course of a school year, report higher levels of self-efficacy (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Brownell & Pajares, 1999; Ross, 1992). Put in other words, these teachers have faith in their ability to succeed in certain instructional activities. Research by Yoon (2004) and well as Dedousis-Wallace and Shute (2009) found that higher levels of teacher self-efficacy related to greater likelihood of intervening in bullying situations. From this research and in accordance with Bandura's definition of self-efficacy, one can infer that teachers who have higher levels of efficacy for teaching may have greater effects on students' aggressive behaviors, not simply in instructional activities.

Dissertation Pilot

In a preliminary study, Felleman Hammel and Tryon (2008) conducted a pilot study to examine middle school teachers' beliefs about the seriousness of specific acts of RA and the likelihood of intervening in each one. Furthermore, the study considered how teachers' level of efficacy for teaching, empathy towards the victim, and belief in the seriousness of the behavior related directly to specific acts of relational aggression. It was hypothesized that gossip, the relationally aggressive behavior that is most similar to overt aggression, would be viewed by teachers most negatively because of the lack of subtlety of the behavior. It was also hypothesized that teachers with higher levels of efficacy for teaching would be more likely to intervene in acts of RA.

A total of 15 teachers completed the survey. The sample was exclusively female and included four sixth, two seventh, and four eighth grade teachers. One respondent was on leave for the semester and three did not provide this information. Fourteen of the respondents considered themselves White/Caucasian/Non-Hispanic, and one respondent considered herself Hispanic/Hispanic-American/Latino. Respondents lived in a number of different states in the U.S. including, Connecticut, Michigan, Texas, and New York. New York had the state highest representation (20%). The mean age of the respondents was 46 years, ranging from 25 to 65. The mean number of years of teaching experience was 12 years, with a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 30. Participants' demographic information also indicated that their teaching experience involved different grade levels. The majority of teachers (76.9%) reported teaching in one level (elementary, middle or high school), with the rest (23.1%) having taught in more than one level (elementary and middle school, elementary and high school, middle and high school, or all three levels).

Participants were then presented a series of vignettes developed for the purposes of the pilot study, and adapted from research by Goldstein and Tisak (2006). Each vignette revolved around a different type of relationally aggressive behavior (gossip, social exclusion, and threats to relationships) and was presented in a randomized order. For each vignette, the participant indicated the level of acceptability of that behavior. Thus, the participant read the vignette and responded to the question, "Do you think this behavior is definitely acceptable, somewhat acceptable, somewhat not acceptable, or definitely not acceptable?" The participant then justified the response in a few sentences. Then the participant responded to the question, "How likely are you to intervene in this situation?" (*very likely - not likely at all*). Again, the participant justified the response. Teachers then provided a rating of their perception of the seriousness of the

behavior when compared to other student behaviors. Finally, the participants rated their level of sympathy toward the victim of the relational aggression. Each participant indicated how sympathetic she felt toward the victim in each vignette by responding to the statement, “I would be upset by the behavior and sympathetic toward the victim” on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*). This question was adapted from The Bullying Attitude Questionnaire (Craig et al., 2000). Summated scores were calculated for each construct measured (acceptability, likelihood of intervention, belief in seriousness, and level of sympathy) within each type of relational aggression (gossip, social exclusion and threats to relationships). For example, all of the “acceptability” items in each gossip vignette were summated, all of the “intervention” items in each gossip vignette were summated, and so on. Lastly, teacher’s level of efficacy for teaching was assessed, using a modified version of Woolfolk & Hoy’s (1993) Teacher Efficacy Scale. Internal consistency for this scale within the current sample was $\alpha = .77$, and found to be acceptable.

Results from the study yielded some interesting results. As predicted, teachers’ indicated that, overall, gossip was the most serious and unacceptable act of RA. This is likely because the act of gossiping is most similar to overt aggression such as name-calling or physical bullying. It can be identified and dealt with more easily when compared to a more covert behavior like social exclusion, which is typically aggressed in secret and hard to detect.

Relationships among teachers’ beliefs across the different types of relationally aggressive behaviors give us some indication of what motivates teachers to intervene. For example, teachers reported that they were more likely to intervene when they believed a behavior was serious or unacceptable. However, such relationships do not speak directly to their beliefs about the behavior itself.

Most surprising was the lack of significance yielded from the regression analysis. While it was predicted that higher levels of efficacy for teaching would predict teacher intervention as in the Yoon (2004) findings, the study did not find this to be the case.

Although this pilot study extended the literature on teachers' beliefs about specific types of RA, the research was limited by a number of factors. First, the small sample size may have prevented a more accurate portrayal of teachers' beliefs and personal attributes. Second, the majority of participants did not respond to the open-ended questions, therefore missing from the study is an understanding of what course of action teachers would take when faced with relationally aggressive behavior among their students. Finally, the study did not consider how teacher attributes (e.g., global empathy and relationships with students) beyond self-efficacy could play a role in beliefs about and interventions in acts of RA.

Rationale and Hypotheses

In an effort to train teachers to be cognizant of the complexity and subtlety of RA, school psychologists need a better understanding of their beliefs about the level of jurisdiction they should have over the different types of behaviors that constitute the construct. Each type of behavior (e.g., social exclusion, threats to relationships, and gossip) is both individually complex and unique from each other and may therefore warrant a distinct intervention.

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' beliefs about the seriousness of relationally aggressive behaviors, the level of jurisdiction they believe that they should have over the behaviors, and the type of intervention they would impose (if any). In adherence to Crick and Grotpeter's (1995) definition of RA, three different types of relationally aggressive behaviors were considered: social exclusion, threats to relationships, and gossip. Based on research cited above, the study will consider how global and situational empathy, efficacy for teaching, and

relationships with students, will relate to their responses. Results of this study will give a detailed analysis of what teachers do and do not do when faced with relationally aggressive behavior among their students. Thus, the study will examine the following research questions:

1. What type of RA do teachers believe is most serious?
2. How likely and to what degree are teachers willing to intervene when witnessing RA?
3. How does teacher situational empathy for the victims of RA relate to their likelihood of intervening?
4. How does efficacy for teaching relate to a teacher's likelihood and degree of intervention in an RA situation?
5. How does a teacher's global empathy relate to his/her likelihood and degree of intervention, as well as situational empathy for the victim in an RA situation?
6. Does a teacher-perceived positive/close relationship with students relate to the likelihood and degree of intervention, as well as situational empathy for the victim in an RA situation?
7. Does efficacy for teaching relate to a positive/close teacher-student relationship?
8. Does global empathy in teachers relate to a positive/close teacher-student relationship?

The following hypotheses were then developed based on the above research questions:

H0 1: The majority of teachers will experience the highest rates of situational empathy (be more upset) in response to the RA behavior involving gossip.

H0 2: Teachers will be more likely to intervene, as well as with a greater degree of intervention, in response to RA behavior that involves gossip.

H0 3: Higher levels of teachers' situational empathy for the RA victims will be related to their likelihood and degree of intervention.

H0 4: Higher levels of teacher efficacy will be associated with higher levels of teachers' likelihood of intervening in each type of RA as well as a greater degree of intervention.

H0 5: Higher global empathy levels will be positively related to teachers' likelihood of intervention, degree of intervention, and situational empathy in situations that involve RA.

H0 6: Teachers' positive/close relationships to students will be related to their likelihood of intervention, degree of intervention, and situational empathy in situations that involve RA.

H0 7: Higher levels of teacher efficacy will be related to more positive/close relationships with students.

H0 8: Higher levels of teachers' global empathy will be related to higher levels of positive/close relationships with students.

H0 9: Higher levels of teacher efficacy, empathy and closeness with students will be predictive of Situational Empathy Engagement in situations that involve RA

Chapter 3: Method

This chapter presents the methodology of the study that examined the relationship between factors of teachers' beliefs about the degree of jurisdiction they believe they should have over relationally aggressive behavior, and their beliefs about the seriousness of the behavior, empathy for the victims of the relationally aggressive behavior, degree of global empathy, efficacy for teaching, and degree of perceived closeness to students. The chapter begins with a description of the participants. This is followed by a description of the instruments used to measure the variables in the study. The chapter concludes with a description of the procedures and data analysis.

Participant Selection Procedure

Because the prevalence of relationally aggressive behavior is seen among early adolescents, participation in this study was open to middle school teachers, grades five through eight. Teachers were recruited through email, list-serves (teachers.net / craigslist.com) word-of-mouth, and flyers to participate in an online survey (posted at New York University, and City University of New York) (see Appendix A). It is unknown exactly how many individuals were solicited because of the grassroots nature of the selection procedure. In this study, participants were 84 current middle school teachers (fifth-eighth grade). Eighty-three percent of the participants were female. The majority of the participants, 91.7%, were Caucasian. Participants' ages ranged from 20 to 69 years old. Fifty-five percent of the participants in the study reported having a Master's Degree, while 26% reported having education beyond a Master's Degree. These statistics are somewhat in line with the national average. A 2010 U.S. Department of Education national survey indicates that in 2007-2008, 76% of public school teachers were female, and 52% had a Master's Degree or higher. In the current study, respondents lived in a

number of different states in the U.S. including, California, Colorado, Pennsylvania, and New York. New York had the highest representation (46%) (see Appendix B for demographic questionnaire). Table 1 reports descriptive statistics of participants.

Table 1

Teacher Demographics

Variable	Variable	<i>N</i>	%
Gender	Male	14	16.7
	Female	70	83.3
Ethnicity	Black	1	1.19
	Asian	3	3.57
	Hispanic	2	2.38
	White	77	91.67
	Other	1	1.19
Age	20-29	19	22.62
	30-39	19	22.62
	40-49	22	26.19
	50-59	19	22.62
	60-69	5	5.95
Highest Degree Earned	High School	1	1.19
	Bachelor's Degree	15	17.86
	Master's Degree	46	54.76
	Post Master's Degree	22	26.19
Years of Teaching Experience	1-5 years	18	21.43
	6-10 years	15	17.86
	11-15 years	25	29.76
	16-20 years	10	11.90
	20-30 years	12	14.29
Grade Currently Teaching	5th Grade	21	25.30
	6th Grade	17	20.48
	7th Grade	10	12.05
	8th Grade	8	9.64
	Teach More than 1 Grade	27	32.53

Materials and Measures

Relational aggression vignettes. Participants received six short written vignettes to read (see Appendix C). Each vignette included a short scenario involving students engaging in one of three specific types of relationally aggressive behavior: threats to relationships, social exclusion, or gossip (Crick, 1995). I developed the vignettes specifically for the purpose of this study and found that each of the vignettes was representative of RA from analyses conducted during a prior pilot study (Hammel, 2008).

Each type of relationally aggressive behavior (i.e., threats to relationships, social exclusion, and gossip) was presented across two different vignette scenarios. This resulted in six different mutually exclusive vignettes presented to the respondents.

The two vignettes reflecting social exclusion were: a) *You learn that Molly is having a birthday party and has invited all the girls in her class except for her former best friend, Rachel,* and b) *In the lunchroom you witness Jamie say to Anne “All of the seats at this table are being saved.” Anne has to find another table to sit at.*

The two vignettes reflecting threats to a relationship were: a) *You overhear Erica say to Andrea, “If you don’t do what I say, I won’t be your friend.”*, and b) *You overhear Grace say to Elizabeth, “If you really don’t like the way I treat you, maybe we shouldn’t be friends anymore.”*

Finally, the two vignettes reflecting gossip were: a) *You overhear a group of girls whispering about a classmate. When you get closer, you hear Claire (one of the girls in the group) say, “Allison told me that she doesn’t want to be friends with Beth, but don’t tell anyone.”*, and b) *You overhear Rosie tell the lunchroom table that Estelle (another classmate) told her that she has a crush on Jonathan, but he thinks that she is ugly.*

Each of the six vignettes explained above were presented in a systematic random order to each participant in the study. Table 2 gives a summary of the vignettes in the exact order they were presented in this study. For each vignette, teachers completed three questions to assess the following: a) Their level of situational empathy toward the victim of relational aggression based on the vignette, b) How likely they would be to intervene in the situation presented to them in the vignette, and c) The teachers' most likely immediate response to the vignette situation.

Summated composite scores were calculated for each construct measured (situational empathy, likelihood of intervention, and degree of intervention) within each type of relational aggression (gossip, social exclusion and threats to relationships). For example, responses to the "situational empathy" items in both "gossip" vignettes were summated, responses to the "likelihood of intervention" items in both "gossip" vignettes were summated, and so on.

Teacher situational empathy for the victim. To assess each teacher's level of situational empathy toward the victim of relational aggression, the participant indicated how she/he felt toward the victim in each vignette by responding to the statement, "I would be upset by the behavior and sympathetic toward the victim" on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Agree*) to 5 (*Strongly Disagree*). This question was reverse coded so higher scores reflected more sympathy towards the victim in the vignette situation. This question was adapted from The Bullying Attitude Questionnaire (Craig et al., 2000).

Likelihood of teacher intervention based on the vignette situation. The teacher participants indicated how likely he/she would be to intervene in each situation, by answering the question, "How likely are you to intervene in this situation?" Respondents indicated their responses on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Very Likely) to 4 (Not likely at All). This question was reverse coded so that higher scores reflected a higher likelihood of intervening.

Teachers' most likely immediate response. The participants were asked what his/her most likely immediate response would be to each scenario. Response options fell into three categories: Punishment (“*I would probably impose some kind of punishment*”), Talking (“*I would probably talk to the student(s) who initiated the behavior about why it is wrong or hurtful.*”), and No Involvement (e.g., “*I would probably not get involved in this particular situation.*”). A 3-point scale was used, with higher scores indicating a greater degree of involvement. Respondents who had previously answered that they were not likely at all to intervene in the situation were not given the opportunity to answer this question and were classified as individuals who would not get involved at all.

Seriousness of behaviors. The vignette scenarios were also presented in dyads to the participants (see Appendix D). The participants were asked to indicate which vignette within each dyad reflected the more serious of the aggressive behaviors. For the purpose of this study, the word “serious” means: something that causes a person great physical or psychological pain. The vignette dyads presented to the respondents were: threats to relationships versus gossip, gossip versus social exclusion, and social exclusion versus threats to relationships. Table 3 indicates the dyads presented to the participants by type of relationally aggressive behavior.

Table 2

Summary of Vignettes by Type of Relational Aggression

Order Vignettes were presented to Respondents	Type of Relationally Aggressive Behavior	Vignette Scenario
Vignette 1	Gossip	“Allison told me that she doesn't want to be friends with Beth, but don't tell anyone.”
Vignette 2	Threats to Relationships	You overhear Erica say to Andrea: <i>"If you don't do what I say, I won't be your friend"</i> .
Vignette 3	Gossip	You overhear Rosie tell the lunchroom table that Estelle (another classmate) told her that she has a crush on Jonathan, but he thinks that she is ugly.
Vignette 4	Social Exclusion	You learn that Molly is having a birthday party and has invited all the girls in her class except for her former best friend Rachel.
Vignette 5	Social Exclusion	In the lunchroom, you witness Jamie say to Anne: <i>"All of the seats at this table are being saved."</i> Anne has to find another table to sit at.
Vignette 6	Threats to Relationships	You overhear Gracie say to Elizabeth: <i>"If you really don't like the way that I treat you, maybe we shouldn't be friends anymore"</i> .

Table 3

Seriousness of Behavior Dyads

Type of Relationally Aggressive Behavior	Dyad Scenario
Dyad 1:	Which Scenario Depicts the More Serious Behavior?
Threats to Relationships	You overhear Erica say to Andrea: <i>"If you don't do what I say, I won't be your friend."</i>
Gossip	You overhear Rosie tell the lunchroom table that Estelle (another classmate) told her that she has a crush on Jonathan, but he thinks that she is ugly.
Dyad 2:	Which Scenario Depicts the More Serious Behavior?
Gossip	You overhear Rosie tell the lunchroom table that Estelle (another classmate) told her that she has a crush on Jonathan, but he thinks that she is ugly.
Social Exclusion	You learn that Molly is having a birthday party and has invited all the girls in her class except her former best friend, Rachel.
Dyad 3:	Which Scenario Depicts the More Serious Behavior?
Social Exclusion	You learn that Molly is having a birthday party and has invited all the girls in her class except for her former best friend, Rachel.
Threats to Relationships	You overhear Erica say to Andrea: <i>"If you don't do what I say, I won't be your friend."</i>

The Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale – Short Version (TSES; Tschannen-Moran, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). The Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) – Short Version (see Appendix E) is a 12-item self-report instrument that measured the teachers' beliefs about their own capabilities as teachers. The TSES is made up of a series of statements revolving around the teaching experience. The scale yields a Generalized Efficacy score and scores for three factors or subscales, Efficacy in Student Engagement, Efficacy in Instructional Practices, and Efficacy in Classroom Management. It employs a nine-point Likert scale with alternatives ranging from 1 (*None at All*) to 9 (*A Great Deal*) for responses. Sample items include: "How much can you do to help your students value learning?" and "How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?" Scores for the Generalized Efficacy score can range from 12 to 108 if a respondent answers all of the questions, with higher scores indicating a higher degree of efficacy for teaching.

To determine each subscale score on the TSES (Efficacy in Student Engagement, Efficacy in Instructional Practices, and Efficacy in Classroom Management), the unweighted mean for each scale is computed based on four items from the scale that tap each subscale construct (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Scores for each of the subscales in this study were summed resulting in a possible score range of 4 to 36 if a respondent answers all of the questions.

For the purposes of this study, I developed four additional questions that tapped into teachers' efficacy for managing relationally aggressive behavior as well as overt teasing in the classroom. The additional questions added to the TSES were: "How much can you help a student who is being teased by other students?", "How much do you know about the friendships among your students?", "How much influence do you have in stopping rumors that students

spread about their peers?”, and “How much can you help a student who is socially excluded by other students?”

Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) based the development of TSES on an unpublished teacher efficacy instrument developed by Bandura (no date). The authors reported two rounds of principal axis factor analyses conducted on scores from independent samples. This procedure yielded 18 items that measured three factors: Efficacy in Student Engagement, Efficacy in Instructional Practices, and Efficacy in Classroom Management. These factors explained 57% of the matrix of association variance and had interfactor correlations of $r = .59$ (215), $r = .60$ (215), and $r = .64$ (215). Score reliabilities were $\alpha = .82$, $\alpha = .81$, and $\alpha = .72$, for the Engagement scale, Instructional Practices scale, and Classroom Management scale, respectively. Convergent and discriminant validity coefficients supported the construct validity of scores.

Because the interfactor correlations in the Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy study (2001) were moderate, the authors conducted a second-order factor analysis. All three factors collapsed into one factor with pattern/structure coefficients ranging from .74 to .84. The TSES has been used by researchers to measure teacher reports of efficacy for teaching in numerous studies (e.g., Egel, 2009; Klassen et al., 2009; Yeo, Ang, Chong, Huan, & Quek, 2008).

Additionally, several authors have investigated the measure for reliability and cross-cultural applications (e.g. Knobloch & Whittington, 2002; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001, 2007; Wolters & Daugherty, 2007). Heneman, Kimball, and Milanowski (2006) evaluated the construct validity of the TSES-Short Version on a large sample of elementary, middle, and high school teachers. Results were compared to those of Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) and found to be very similar. Coefficient alphas for the subscales and the total scores were quite high,

ranging from $\alpha = .75$ to $\alpha = .90$. Klassen and colleagues (2009) measured the validity of the TSES in five different settings - the United States, Canada, Cyprus, Korea, and Singapore. Results of the study showed convincing reliability and measurement invariance across the five locations, as well as a relationship between the TSES and job satisfaction across all settings. Taken together, these studies provide evidence that the TSES is a valid construct across culturally diverse settings.

In the current study, Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency reliability coefficients were calculated for the total scales and subscales of the TSES. The 12 item TSES was found to be highly reliable ($\alpha = .88$). Reliability of the TSES subscales ranged from $\alpha = .75$ (Efficacy for Student Engagement) to $\alpha = .90$ (Efficacy for Classroom Management). These reliabilities are consistent with Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy's (2001) findings. Because four additional questions that aimed to measure teacher efficacy for managing relationally aggressive behaviors were created for this study, a second reliability analyses was conducted on the TSES total scale which included these four items ($N = 16$). Results indicated that the addition of these four items increased the TSES total scale reliability to $\alpha = .90$, therefore these items were included in the calculation of the TSES Total scale score. Because of the strength of the reliability of this new subscale, it should be considered for future research on teacher efficacy and student behavior.

The Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI; Davis, 1980, 1983). The Interpersonal Reactivity Index (see Appendix F) measured dispositional or global empathy of the participants. The measure was developed under the assumption that empathy consists of a set of different but related constructs (Davis, 1980). Put in other words, the measure assumes that empathy is multidimensional.

The instrument is made up of four, seven-item subscales. Each subscale taps into a different aspect of empathy in an individual. Perspective-taking (PT) is the first subscale. These items measure an individual's proclivity to spontaneously adopt the perspectives of other people and see things from their point of view (e.g., "I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective"). The Fantasy subscale (FS) includes items that measure the tendency of an individual to identify with characters in movies, novels, plays, and other fictional situations (e.g., "When I am reading an interesting story or novel, I imagine how I would feel if the events were happening to me"). The Empathic Concern (EC) subscale focuses on the respondent's feelings of warmth, compassion, and concern for others (e.g., "I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me"). The Personal Distress (PD) subscale measures the personal feelings of anxiety and discomfort that result from witnessing another person's negative experience (e.g., "Being in a tense emotional situation scares me"). Items are presented on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (*does not describe me well*) to 5 (*describes me very well*). Scores on each subscale may range from 0 to 28, with higher scores indicating higher levels of dispositional empathy.

The IRI was initially developed by pooling together over 50 items taken, borrowed, or adapted from other measures (e.g., Mehrabian & Epstein's (1972) Emotional Empathy Scale). However, the author wrote most of the items on the IRI for the purposes of the new instrument. Davis (1980) tested the items on over 400 participants (201 males and 251 females). The initial factor analysis on the items (for males and females separately) revealed the four major factors as discussed (PT, FS, EC, and PD) for both groups.

Davis (1980) developed a second version of the measure using 45 items from the original version. Two hundred twenty-one males and 206 females participated. Again, the author

conducted separate factor analyses on the male and female groups and specified a four-factor solution for the analysis in each sex. Again, almost identical factors emerged for both sexes, and they were the same factors that Davis found in the first test trial.

Davis (1983) produced a final 28-item version of the measure, and gave this third variation of the test to a set of new responders. Items 1, 5, 7, 12, 16, 23, and 26 make up the Fantasy subscale. The items used to create this variable have an internal reliability ($\alpha = .78$ for males) and ($\alpha = .75$ for females). Items 3, 8, 11, 15, 25, 21, and 28 make up the Perspective-Taking subscale. The items used to create this variable have an internal reliability ($\alpha = .75$ for males) and ($\alpha = .78$ for females). The Empathic Concern subscale is made up of items 2, 4, 9, 14, 18, 20, and 22. The items used to create this variable have an internal reliability ($\alpha = .72$ for males) and ($\alpha = .70$ for females). Finally, the Personal Distress subscale is made up of items 10, 6, 13, 17, 19, 24, and 27. The items used to create this variable have an internal reliability ($\alpha = .78$ for males) and ($\alpha = .78$ for females).

Test-retest reliabilities for the four subscales were measured on a sample of University of Texas undergraduates (56 males and 53 females) who completed the measure twice (Davis, 1980). The elapsed time between the first and second test administration ranged from 60 to 75 days. Satisfactory temporal stability was exhibited with correlations for males ranging from $r = .61$ (54) to $r = .79$ (54) and for females from $r = .62$ (51) to $r = .81$ (51).

Many researchers and practitioners have used the IRI for a number of different research purposes since its development 30 year ago. For example, Hatcher et al. (2005) measured global empathy in therapists to assess how well they were able to understand their clients' unique situations. The IRI has frequently been used to measure empathy in individuals with mood and anxiety disorders (e.g., Fontenelle, 2009; Seghers & Docherty, 2009; Wilbertz et al., 2010). For

instance, Wilbertz and colleagues (2010) used the IRI to assess the relationship between global empathy and chronic depression in an adult population. They found that lack of empathy existed in the daily life of early onset chronically depressed patients. Additionally, the IRI is frequently used to assess empathy when assessing and treating couples (e.g. Bakker & Demerouti, 2009; Balcom, 1996; Wachs & Cardova, 2007). In the current study, reliability of the four subscales of the IRI ranged from $\alpha = .66$ (Empathic Concern) to $\alpha = .85$ (Perspective Taking). These reliabilities are consistent with Davis's (1980) findings and were considered acceptable for this study.

The Student-Teacher Relationship Scale-Short Form (STRS-SF; Pianta, 2001). The Student -Teacher Relationship Scale- Short Form (see Appendix G) was used to measure the participants' perceptions of their relationships with their students. The STRS-SF is a 15-item teacher report measure intended to assess the quality of student-teacher relationships. The items on STRS derived from attachment theory and the attachment Q-set (Waters & Dean, 1985) in addition to a review of the literature on teacher-child relationships. The STRS has been widely used as an assessment tool of teacher-child relationships and “has been used in virtually every published study of teacher-child quality” (Lapp-Payne, 2003, p. 11).

On the STRS, the teacher rates how well each item applies to his or her relationship with a particular student on a Likert scale from one to five. A rating of “1” indicates that the item definitely does not apply and “5” indicates that the item definitely applies.

The STRS yields a Total Relationship score as well as two subscale scores: Conflict and Closeness. Conflict items are designed to obtain information about perceived negativity within the student-teacher relationship (e.g., “This child is sneaky or manipulative with me” or “This child easily becomes angry with me.”). The Closeness subscale items measure the extent to

which the student-teacher relationship is characterized as warm, affectionate and involves open communication, (e.g., “If upset, this child will seek out comfort from me,” and “This child spontaneously shares information about himself/herself.”). The Conflict subscale score is computed as the sum of items 2, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14. Scores may range from 1 to 35, with higher scores indicating more conflict between the teacher and student. The items used to create this variable had high internal reliability ($\alpha = .88$). The Closeness subscale score is computed as the sum of items 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, and 15. Scores may range from 8 to 40, with higher scores indicating more closeness between the teacher and student. The items used to create this variable had high internal reliability ($\alpha = .85$). The Total Relationship score is computed as the sum of all 15 items on the inventory. Items 2, 4, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14 (all Conflict and one Closeness items) must be reversed before the Total score is computed. Scores computed in this manner may range from 15 to 75, with higher scores indicating a more positive total relationship between the teacher and the student.

The items used to create this variable have high internal reliability ($\alpha = .87$). The STRS subscale and Total Relationship scores have been found to have adequate reliability and validity. Test-retest reliability has been measured at ($\alpha = .89$) for the total score, and at $\alpha = .88$, and $\alpha = .92$ for the Closeness and Conflict subscale scores respectively (Pianta, 2001).

The STRS has been used in a number of studies measuring the student-teacher relationship (e.g. Arbeau, Coplan, & Weeks, 2010; Gregoriadis & Tsigilis, 2009; Griggs, Gagnon, Huelsman, Kiddler-Ashley, & Ballard, 2009; Howes & Ritichie, 1999). In one study, Arbeau and colleagues (2010) considered the moderating role of teacher-child relationships in relation to shyness and socio-emotional adjustment in early elementary school. Using the STRS, the researchers found that shyness and negative student-teacher relationships were related to

socio-emotional difficulties, whereas close relationships were associated with positive student adjustment.

This study used a revised version of the STRS to measure teachers' beliefs about the degree of personal connection teachers believe they have with the majority of their students. Because the STRS was developed for teachers to report on an individual student, I modified questions for the current study so that respondents reported on the majority of their current students. For example, a question that read on the original STRS "I share an affectionate, warm relationship with this child" now reads, "I share an affectionate, warm relationship with the majority of my students." Additionally, one question was removed because it was not applicable for middle school aged students. In this study, reliability of the STRS total subscales were $\alpha = .68$ (Conflict) and $\alpha = .77$ (Closeness). The STRS Total score reliability was found to be somewhat lower than Pianta's (2001) findings ($\alpha = .78$), but adequate for the purposes of this study.

Procedure

Teachers were recruited through mass emails, list-serves, flyers, word-of-mouth, and university bulletin boards to participate in the online study (see Appendix A). All participants were directed to a confidential surveymonkey.com webpage developed specifically for the study.

All participants were directed to the same survey. First, they received a consent form (see Appendix H) followed by the questionnaires. The consent form included (a) a description of the study; (b) an assurance of confidentiality; (c) a statement indicating that their participation is voluntary, and that completing and submitting the questionnaire constitutes consent on their part to participate in the investigation; (d) an option to opt out of the survey; (e) an explanation of

why the recipient is important; (f) a promise to send copies of the results if the recipient is interested; and (g) an invitation to contact the P.I. for questions along with contact information.

Participants read and filled out the consent form before data collection and provided their initials as an indication of consent. Participants were not able to proceed to the questionnaires without giving consent. The principal investigator maintained participant confidentiality by securing all response forms in a password protected file. Data collection proceeded from January-June, 2011. All participants were offered the opportunity to have their name entered into a lottery by providing their email address once they completed the study (see Appendix I). Three names were randomly chosen once the study closed to new participants and the winners each received a \$25 gift certificate from Amazon.com.

Data Analysis

To answer the study's research questions, several procedures to analyze the data were used. SPSS Version 16 for Windows (2007), a statistical data analysis software package was used for all data analysis. In the first stages of the analyses, demographic variables and outcome measures used in this study were analyzed via descriptive statistics and frequency analyses. Next, independent *t*-tests and ANOVAs comparing teachers' beliefs about each type of RA as well as teachers TSES, IRI, and STRS scores across demographic groups are analyzed. Following, results of paired *t*-tests comparing teachers beliefs across different types of RA vignette responses are presented. These *t*-tests were run to determine if there was a mean difference in the responses to each of the questions across vignette composites.

In addition, to determine the strength and direction of relationships between teacher's beliefs (situational empathy, likelihood of intervention, and type of intervention) and type of

relational aggression, as well as relationships between TSES, IRI, and STRS score and vignette responses, correlational analyses were used.

Last, simple linear regressions were run to analyze if higher levels of self-efficacy, dispositional empathy, and positive relationships with students would be predictive of a teacher feeling upset by the behavior, and engaging the students with some kind of response (Situational Empathy Engagement). Scores from the TSES, IRI, and STRS were used as dependent variables, and a summed vignette composite score reflecting Situational Empathy Engagement (how upset the teacher felt, how likely he/she was to intervene, and type of response) were used as independent variables. A high SEE score would indicate that a teacher was upset by the situation/sympathetic towards the victim, likely to intervene, and would engage in some kind of proactive response.

Chapter4: Results

The primary aim of this study was to determine the degree to which teachers believe they should intervene in different acts of relational aggression (RA), as well as what type of intervention they would impose. Further, this study considered teachers' beliefs about the seriousness of the behaviors and their situational empathy for the victim. This study also sought to provide an understanding of how specific factors related to teachers' personality (e.g., global empathy, efficacy for teaching, and closeness to students) related to their beliefs about RA.

The chapter first presents descriptive statistics across vignette composites as well as the measures used in the study. This is followed by participants' qualitative verbatim responses to the items. Next, the chapter presents independent *t*-tests and ANOVAs comparing teachers' beliefs about each type of RA as well as teachers' TSES, IRI, and STRS scores across demographic groups. Next, results of paired *t*-tests comparing teachers' beliefs across different types of RA vignette responses are presented. Finally, the chapter examines the specific hypotheses outlined in Chapter II using correlations between the constructs of interest in this study as well as simple linear regression analyses using the composite vignette RA situational empathy engagement (SEE) scores as predictors of teachers' scores on the TSES, STRS, and IRI.

Descriptive Statistics

Vignette item level descriptives. Descriptive statistics of the items that tapped into teachers' beliefs about their degree of situational empathy for the victim, their likelihood of intervention, and the degree of intervention they would participate in based on the type of RA vignette presented to them can be viewed in Tables 4, 5, and 6 respectively. For the rating scales, higher scores indicate greater empathy, likelihood of intervention, and degree of intervention.

Overall, as can be seen in Table 4, results revealed that teachers felt the most situational empathy for the victims in the social exclusion vignettes. As can be seen in Table 5, teachers reported that they would be most likely to intervene in the gossip scenarios. Lastly, Table 6 reflects results that imply that teachers also would be most likely to impose the greatest degree of intervention when faced with the social exclusion scenarios. Readers should note that these differences are purely descriptive and were not tested for significance in this section.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics of Teachers Situational Empathy across Vignettes

Vignette	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max
Gossip	83	6.35	1.15	3.00	8.00
Threats to relationships	83	6.34	0.94	4.00	8.00
Social exclusion	83	6.88	1.06	4.00	8.00

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics of Teachers Beliefs about Their Likelihood of Intervening across Vignettes

Vignette	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max
Gossip	83	4.57	0.89	2.00	6.00
Threats to relationships	83	4.39	0.87	2.00	6.00
Social exclusion	83	4.33	0.84	2.00	6.00

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics of Teachers Attitudes about the Type of Intervention across Vignettes

Vignette	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max
Gossip	83	3.49	0.65	2.00	5.00
Threats to relationships	83	3.17	0.85	1.00	5.00
Social exclusion	83	3.52	0.80	2.00	6.00

Vignette composite SEE score descriptives. Table 7 presents descriptive statistics for the situational empathy engagement (SEE) composite scores (composite of how upset the teacher felt, how likely he/she was to intervene, and type of response) for each type of RA scenario. Consistent with the other descriptive statistics reported, teachers reported experiencing the most Situational Empathy Engagement for the social exclusion scenario.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics of Situational Empathy Engagement (SEE) Composite Scores for each Vignette

Vignette	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max
Gossip SEE	83	14.41	1.99	7.00	18.00
Threats to relationships SEE	83	13.89	2.06	8.00	18.00
Social exclusion SEE	83	14.72	2.07	9.00	18.00

TSES, IRI, and STRS descriptives. Table 8 presents descriptive statistics for the TSES (Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale), STRS (Student-Teacher Relationship Scale), and IRI (Interpersonal Reactivity Index) total and subscale scores. On the TSES, teachers scored the lowest for Efficacy for Student Relationships and highest for Efficacy for Classroom Management. On the IRI, teachers scored the highest on the Empathic Concern subscale and lowest on Personal Distress. Finally, on the STRS, teachers scored higher on the Closeness subscale. Again, readers are reminded that these are just descriptive statistics. Also, because the scales have no norms, but have been used for research purposes only, it is not possible to interpret the scores except as they relate to other variables.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics of the TSES, STRS, and IRI Total and Subscale Scores

	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max
TSES					
Total score	79	113.34	14.04	68.00	142.00
Classroom management	79	30.90	4.39	17.00	36.00
Student engagement	79	27.41	4.44	14.00	36.00
Instructional practices	79	30.61	3.97	19.00	36.00
Student relationships	79	24.43	4.65	11.00	35.00
IRI					
Fantasy	76	14.78	5.58	2.00	27.00
Perspective taking	76	20.03	4.65	5.00	28.00
Empathic concern	76	21.87	3.79	13.00	28.00
Personal distress	76	8.28	4.49	0.00	19.00
STRS					
Total score	75	57.96	5.83	45.00	69.00
Conflict	75	13.99	3.80	7.00	21.00
Closeness	75	29.95	3.23	23.00	35.00

Qualitative responses. Table 9 reveals the qualitative responses that teachers provided if they chose “Other Reasons” as an answer choice to the question, “Why would you not get involved in this particular situation?” Qualitative data provide a personalized and illustrative interpretation of events that can give insight into what the respondents are really thinking and feeling about the vignette situations.

Responses indicate that for the gossip vignettes, teachers found the situations to be “petty” or “trite” while the social exclusion vignettes were either out of a teacher’s “jurisdiction” or too commonplace to be a big deal. Finally, the threats to relationships responses indicated, that, for the most part, teachers felt that these issues should be handled within the context of the friendship with minimal teacher intervention.

Seriousness of behavior dyads. Threats to relationships, gossip, and social exclusion individual vignettes(vignettes #2, #3, and #4) were compared to each other in dyads to measure which ones teachers thought were most serious. The respondents thought that the threats to relationships scenarios were more serious than gossip (65% versus 35%, respectively) and social exclusion (65% versus 35%, respectively), and that the social exclusion scenarios were less serious than the gossip scenarios (45% versus 55%, respectively).

Table 9

Qualitative Responses to Vignettes

Vignette scenario	Teacher response
Gossip	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <i>Not a big deal. Not enough time.</i> 2) <i>This is too petty for my involvement.</i> 3) <i>A student may not want me to know someone thinks she is ugly. This was said in confidence to a friend. Students who are comfortable with me, come to me.</i> 4) <i>Seems trite.</i>
Threats to relationships	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <i>Students need to explore relationships on their own terms.</i> 2) <i>I think they are handling it maturely.</i> 3) <i>I would get involved but talk to the victim. In finding out the whole story, I may encourage her to not be friends for a time. To not let the threat dictate her friendships. Sometimes it is better to part ways.</i> 4) <i>The comment was likely an appropriate response!</i>

Table 9 (continued)

Social exclusion

- 1) *It is not appropriate for teachers to get involved in these kinds of situations. No invitations should be distributed in school.*
 - 2) *This is not uncommon, and often a misrepresentation of a real event; most of the outside school events resolve themselves between children and don't require teacher intervention.*
 - 3) *This is personal to the child and her family. It is rude, but it is outside of school time and beyond my jurisdiction.*
 - 4) *Our lunch tables are small. It is highly likely that all of the seats are being saved. Students are free to do that at lunch at our school.*
 - 5) *We allow only 7 students per table and this happens all the time.*
-

Independent Sample *t*-Tests and ANOVAs: Demographics

Differences in beliefs about RA type across demographic variables. In order to evaluate if there were any mean differences in teachers beliefs about the different vignette scenarios across demographic data, I conducted series of independent sample *t*-tests and one-way ANOVAs. Gender, ethnicity, education level, the number of years of teaching, teachers age, and the grade levels taught by teachers were evaluated. Tables 10 – 13 present the results of these analyses.

Gender. As can be seen in Table 10, a significant mean difference was found in the threats to relationships-situational empathy question between genders, with female teachers ($M = 6.44$, $SD = .90$) having higher mean scores than male teachers ($M = 5.77$, $SD = 1.01$). Further, female teachers ($M = 4.43$, $SD = .83$) indicated a significantly greater likelihood of intervening in situations of social exclusion than did male teachers ($M = 3.77$, $SD = .73$).

Table 10

Independent Sample t-Tests between Teachers Beliefs by Gender

	Gender		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>
	Male (<i>n</i> = 13)	Female (<i>n</i> = 70)		
Situational empathy				
Gossip	6.08	6.40	-0.93	81
Threats to relationships	5.77	6.44	-2.44**	81
Social exclusion	6.62	6.93	-.97	81
Likelihood of intervention				
Gossip	4.54	4.57	-.12	81
Threats to relationships	4.38	4.39	.00	81
Social exclusion	3.77	4.43	-2.69**	81
Degree of intervention				
Gossip	3.69	3.46	1.20	81
Threats to relationships	2.85	3.23	-1.50	81
Social exclusion	3.46	3.53	-.28	81

** $p < .01$.

Ethnicity. Table 11 highlights results of independent sample *t*-tests by ethnicity.

There was a significant mean difference in the gossip-situational empathy question between Caucasian/non-Caucasian, with Caucasians having more situational empathy in this situation ($M = 6.45$, $SD = 1.06$; $M = 5.29$, $SD = 1.60$, for Caucasians and non-Caucasians, respectively). In addition, there was a significant mean difference in the threats to relationships- likelihood of intervention question, with non-Caucasian individuals having higher mean scores ($M = 5.43$, $SD = .54$) than Caucasians ($M = 4.29$, $SD = .83$), suggesting that they were more likely to intervene in this situation.

Table 11

Independent Sample t-Tests between Teachers Beliefs by Ethnicity

	Ethnicity		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>
	Caucasian (<i>n</i> = 76)	Non-Caucasian (<i>n</i> = 7)		
Situational empathy				
Gossip	6.45	5.29	-2.64**	81
Threats to relationships	6.37	6.00	-1.51	9.45 [†]
Social exclusion	6.88	6.86	-.06	81
Likelihood of intervention				
Gossip	4.57	4.57	.02	81
Threats to relationships	4.29	5.43	3.55**	81
Social exclusion	4.30	4.57	.81	81
Degree of intervention				
Gossip	3.50	3.43	-.28	81
Threats to relationships	3.14	3.43	.84	81
Social exclusion	3.53	3.43	-.31	81

** $p < .01$.[†]Group variances are considered unequal based on Levine's test for equality of variances.

Education. As can be seen in Table 12, there was a significant mean difference in the social exclusion-situational empathy question, with teachers with post Bachelor degrees having more situational empathy in this situation ($M = 7.00$, $SD = 1.07$) than teachers with only a Bachelors degree ($M = 6.33$, $SD = .90$). There was also a significant mean difference in the social exclusion-degree of intervention question with post Bachelor degree educated teachers having higher mean scores ($M = 3.63$, $SD = .79$) than teachers with only Bachelor's degrees ($M = 3.00$, $SD = .66$).

Table 12

Independent Sample t-Tests between Teachers Beliefs by Education Level

	Education level		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>
	Bachelors degree (<i>n</i> = 15)	Post Bachelors degree (<i>n</i> = 68)		
Situational empathy				
Gossip	6.67	6.28	1.18	81
Threats to relationships	6.13	6.38	-.93	81
Social exclusion	6.33	7.00	-2.25*	81
Likelihood of intervention				
Gossip	4.53	4.57	-.16	81
Threats to relationships	4.40	4.38	.07	81
Social exclusion	4.07	4.38	-1.32	81
Degree of intervention				
Gossip	3.53	3.49	.26	81
Threats to relationships	3.13	3.18	-.18	81
Social exclusion	3.00	3.63	-2.89*	81

* $p < .01$.

Grade level taught. I used one-way ANOVAs to test for differences in teacher's beliefs towards each RA vignette across grade levels (i.e., 5th or 6th grade, 7th or 8th grade, and those teaching more than 1 grade).

As can be seen in Table 13, results indicated that teachers' beliefs in regard to the gossip-situational empathy question differed significantly across the three groups, $F(2, 79) = 5.18, p = .008$. Tukey post-hoc comparisons indicated that teachers who reported that they teach either 5th or 6th grades ($n = 37, M = 6.73, SD = .99$) had significantly higher situational empathy in the gossip scenario than teachers who reported that they teach 7th or 8th grades ($n = 18, M = 5.78, SD = 1.17$), $p = .010$. Comparisons between teachers who indicated that they teach more than one grade ($n = 27, M = 6.15, SD = 1.17$) and the other two groups were not statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Other variables. The demographic variables measuring number of years of teaching experience and age were also analyzed via a one-way ANOVA and an independent t -test, respectively, but these models yielded no significant results. Results from these analyses can be viewed in Appendix J, Tables J.1 – J.2.

TSES, IRI, STRS, and demographics. Additional independent sample t -tests and one-way ANOVAs were run to determine if there were mean differences in the teachers' responses on the TSES, IRI, and STRS across each of the demographic variables. Results are presented in Tables 14 - 17.

Gender. There was a significant mean difference found between males ($M = 27.91, SD = 1.70$) and females ($M = 30.30, SD = 3.30$) on the STRS Closeness scale as well as the IRI Perspective Taking scale (Males, $M = 16.00, SD = 5.39$; Females, $M = 20.78, SD = 4.12$), with females having higher mean scores on both.

Table 13

Summary of ANOVAs across Grade Level Groups (N = 82)

Vignette		SS	df	MS	F
Situational empathy					
Gossip	Between Groups	12.29	2	6.15	5.18**
	Within Groups	93.82	79	1.19	
	Total	106.11	81		
Threats to relationships	Between Groups	3.40	2	1.70	2.02
	Within Groups	66.36	79	.84	
	Total	69.76	81		
Social exclusion	Between Groups	.39	2	.19	.17
	Within Groups	91.14	79	1.15	
	Total	91.52	81		
Likelihood of intervention					
Gossip	Between Groups	.08	2	.04	.05
	Within Groups	63.99	79	.81	
	Total	64.06	81		
Threats to relationships	Between Groups	.46	2	.23	.30
	Within Groups	61.06	79	.77	
	Total	61.51	81		
Social exclusion	Between Groups	.04	2	.02	.03
	Within Groups	57.72	79	.73	
	Total	57.76	81		
Degree of intervention					
Gossip	Between Groups	.58	2	0.289	.67
	Within Groups	33.91	79	0.429	
	Total	34.49	81		
Threats to relationships	Between Groups	2.02	2	1.012	1.41
	Within Groups	56.92	79	0.72	
	Total	58.94	81		
Social exclusion	Between Groups	.55	2	0.275	0.419
	Within Groups	51.94	79	0.657	
	Total	52.49	81		

** $p < .01$.

Table 14

Independent Sample t-Tests between Teachers TSES, IRI, and STRS Scores by Gender

	Gender		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>
	Male (<i>n</i> = 13)	Female (<i>n</i> = 66)		
TSES				
Total score	111.15	113.77	-.61	77
Classroom management	29.54	31.17	-1.23	77
Student engagement	27.69	27.35	.25	77
Efficacy for instructional practices	29.00	30.92	-1.61	77
Student relationship	24.92	24.33	.42	77
IRI				
Fantasy	12.58	15.19	-1.50	74
Perspective taking	16.00	20.78	-3.51**	74
Empathic concern	20.00	22.22	-1.89	74
Personal distress	7.92	8.34	-.30	74
STRS				
Total score	55.91	58.31	-1.27	73
Conflict	14.00	13.98	.01	73
Closeness	27.91	30.30	-2.34**	25.45 [†]

** $p < .01$.[†]Group variances are considered unequal based on Levine's test for equality of variances.

Ethnicity. As can be seen in Table 15, a significant mean difference was found between Caucasians and non-Caucasians on the TSES Efficacy for Student Relationships subscale, with non-Caucasians ($M = 28.14$, $SD = 2.80$) having higher mean scores than Caucasians ($M = 24.07$, $SD = 4.65$).

Table 15

Independent Sample t-Tests between Teachers TSES, IRI, and STRS Scores by Ethnicity

	Ethnicity		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>
	Caucasian (<i>n</i> = 72)	Non – Caucasian (<i>n</i> = 7)		
TSES				
Total score	112.50	122.00	1.73	77
Classroom management	30.75	32.43	.96	77
Student engagement	27.11	30.43	1.92	77
Efficacy for instructional practices	30.57	31.00	.27	77
Student relationship	24.07	28.14	2.27*	77
IRI				
Fantasy	14.75	15.00	.11	74
Perspective taking	19.87	21.57	.92	74
Empathic concern	21.74	23.14	.93	74
Personal distress	8.51	6.00	-1.42	74
STRS				
Total score	57.72	60.29	1.11	73
Conflict	14.10	12.86	-.82	73
Closeness	29.82	31.14	1.03	73

**p* < .05.

Grade level taught. One-way ANOVAs were used to test for differences in teacher's TSES, IRI, and STRS scores across grade levels (i.e., 5th or 6th grade, 7th or 8th grade, and those teaching more than 1 grade). Results are presented in Table 16. Teachers' mean scores on the IRI Empathic Concern Scale differed significantly across the three groups, $F(2, 75) = 3.46, p = .037$. Tukey post-hoc comparisons indicates that teachers who reported that they teach either 7th or 8th grades ($n = 17, M = 23.94, SD = 2.90$) had significantly higher IRI Empathic

Concern scores than teachers who reported that they teach more than 1 grade ($n = 24$, $M = 21.04$, $SD = 3.52$), $p = .044$. Comparisons between those teachers indicating they teach either 5th or 6th grade ($n = 34$, $M = 21.56$, $SD = 4.05$) and the other two groups were not statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Age. Table 17 presents independent sample t -tests between the measures and teachers' age. Results found a significant mean difference found between age groups, with teachers 20-39 years old scoring higher on the Personal Distress scale on the IRI compared to teachers 40+ years. This may suggest that the younger teachers are more likely to feel discomfort when witnessing the pain of others.

Table 16

Summary of ANOVAs across Grade Level Groups ($N = 75$)

Vignette		<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>
TSES Total score	Between Groups	32.24	2	16.12	.08
	Within Groups	14725.71	75	196.34	
	Total	14757.95	77		
TSES Classroom management	Between Groups	7.58	2	3.79	.19
	Within Groups	1471.25	75	19.62	
	Total	1478.83	77		
TSES Student engagement	Between Groups	4.65	2	2.33	.12
	Within Groups	1488.33	75	19.84	
	Total	1492.99	77		
TSES Instructional practices	Between Groups	4.09	2	2.04	.13
	Within Groups	1205.21	75	16.07	
	Total	1209.29	77		
TSES Student relationships	Between Groups	2.40	2	1.20	.06
	Within Groups	1612.58	75	21.50	
	Total	1614.99	77		
IRI Fantasy	Between Groups	4.75	2	2.38	.07
	Within Groups	2283.91	72	31.72	
	Total	2288.67	74		
IRI Perspective taking	Between Groups	27.08	2	13.54	.61
	Within Groups	1585.59	72	22.02	
	Total	1612.67	74		
IRI Empathic concern	Between Groups	92.38	2	46.19	3.46*
	Within Groups	962.28	72	13.37	
	Total	1054.67	74		
IRI Personal distress	Between Groups	28.99	2	14.49	.71
	Within Groups	1470.16	72	20.42	
	Total	1499.15	74		
STRS Total score	Between Groups	8.40	2	4.20	.12
	Within Groups	2480.73	71	34.94	
	Total	2489.14	73		
STRS Conflict	Between Groups	10.95	2	5.48	.37
	Within Groups	1055.05	71	14.86	
	Total	1066.00	73		
STRS Closeness	Between Groups	10.51	2	5.25	.50
	Within Groups	742.63	71	10.46	
	Total	753.14	73		

* $p < .05$.

Table 17

Independent Sample t-Tests between Teachers TSES, IRI, and STRS Scores by Age

	Teachers Age		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>
	20 – 39 Yrs (<i>n</i> = 35)	40+ Yrs (<i>n</i> = 44)		
TSES				
Total score	113.66	113.09	.18	77
Classroom management	30.97	30.84	.13	77
Student engagement	27.89	27.02	.86	77
Efficacy for instructional practices	30.17	30.95	-.87	77
Student relationship	24.63	24.27	.34	77
IRI				
Fantasy	16.00	13.79	1.74	74
Perspective taking	19.44	20.50	-.99	74
Empathic concern	21.65	22.05	-.46	74
Personal distress	9.41	7.36	2.02*	74
STRS				
Total score	58.06	57.88	.13	73
Conflict [†]	13.97	14.00	-.04	72.73
Closeness	30.03	29.88	.20	73

* $p < .05$. [†]Group variances are considered unequal based on Levine's test for equality of variances.

Other variables. The demographic variables measuring number of years of teaching experience and level of education were also analyzed using a one-way ANOVA and an independent sample *t*-test, respectively, but yielded no significant results. Results from these analyses can be viewed in Appendix J, Tables J.3 – J.4.

Hypothesis #1

Situational empathy. It was hypothesized that the majority of teachers would experience the highest rates of situational empathy (i.e., be more upset) in response to the gossip vignettes than to the other vignettes. As can be seen in Table 18, there was a significant mean difference in situational empathy between the gossip and social exclusion vignettes, with teachers reporting higher levels of empathy for the social exclusion vignettes ($M = 6.88, SD = 1.06$) than for the gossip vignettes ($M = 6.35, SD = 1.15$). Further, a significant mean difference was found between social exclusion ($M = 6.88, SD = 1.06$) and threats to relationships ($M = 6.34, SD = .94$). These findings do not support Hypothesis #1.

Table 18

Paired Sample t-Tests across Vignettes for Teachers' Situational Empathy Scores (N = 83)

	Vignette 1	Vignette 2	Mean Difference	SD	<i>t</i>
Pair 1	Gossip	Threats to relationships	.01	1.08	.10
Pair 2	Gossip	Social exclusion	-.53	1.22	-3.95**
Pair 3	Threats to relationships	Social exclusion	-.54	1.09	-4.55**

** $p < .01$. Significance based on two tailed test.

Hypothesis #2

It was hypothesized that teachers would be more likely to intervene, as well as intervene to a greater degree, in response to the gossip vignettes when compared to the threats to relationships or the social exclusion vignettes.

Likelihood of intervention. As can be seen in Table 19, the mean difference in the likelihood of intervention between the gossip and social exclusion vignettes approached significance ($p = .058$), with the gossip vignettes ($M = 4.57, SD = .89$) resulting in the higher likelihood of intervention than the social exclusion vignettes ($M = 4.33, SD = .84$). There were no other significant differences. These findings partially support Hypothesis #2.

Table 19

Paired Sample t-Tests across Vignettes for Teachers' Likelihood of Intervention Scores (N = 83)

	Vignette 1	Vignette 2	Mean Difference	SD	t
Pair 1	Gossip	Threats to relationships	.18	1.13	1.46
Pair 2	Gossip	Social exclusion	.24	1.14	1.92
Pair 3	Threats to relationships	Social exclusion	.06	1.02	.54

Degree of intervention. As can be seen in Table 20, there was a significant mean difference in teachers reported degree of intervention between the gossip ($M = 3.49, SD = .65$) and threats to relationships ($M = 3.17, SD = .85$) vignettes, with the gossip vignette resulting in a higher degree of intervention. There was also a significant mean difference between the threats to relationships ($M = 3.17, SD = .85$) and social exclusion ($M = 3.52, SD = .80$) vignettes, with the social exclusion vignettes resulting in a higher degree of teacher intervention. These findings partially support Hypothesis #2 as well.

Table 20

Paired Sample t-tests across Vignettes for Teachers' Type of Intervention Scores (N = 83)

	Vignette 1	Vignette 2	Mean Difference	SD	<i>t</i>
Pair 1	Gossip	Threats to relationships	.33	.98	3.03**
Pair 2	Gossip	Social exclusion	-.02	.92	-.24
Pair 3	Threats to relationships	Social exclusion	-.35	.98	-3.25**

** $p < .01$ Significance based on two tailed test.

Hypothesis #3

It was hypothesized that higher levels of situational empathy would relate positively to the likelihood and degree of intervention. Pearson product moment correlations were used to examine the strength and direction of the relationships between teachers' beliefs (situational empathy, likelihood of intervention, and type of intervention) and the different types of relational aggression (gossip, social exclusion, and threats to relationships). Table 21 presents these findings.

For each type of RA, there were significant positive correlations between teachers' reported situational empathy and their degree of intervention. This suggests that the more situational empathy a teacher feels, the greater the degree of intervention. Additionally, a positive correlation was found between likelihood of intervention and situational empathy for the social exclusion vignette. These findings partially support Hypothesis #3.

Table 21

Correlations between Teachers' Beliefs by Vignette (N = 83)

Teachers beliefs	Vignette		
	Gossip		
	1	2	3
1. Situational empathy towards victim	--		
2. Likelihood of intervention	.14	--	
3. Type of intervention	.40**	.48**	--
Threats to relationships			
	1	2	3
1. Situational empathy towards victim	--		
2. Likelihood of intervention	.12	--	
3. Type of intervention	.49**	.60**	--
Social exclusion			
	1	2	3
1. Situational empathy towards victim	--		
2. Likelihood of intervention	.24*	--	
3. Type of intervention	.60**	.27*	--

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$.

Hypothesis #4

It was hypothesized that higher levels of teacher efficacy (TSES) on subscales and the TSES Total score would be associated with higher levels of teachers' likelihood of intervening in each type of RA as well as a greater degree of intervention. Table 22 presents correlational results that assessed these associations.

There were no significant correlations between the TSES Total or subscale scores and the likelihood of intervention or situational empathy responses for any of the vignette scenarios.

There were significant positive correlations between all the TSES scores (with the exception of

Instructional Practices) and gossip-degree of intervention scores. This suggests that higher teacher efficacy is associated with a greater likelihood of intervention in the gossip scenarios.

Further, there was a significant positive correlation between the Efficacy for Student Relationships subscale and the threats to relationships- degree of intervention question, suggesting that the greater efficacy a teacher has for understanding his/her students' relationships, the greater the degree of interventions. These findings partially support Hypothesis #4.

Table 22

Correlations between TSES Scores and Teachers' Situational Empathy, Likelihood of Intervention, and Degree of Intervention (N = 79)

	TSES scores				
	Total	Classroom management	Empathic concern	Instructional practices	Student relationships
Situational empathy					
Gossip	.11	.15	.07	-.01	.13
Threats to relationships	.10	.07	.08	.07	.10
Social exclusion	.03	.03	.05	-.08	.07
Likelihood of intervention					
Gossip	.06	.10	.14	-.07	.03
Threats to relationships	-.03	-.05	.08	-.12	-.01
Social exclusion	.09	.13	.07	-.01	.08
Degree of intervention					
Gossip	.34**	.22*	.32**	.17	.36**
Threats to relationships	.19	.10	.17	.09	.25*
Social exclusion	-.02	-.10	.01	-.08	.10

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$.

Hypothesis #5

It was hypothesized that higher empathy levels on the IRI would be positively related to teachers likelihood of intervention, degree of intervention, and situational empathy. Table 23 indicates that the only significant relationships were between the IRI Empathic Concern and Personal Distress scales and the social exclusion- situational empathy vignettes. These results indicate that teachers with higher levels of warmth, concern for others, and discomfort when witnessing the pain of others, are more likely to feel empathy for the victims of social exclusion. No other significant relationships were found for any of the vignette questions. These findings partially support Hypothesis #5.

Table 23

Correlations between IRI Scores and Teachers' Situational Empathy, Likelihood of Intervention, and Degree of Intervention (N = 76)

	IRI scores			
	Fantasy	Perspective taking	Empathic concern	Personal distress
Situational empathy				
Gossip	.19	-.12	.11	.13
Threats to relationships	.15	.13	.20	.21
Social exclusion	.22	-.04	.28*	.32**
Likelihood of intervention				
Gossip	-.02	-.04	.09	.15
Threats to relationships	.20	-.02	-.04	.10
Social exclusion	.06	.09	.02	.10
Degree of intervention				
Gossip	-.18	-.08	.14	-.02
Threats to relationships	.06	.12	.06	.09
Social exclusion	-.08	-.06	.18	.20

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$.

Hypothesis #6

It was hypothesized that for all vignette types, higher student-teacher Closeness scores on the STRS would be related positively to likelihood of intervention, degree of intervention, and situational empathy. Table 24 indicates significant positive correlations between all STRS Total and Closeness scores and the gossip-degree of intervention responses. These results indicate that perceived closeness to students is positively related to the degree a teacher will intervene in the gossip scenarios. There were no other significant findings, thus, Hypothesis #6 was partially supported.

Table 24

Correlations between STRS Scores and Teachers' Situational Empathy, Likelihood of Intervention, and Degree of Intervention (N = 75)

	STRS scores		
	Total	Conflict	Closeness
Situational empathy			
Gossip	.11	-.02	.17
Threats to relationships	.09	-.07	.08
Social exclusion	.02	-.05	-.01
Likelihood of intervention			
Gossip	.06	-.09	.00
Threats to relationships	-.22	.23	-.13
Social exclusion	.03	.06	.12
Degree of intervention			
Gossip	.34**	-.32**	.24*
Threats to relationships	.06	-.04	.06
Social exclusion	-.05	.01	-.08

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$.

Hypothesis #7

It was hypothesized that higher levels of efficacy (TSES) would be related to more positive relationships with students (STRS). Correlational analysis as indicated in Table 25 reveals significant positive relationships between the STRS Total score and all sub-scales on the TSES. Similarly, there are significant positive relationships between the STRS Closeness score and all sub-scales on the TSES. Further, the Conflict score on the STRS was found to be significantly negatively correlated with all subscale score on the TSES, indicating that the more conflict a teacher feels he/she has with his/her students, the more likely he/she is to feel ineffective as a teacher. These findings support Hypothesis #7.

Table 25

TSES and STRS Total and Subscale Correlations (N = 75)

	TSES scores				
	Total	Classroom management	Instructional practices	Empathic concern	Student relationships
STRS Total score	.61**	.51**	.45**	.52**	.50**
STRS Conflict	-.45**	-.37**	-.31**	-.43**	-.35**
STRS Closeness	.57**	.48**	.45**	.42**	.50**

** $p < .01$.

Hypothesis #8

It was hypothesized that higher levels of empathy on the IRI subscales would be related to higher Closeness and Total scores on the STRS. Table 26 indicates that a significant positive correlation was found between the IRI's Empathic Concern subscale and the STRS Total and Closeness scores. There is a significant negative correlation between the IRI's Personal Distress score and the STRS's Total and Closeness scores. These findings partially support Hypothesis #8.

Table 26

Correlations between STRS and IRI Scores (N = 75)

	IRI scores			
	Fantasy	Perspective taking	Empathic concern	Personal distress
STRS Total score	.04	.23	.25*	-.27*
STRS Conflict	.04	-.17	-.15	.21
STRS Closeness	.12	.21	.27*	-.24*

* $p < .05$.

IRI& TSES correlations. Table 27 reveals that a significant positive correlation was found between the TSES Total Score and the IRI Perspective Taking subscale score. Additionally, a significant positive correlation was found between the TSES Student Relationship score and the IRI Empathic Concern subscale score. No other significant relationships were found.

Table 27

Correlations between TSES Scores and IRI Scores (N = 76)

	IRI scores			
	Fantasy	Perspective taking	Empathic concern	Personal distress
TSES Total score	-.09	.24*	.18	-.17
TSES Classroom management	-.06	.20	.12	-.16
TSES Student engagement	.00	.18	.13	-.17
TSES Instructional practices	-.12	.20	.05	-.13
TSES Student relationships	-.11	.18	.26*	-.09

* $p < .05$.

Hypothesis #9

It was hypothesized that higher levels of teacher efficacy (TSES), empathy (IRI) and perceived closeness with students (STRS) would be predictive of Situational Empathy Engagement (SEE) for each type of RA vignette.

Regression analyses were conducted to understand if higher levels of efficacy for teaching, global empathy, and positive relationships with students would be predictive of a teacher feeling upset by the behavior, and engaging the students with some kind of response (Situational Empathy Engagement). Scores from the TSES, IRI, and STRS were used as independent variables, and summed vignette scores for each vignette scenario reflecting Situational Empathy Engagement (SEE) were used as the dependent variables.

Results are presented in Tables 28– 30 for each RA SEE composite score. For the gossip vignettes, the TSES Student Engagement score positively predicted Situational Empathy Engagement in these situations. For the social exclusion vignettes, the IRI - Personal Distress score positively predicted Situational Empathy Engagement in these situations. No significant results were found for the threats to relationships SEE scores. These results partially support Hypothesis #9.

Table 28

Summary of Simple Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Gossip SEE Scores (N = 79)

Predictor	Unstandardized		Standardized	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β		
TSES					
Total score	.03	.01	.21	1.89	.05
Classroom management	.09	.05	.21	1.89	.04
Student engagement	.09	.05	.22	1.96*	.05
Instructional practices	.01	.05	.02	.14	.00
Student relationships	.09	.04	.22	1.95	.05
IRI					
Fantasy	.01	.04	.04	.35	.00
Perspective taking	-.05	.05	-.12	-1.04	.01
Empathic concern	.08	.06	.15	1.35	.02
Personal distress	.06	.05	.14	1.23	.02
STRS					
Total score	.07	.04	.21	1.84	.04
Conflict	-.08	.06	-.17	-1.44	.03
Closeness	.11	.07	.19	1.61	.03

* $p < .05$.

Table 29

Summary of Simple Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Threats to Relationship SEE Scores (N = 76)

Predictor	Unstandardized		Standardized	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β		
TSES					
Total score	.02	.02	.12	1.05	.01
Classroom management	.02	.05	.05	.47	.00
Student engagement	.06	.05	.15	1.30	.02
Instructional practices	.01	.06	.02	.17	.00
Student relationships	.06	.05	.15	1.34	.02
IRI					
Fantasy	.06	.04	.18	1.56	.03
Perspective taking	.04	.05	.10	.86	.01
Empathic concern	.05	.06	.10	.85	.01
Personal distress	.08	.05	.18	1.56	.03
STRS					
Total score	-.01	.04	-.03	-.25	.00
Conflict	.03	.06	.05	.44	.00
Closeness	.00	.07	.01	.06	.00

Table 30

*Summary of Simple Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Social Exclusion SEE Scores
(N = 75)*

Predictor	Unstandardized		Standardized	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β		
TSES					
Total score	.01	.02	.04	.37	.00
Classroom management	.01	.05	.03	.25	.00
Student engagement	.03	.05	.06	.53	.00
Instructional practices	-.04	.06	-.08	-.69	.01
Student relationships	.05	.05	.11	.97	.01
IRI					
Fantasy	.04	.04	.10	.88	.01
Perspective taking	-.01	.05	-.01	-.11	.00
Empathic concern	.12	.06	.22	1.95	.05
Personal distress	.13	.05	.28	2.49**	.08
STRS					
Total score	.00	.04	.00	.02	.00
Conflict	.00	.06	.00	.03	.00
Closeness	.01	.07	.01	.08	.00

***p* < .01,

Table 31

Study Hypotheses Summary

Hypothesis Number	Hypothesis	Evidence For/Against	Supported/Not Supported
H01	It is expected that the majority of teachers will experience the highest rates of situational empathy in response to the gossip vignette scenarios in comparison to the threats to relationships and social exclusion vignette scenarios.	<p>Teachers reported higher levels of situational empathy for the social exclusion vignettes in comparison to the gossip vignettes.</p> <p>Teachers reported higher levels of sit. empathy for the social exclusion vignettes in comparison to the threats to relationship vignettes.</p>	Not Supported
H02	It is expected that teachers will be more likely to intervene and will be more likely to intervene to a greater degree in response to the gossip vignettes when compared to both the threats to relationships and the social exclusion vignettes.	<p>Teachers reported they were more likely to intervene in the gossip vignettes in comparison to the social exclusion vignettes.</p> <p>Teachers reported they were more likely to intervene to a greater degree in response to the gossip vignettes in comparison to the social exclusion vignettes.</p>	Partially Supported

Table 31 (Continued)

Hypothesis Number	Hypothesis	Evidence For/Against	Supported/Not Supported
		Teachers reported they were more likely to intervene to a greater degree in response to the Social Exclusion vignettes in comparison to the Threats to Relationship vignettes.	
H03	It is expected that higher levels of teacher situational empathy will be associated with teachers' likelihood and degree of intervening with each type of aggression.	<p>For each type of RA, there were significant positive correlations between teachers' reported situational empathy and their degree of intervention.</p> <p>For social exclusion, there was a significant positive correlation between situational empathy and the likelihood that a teacher would intervene.</p>	Partially Supported

Table 31 (Continued)

Hypothesis Number	Hypothesis	Evidence For/Against	Supported/Not Supported
H04	It is expected that higher levels of teachers' efficacy as measured by the TSES total and subscale scores will be associated with higher levels teachers likelihood of intervention and degree of intervention for each type of RA.	<p>There were significant positive correlations between all the TSES scores (with the exception of Instructional Practices) and the gossip - degree of intervention scores.</p> <p>There was a significant positive correlation between the TSES Efficacy for Student Relationships subscale and the threats to relationships-degree of intervention</p>	Partially Supported
H05	It is expected that higher empathy as measured by the IRI will be positively related to teachers' likelihood of intervention, degree of intervention, and situational empathy	There were significant positive correlations between the IRI Empathic Concern and Personal Distress Scales and the social exclusion-situational empathy vignettes.	Partially Supported

Table 31 (Continued)

Hypothesis Number	Hypothesis	Evidence For/Against	Supported/Not Supported
H06	It is expected that for all RA vignette types, higher student-teacher Closeness scores as measured by the STRS will be positively related to teachers' likelihood of intervention, degree of intervention, and situational empathy.	There were significant positive correlations between all STRS Total and Closeness scores and the gossip - degree of intervention responses.	Partially Supported
H07	It is expected that higher levels of teachers' efficacy as measured by the TSES Total and subscale scores will be associated with higher levels of perceived closeness to students as measured by the STRS.	<p>Significant positive correlations were found between the STRS Total score and all the sub-scales on the TSES.</p> <p>Significant positive correlations were found between the STRS Closeness score and all subscales on the TSES.</p> <p>The Conflict score on the STRS was found to be significantly negatively correlated with all subscale scores on the TSES.</p>	Supported

Table 31 (Continued)

Hypothesis Number	Hypothesis	Evidence For/Against	Supported/Not Supported
H08	It is expected that higher levels of empathy on the IRI subscales will be related to higher STRS Closeness and STRS Total scores.	<p>A significant positive correlation was found between the IRI's Empathic Concern subscale and the STRS Total and Closeness scores.</p> <p>A significant negative correlation was found between the IRI's Personal Distress score and the STRS's Total and Closeness scores.</p>	Partially Supported
H09	It is expected that higher levels of teachers' efficacy as measured by the TSES, empathy as measured by the IRI, and perceived closeness with students as measured by the STRS will be predictive of teachers Situational Empathy Engagement (SEE) for each type of RA.	<p>The TSES Student Engagement score positively predicted Situational Empathy Engagement in the gossip vignette.</p> <p>The IRI - Personal Distress score positively predicted Situational Empathy Engagement in the social exclusion vignette.</p>	Partially Supported

CHAPTER 5: Discussion

This chapter describes the findings obtained from the statistical analyses as well as educational implications of the findings, limitations of the study, and directions for future research. The current study aimed to understand what teachers believed and felt about the different types of RA, their likelihood of intervening in each act, and to what degree (if any) they believed that they should intervene in different acts of RA. Further, their beliefs about the seriousness of the behaviors were considered. The study related demographic variables (e.g. gender, race, age, and years of teaching experience) to the study variables, as well as provided an understanding of how specific factors related to teachers' personality (e.g., efficacy for teaching, global empathy, and closeness to students) related to beliefs about RA. The present study has provided a complex and nuanced picture of teachers' beliefs about RA. Some results are in agreement with the proposed hypotheses and the limited number of past studies conducted on teachers perceptions of RA, and some results shed new light on this area of research still in its infancy.

How Do Teachers Feel About Relational Aggression?

All in all, the social exclusion vignettes emerged as emotionally impactful on the teachers. There was a significant mean difference in situational empathy between the gossip and social exclusion vignettes with social exclusion eliciting higher levels of empathy. Descriptive statistics concurrently found that teachers felt the most situational empathy for victims of social exclusion. Further, SEE composite scores indicated that teachers felt the most Situational Empathy Engagement for social exclusion. These results differ somewhat from Felleman Hammel and Tryon's (2008) pilot study that found that, overall, gossip was teachers' most unacceptable act of RA. Based on the findings from the pilot study, we conjectured that belief in the unacceptability

of the behavior would translate to situational empathy. Results from the current study tell us that situational empathy (feeling upset by a certain behavior) is not necessarily related to believing that a behavior is serious or unacceptable. Put in other words, a teacher might feel extremely empathic towards the victim of social exclusion, but may also believe that the behavior is not necessarily unacceptable. Interestingly, descriptive statistics from the current study tell us that teachers felt that the threats to relationships vignettes were the most serious of the three types of RA. Exactly why teachers felt this way is unclear, but we may conjecture that the threats to relationships vignette presented in the dyads was, of the three vignettes, a clear and direct assault against the victim (*If you don't do what I say then I take something away from you*). The other two vignettes presented, while seemingly hurtful, perhaps warranted further explanation from the individuals involved.

What Do Teachers Do When Faced With Relationally Aggressive Students?

Results from the current study found a significant mean difference in the gossip and social exclusion vignettes, with teachers more likely to intervene in the gossip vignettes. These results enhance the original findings from the pilot study, which told us that gossip was considered to be the most unacceptable and serious kind of RA. The current findings suggest that gossip continues to play a role similar to overt aggression such as name-calling or physical bullying. It can be identified and dealt with more easily when compared to more socially nuanced behaviors like social exclusion or threats to relationships that involve complex relationships, outside parties (e.g. family members organizing a birthday party), and the very difficult balancing act of allowing a girl to assert her free will versus “doing the right thing.” For example, in the lunchroom scenario (Social Exclusion #4), a teacher may witness the act of social exclusion from a table and have no idea of the history of the relationship between the

students involved. Does the aggressor exclude every day? Did the victim do something equally as egregious to provoke the exclusion? The teacher is forced to examine many sides of a complicated narrative that he/she may neither be willing nor have time to parse. Further, several studies have found that teachers tend to not intervene in bullying situations despite being aware of them because they viewed bullying as normative behavior or out of the jurisdiction of the teacher (e.g., Elinoff, Chafouleas, & Sassu, 2004; Goldstein, 2001; Hazler et al., 1992). Qualitative responses to the vignette scenarios support these findings. For example, one respondent wrote, in response to the threats to relationships scenario, “students need to explore relationships on their own terms.” This would indicate an inclination towards believing that the behavior was normative and part of a natural course of development. In response to the social exclusion vignettes, one teacher wrote, “This is not uncommon, and often a misrepresentation of a real event; most of the outside school events resolve themselves between children and don’t require teacher intervention.” This kind of response supports the idea that teachers may believe that certain acts of social exclusion are outside the boundaries of school jurisdiction.

Correlational findings in the current study indicated that the more situational empathy a teacher feels for the victim, the greater the degree of teacher intervention in the situation, but not necessarily a greater likelihood of intervention. These results contradict Yoon’s (2004) findings that suggested that the more empathy a teacher feels for his/her students, the more likely he/she is to intervene in a bullying situation. Further, these results are also in contrast to the study by Dedousis-Wallace and Shute (2009), which found that teachers were more likely to intervene in acts of RA when they felt empathy for the victim.

The Role of Teacher Attributes

Teacher efficacy. Teacher self-efficacy refers to teachers' beliefs in their own ability to influence positive student outcomes (Soodak & Podell, 1996). Research by Yoon (2004) found that higher levels of efficacy for teaching related to greater likelihood of intervening in bullying situations. The current study found significant positive correlations between the TSES scores (with the exception of Instructional Practices) in relation to the gossip – degree of intervention question. This indicates that higher teacher levels of teacher efficacy in almost all areas measured is related to the degree to which teachers would intervene in the gossip scenarios (e.g., the more self-efficacy, the greater degree of intervention). These findings are interesting, particularly because they center on gossip behavior and exclude the more nuanced and complicated behaviors of social exclusion and threats to relationships. These findings are similar to those of Yoon (2004) who looked at bullying behavior (not exclusively RA), once again suggesting the similarity of gossip to overt aggression, and highlighting the relative confidence with which teachers with high levels of efficacy would intervene in a gossip situation but not necessarily intervene in the other, more socially complex types of RA.

Correlational analyses also revealed significant positive correlations between all subscales on the TSES and the STRS Total score. These findings indicate that teachers with high levels of efficacy for teaching tend to have positive relationships with their students. Such results would suggest that the more satisfied a teacher is with his/her ability to handle the demands and challenges of teaching, the more likely he/she is to be emotionally available and capable of having strong relationships with students. These results are in line with Pianta and Walsh's (1996) findings that positive teacher-student relationships have an impact on teachers' classroom management and overall student satisfaction. Research has also shown that a positive

student-teacher relationship increases the likelihood of job satisfaction for teachers (Dinham, 1995).

Teacher empathy. Empathy refers to a person's ability to identify with another person's feelings from their point of view (Brunel, Dupuy-Walker, & Schleifer, 1989). In the field of education, there is limited research on the role of empathy. A study by Morgan (1984) found that teachers with high levels of empathy were able to express their feelings effectively, and showed moderate levels of self regard (neither extremely high nor extremely low). Further, the high empathy teachers did not have difficulty establishing warm interpersonal relationships. These findings are somewhat consistent with the results from the current study. A significant relationship was found between the Empathic Concern subscale and Personal Distress subscale on the IRI and the social exclusion – situational empathy vignettes. This would suggest that teachers with high levels of warmth, concern for others, and discomfort when witnessing the pain of others, are more likely to feel empathy for the victims of social exclusion. Significant positive correlations were also found between the IRI's Empathic Concern subscale and the STRS Total and Closeness scores. This, again, supports the past literature that indicates that teachers with high levels of warmth and compassion can effectively establish strong interpersonal relationships (Pianta & Walsh, 1996).

Teacher relationships with students. Research by Pianta and Walsh (1996) found that positive teacher-student relationships had an impact on teacher classroom management and overall student satisfaction, and such relationships tend to impact positively on a student's sense of self and may promote resiliency. The current study found significant positive correlations between all the STRS Total and Closeness scores and the gossip-degree of intervention questions, suggesting that closeness to students is positively related to the degree a teacher will intervene in

the gossip scenarios. These results are somewhat surprising, as we might conjecture that the closer a teacher feels to a student, the more likely he/she might be to intervene to a greater degree in a more challenging or nuanced type of RA such as social exclusion or threats to relationships. However, what may be the case is that teachers are already so ambivalent to get involved in any kind of relationally aggressive scenario, that feeling close to a student may only allow for a teacher to intervene in the least challenging of the three types of RA.

Teacher situational empathy engagement (SEE). Most surprising was the limited significance found from the regression analysis. For the gossip vignettes, the TSES- Student Engagement score positively predicted Situational Empathy Engagement. This would suggest that, when faced with a gossip scenario, a higher level of self-efficacy for engaging students in the classroom setting predicts Situational Empathy Engagement. Further, for the social exclusion vignettes, the IRI – Personal Distress score positively predicted SEE scores.

Teacher Demographics

A number of significant mean differences were found among the demographic variables. However, because of the small and ethnically homogeneous sample size, any interpretation should be considered with caution.

Gender. In the current study, female teachers were found to have higher levels of situational empathy in regards to the threats to relationships vignettes. Further, on the IRI, there was a significant mean difference found on the Perspective Taking scores, with females having higher mean scores. Finally, on the STRS, females had higher mean scores on the STRS Closeness scores. Past research has suggested that gender may play a role in the experience of a teacher's level of empathy. Hoffman (1977) found that female teachers tended to score higher on measures of empathy in comparison to male teachers. Further, when teachers (both male and

female) scored higher on feminine sex-role attributes, they also scored higher on empathy scales (Spence & Helmreich, 1978).

Grade level taught. Teachers who reported teaching either 5th or 6th grades had significantly higher situational empathy in the gossip scenarios than teachers who reported teaching 7th or 8th grade. These results might suggest that teachers in older grades may believe that gossip is more typical or developmentally normative at that age, perhaps because it is more prevalent. Thus, because teachers in the older grades consider gossip as commonplace they may feel less empathy for the victims, when compared to lower grades where it is less typical.

Educational Implications

A better understanding of what teachers really think and might do in the face of relationally aggressive behavior will inform schools about issues they should address, in an effort to sensitize teachers to the seriousness of RA and to provide guidance and training in how to intervene appropriately. Results from the current study found that social exclusion was a consistently emotionally impactful RA type for the teachers. Teachers' situational empathy for victims of social exclusion should not be ignored, but rather translated into action. For instance, sensitivity training programs can help teachers identify victims of social exclusion, model ways in which talk to them about their feelings, and help them find productive coping mechanisms. School-wide bully prevention programs, which include relationally aggressive behaviors, should be incorporated into the school curriculum.

Research by Yoon and Kerber (2003) hypothesized that the reason teachers may be less likely to intervene in acts of RA is they may feel discomfort with the ambiguity of the behavior. The results from the current study should take this explanation into consideration, as teachers seemed be more likely to intervene in the gossip scenarios (when compared to social exclusion),

most likely because of the clear and direct nature of the gossiping behavior. It would seem that in order to intervene in a nuanced act of RA, such as threats to relationships or social exclusion, a teacher would have to gage the situation very carefully. Put in other words, teachers need to be able to detect when it is appropriate to intervene (or when students should work it out on their own), when the victim would be welcoming of the help, if an intervention would do more good than harm, and how to actually provide constructive guidance. The difficulty in this resides in the complex nature of social relationships, the limited time a teacher has to hash out the different sides of a story, and the limitations of how much help a victim would actually allow.

Hiring protocol may also be informed from the results of this study. It was found that teachers with higher levels of situational empathy were likely to intervene to a greater degree in the RA scenarios, and those with high levels of efficacy for teaching were more likely to intervene to a greater degree in the gossip scenarios. Taken together, these findings would suggest that students would benefit from teachers with high levels of empathy and self-efficacy, not only for the purpose of intervening in aggressive situations, but to develop close and meaningful relationships with students.

Finally, this study brings to light the importance of educating teachers about student mental health and warning signs of depression and anxiety. Outcomes for victims of RA are negative and include psychosocial difficulties such as social anxiety (Storch, Brassard, & Masia-Warner, 2003), loneliness, depression, and social avoidance beyond that predicted by overt victimization alone (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). While research has suggested that social support for the victim may be one of the most effective kinds of intervention for this type of aggression (Remillard & Lamb, 2005), to provide this kind of support, teachers must be savvy enough to detect victimization from RA. What is most deceiving about the effects of RA is that the harm

that it may cause is often unrecognizable. A teacher may not realize the pain that a student is experiencing because it is often internalized (Yoon & Kerber, 2003).

Limitations of the Study

Although the findings in this study make important contributions to the field of education and RA, there are several limitations to the study. First, this was the first study of its kind to look at the different types of RA. Further studies are recommended to see if the findings are consistent when the study is replicated using a new sample.

The second limitation of the study revolves around the size and diversity of the sample. On a whole, the sample was mostly Caucasian, highly educated, and female. This could partly be due to the method of recruitment process. Findings regarding these demographic variables may therefore be limited and should be interpreted with caution. Naturally, a larger sample size would increase the power of the sample and results, and future studies should therefore use a larger, more diverse sample size.

The third limitation has to do with the RA vignettes. While the vignettes were originally developed and tested as part of a small pilot study and based on past bullying research, they have not been extensively validated. Therefore, the vignettes should be tested again on a much larger sample and reviewed by experts in the field to measure validity.

The very nature of RA is complex and fluid – it is not a straightforward behavior like physical aggression or even name-calling. To assume that teachers are always privy to overhearing RA situations, such as those presented in the vignettes, is unlikely. Often, teachers may find out about RA through hearsay or suspicion. These vignettes painted a very simplistic picture of how teachers may witness acts of RA, and the behaviors presented were abbreviated versions of what typically happens in real life. Similarly, RA, by definition must be propelled by

the intention to thwart or control a relationship. This is perhaps at the heart of the difficulty in identifying behaviors as relationally aggressive: how can we know or assume a person's intentions? These vignettes were presented under the assumption that the aggressor's intentions were to hurt the victim, but this is not necessarily always the case. For instance, in the social exclusion lunchroom scenario how is a teacher to know if the exclusion was a deliberate act to hurt the victim, or if there just was not any more room at the table? These are some of the challenges teachers face when trying to navigate the complex world of student behavior and emotions. Further, so much of RA is exhibited non-verbally through body language or facial expression – a disapproving eye-roll, the turn of a shoulder, the physical exclusion of a group. Artfully presenting subtle body language through brief vignettes is extremely difficult to do, and was left out of the current study.

Another limitation of the study was the creation of the composite scores for the vignettes. Because each composite included two distinct scenarios (even though they both shared the same type of RA), it was not necessarily the purest measure of RA. By combining these into one score we may have introduced some error because of the differences in the scenarios (i.e., one scenario may have been more impactful than the other, which would lead to higher/lower composite scores).

The presentation of the “serious” dyads was flawed to some extent, as we could not adequately tap into which scenario of the three was most severe. Because the questions were presented in dyads, we could compare only two at a time, not all three. Having teachers respond with a rank ordering would have given us a better understanding of which RA type they believed was most serious.

Finally, the exclusively correlational nature of the study does not allow for us to see a fully developed picture of teachers' beliefs about RA, beyond just relationships between variables. Future studies may also consider including a path analysis on results. A path analysis would structure the results, look at what variables are more or less important, and help determine the most viable model in which the relationships between variables are best described.

Directions for Future Research

Because the field of research on RA is so new, particularly the study of the different *types* of RA, there is opportunity for many new research questions to be answered. Future research should consider students' beliefs about the different types of RA, as well as take a more in-depth look at the impact of the different types.

One looming question that this study did not seek to answer, but still remains profoundly important is: how can teachers help their students who are victims of RA? Future research must consider not just if victims of RA need help, but if they will be accepting of help, and exactly what kind of help they would welcome. Further, research should consider how truly aware teachers are of RA in the school, and if the culture and mission of a school has any effect on how teachers do or do not respond.

Future research should also explore how well teachers are able to identify mental health issues. As stated earlier, victimization from RA can lead to a number of detrimental outcomes including anxiety and depression (Storch et al., 2003). Teachers need to be aware of these symptoms, be able to identify them, and know what kind of appropriate support to give. A better understanding of teachers' knowledge in this area should be considered. Further, the current studies that looked at school-based interventions for RA (e.g., Nixon & Werner, 2010) used outside mentors, counselors, or facilitators to implement the program. Although there was a

reduction in levels of RA post-treatment, we do not know the long-term effects of the interventions. Because there was no teacher training component to these interventions, it is unclear if untrained teachers were able to maintain the effects. More research needs to be done on training and mentoring teachers to be arbiters of RA in the schools.

Finally, because the majority of the results were subject to the limitations of self-report measures, teachers may have answered the questions in a certain way to portray themselves in a socially acceptable manner. Future studies should control for possible socially desirable responding. The limited qualitative measure in the current study could not accurately capture all of the respondents' thoughts or feelings about the behaviors. A more in-depth qualitative study involving teachers' beliefs would paint a richer picture of their experience.

Conclusion

Although teachers' beliefs about RA among students have been peripherally studied, the present study was the first to explore teachers' beliefs about the different *types* of RA. This study was conceptualized with the goal of contributing to the literature on improving how school administrations can support teachers and increase their understanding of RA. By parceling out the different types of RA, the study attempted to get a deeper understanding of how teachers tend to feel and react to these behaviors. Results found that teachers had different beliefs about the different types of RA, and their likelihood of intervention varied. Further, factors such as levels of empathy, self-efficacy, and relationships with students all seemed to play a role in their beliefs or interventions.

A better understanding of what teachers really think and might do in the face of relationally aggressive behavior will inform schools about how to sensitize teachers to the seriousness of RA and to provide guidance and training in how to appropriately intervene.

Furthermore, the results from this study may inform teacher training and hiring protocol within the school system.

Appendix A

CALL FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH STUDY

Dear Colleagues and Teachers,

As many of you know, I am working on my doctorate in educational psychology. For my dissertation, I am studying the topic of teachers' beliefs about relational aggression among middle school girls. My study involves the completion of a confidential survey for teachers currently teaching 5th, 6th, 7th or 8th grade (any subject).

The survey should take only 15-20 minutes to complete and will add to the research literature on this important topic. If you choose to complete the survey, you may enter to win one of three \$25 Amazon.com gift cards.

I would be grateful if you would fill out my survey and/or forward this email to any teachers you know who may be interested. The survey can be found at the following link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/TeacherQuestions>

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact me at efelleman@gc.cuny.edu.

You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Georgiana Tryon, at gtryon@gc.cuny.edu or (212) 817-8293. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact Kay Powell, Institutional Review Board (IRB) Administrator, CUNY Graduate Center, at kpowell@gc.cuny.edu or (212) 817-7525.

Thank you so much.

Elizabeth Felleman Hammel

Appendix B

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Teacher Demographics

We would like to ask some questions about you to help interpret the results of the study. Please place a check mark in the appropriate box or write a response on the provided line. You may opt out of the study at any time.

What is your ethnicity?

- Asian, Asian-American, Pacific Islander
- Black, African-American, Non-Hispanic
- Hispanic, Hispanic-American, Latino
- American Indian, Alaskan Native
- White, Caucasian, Non-Hispanic
- Other (please specify)

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

Which degrees have you received? (please check as many as appropriate)

- G.E.D.
- High school degree
- Child care credential (e.g. NC, CDA)
- Early Childhood Certificate
- Early Childhood Diploma
- Some College
- Associate's Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Some graduate coursework
- Master's degree
- Post-Master's degree or coursework

What is your age?

- 20-29
 30-39
 40-49
 50-59
 60-69
 70+

How many years have you worked as a teacher?

- 1-5 years
 6-10 years
 11-15 years
 16-20 years
 20-30 years
 30+ years

What grade(s) do you currently teach?

- 5th grade
 6th grade
 7th grade
 8th grade

In what state in the U.S. do you currently teach?

State:

Appendix C

VIGNETTE SCENARIOS

Scenario #1

On the following pages are a number of brief scenarios. The students in each scenario could be in grades 5 through 8. Please read each one and answer as honestly as you can about the items that follow it. Remember, your responses are confidential. You may opt out of the study at any time.

Scenario #1

You overhear a group of girls whispering about a classmate. When you get closer, you hear Claire (one of the girls in the group) say: "Allison told me that she doesn't want to be friends with Beth, but don't tell anyone."

I would be upset by this behavior and sympathetic toward the victim.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

How likely are you to intervene in this situation?

- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Somewhat not likely
- Not likely at all

What would be your most likely response to this situation?

- I would probably not get involved in this particular situation.
- I would probably talk to the student(s) who initiated the behavior about why it is wrong or hurtful.
- I would probably impose some kind of punishment (e.g. call home, loss of privileges, going to the principal, etc.) on the students who initiated the behavior.

Scenario #2

Scenario #2

You overhear Erica say to Andrea: "If you don't do what I say, I won't be your friend."

I would be upset by this behavior and sympathetic toward the victim.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

How likely are you to intervene in this situation?

- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Somewhat not likely
- Not likely at all

Why would you not intervene in this situation?

- I think the students should work out the situation on their own.
- It is not appropriate for teachers to get involved in these kinds of situations.
- I would not know what to do in this situation.
- Other (please specify)

What would be your most likely response to this situation?

- I would probably not get involved in this particular situation.
- I would probably talk to the student(s) who initiated the behavior about why it is wrong or hurtful.
- I would probably impose some kind of punishment (e.g. call home, loss of privileges, going to the principal, etc.) on the students who initiated the behavior.

Scenario #3

Scenario #3

You overhear Rosie tell the lunchroom table that Estelle (another classmate) told her that she has a crush on Jonathan, but he thinks that she is ugly.

I would be upset by this behavior and sympathetic toward the victim.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

How likely are you to intervene in this situation?

- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Somewhat not likely
- Not likely at all

Why would you not intervene in this situation?

- I think the students should work out the situation on their own.
- It is not appropriate for teachers to get involved in these kinds of situations.
- I would not know what to do in this situation.
- Other (please specify)

What would be your most likely response to this situation?

- I would probably not get involved in this particular situation.
- I would probably talk to the student(s) who initiated the behavior about why it is wrong or hurtful.
- I would probably impose some kind of punishment (e.g. call home, loss of privileges, going to the principal, etc.) on the students who initiated the behavior.

Scenario #4

Scenario #4

You learn that Molly is having a birthday party and has invited all the girls in her class except for her former best friend, Rachel.

I would be upset by this behavior and sympathetic toward the victim.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

How likely are you to intervene in this situation?

- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Somewhat not likely
- Not likely at all

Why would you not intervene in this situation?

- I think the students should work out the situation on their own.
- It is not appropriate for teachers to get involved in these kinds of situations.
- I would not know what to do in this situation.
- Other (please specify)

What would be your most likely response to this situation?

- I would probably not get involved in this particular situation.
- I would probably talk to the student(s) who initiated the behavior about why it is wrong or hurtful.
- I would probably impose some kind of punishment (e.g. call home, loss of privileges, going to the principal, etc.) on the students who initiated the behavior.

Scenario #5

Scenario #5

In the lunchroom, you witness Jamie say to Anne: "All of the seats at this table are being saved." Anne has to find another table to sit at.

I would be upset by this behavior and sympathetic toward the victim.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

How likely are you to intervene in this situation?

- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Somewhat not likely
- Not likely at all

Why would you not intervene in this situation?

- I think the students should work out the situation on their own.
- It is not appropriate for teachers to get involved in these kinds of situations.
- I would not know what to do in this situation.
- Other (please specify)

What would be your most likely response to this situation?

- I would probably not get involved in this particular situation.
- I would probably talk to the student(s) who initiated the behavior about why it is wrong or hurtful.
- I would probably impose some kind of punishment (e.g. call home, loss of privileges, going to the principal, etc.) on the students who initiated the behavior.

Scenario #6

Scenario #6

You overhear Gracie say to Elizabeth: "If you really don't like the way that I treat you, maybe we shouldn't be friends anymore."

I would be upset by this behavior and sympathetic toward the victim.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

How likely are you to intervene in this situation?

- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Somewhat not likely
- Not likely at all

Why would you not intervene in this situation?

- I think the students should work out the situation on their own.
- It is not appropriate for teachers to get involved in these kinds of situations.
- I would not know what to do in this situation.
- Other (please specify)

What would be your most likely response to this situation?

- I would probably not get involved in this particular situation.
- I would probably talk to the student(s) who initiated the behavior about why it is wrong or hurtful.
- I would probably impose some kind of punishment (e.g. call home, loss of privileges, going to the principal, etc.) on the students who initiated the behavior.

Appendix D

SERIOUSNESS OF BEHAVIOR DYADS

Seriousness of Behavior

Below are the scenarios presented in pairs. For each pair, please indicate which scenario depicts the more serious behavior (serious means: causing a person physical or psychological pain).

Which scenario depicts the more serious behavior? Mark the bubble next to the scenario you think is more serious.

- You overhear Erica say to Andrea: "If you don't do what I say, I won't be your friend."
- You overhear Rosie tell the lunchroom table that Estelle (another classmate) told her that she has a crush on Jonathan, but he thinks that she is ugly.

Which scenario depicts the more serious behavior? Mark the bubble next to the scenario you think is more serious.

- You overhear Rosie tell the lunchroom table that Estelle (another classmate) told her that she has a crush on Jonathan, but he thinks that she is ugly.
- You learn that Molly is having a birthday party and has invited all the girls in her class except her former best friend, Rachel.

Which depicts the more serious behavior? Mark the bubble next to the scenario you think is more serious.

- You learn that Molly is having a birthday party and has invited all the girls in her class except for her former best friend, Rachel.
- You overhear Erica say to Andrea: "If you don't do what I say, I won't be your friend."

Appendix F

THE INTERPERSONAL REACTIVITY INDEX

The following statements inquire about your thoughts and feelings in a variety of situations. For each item, indicate how well it describes you by choosing the appropriate corresponding bubble. Please read each item carefully and answer as honestly as you can.

Please read each item and indicate how well it describes you.

	Does Not Describe Me Well (A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	Describes Me Very Well (E)
I daydream and fantasize, with some regularity about things that might happen to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the "other guy's" point of view.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sometimes I don't feel very sorry for other people when they are having problems.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I really get involved with the feelings of the characters in a novel.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In emergency situations, I feel apprehensive and ill-at-ease.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am usually objective when I watch a movie or play, and I don't often get completely caught up in it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I sometimes feel helpless when I am in the middle of a very emotional situation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Becoming extremely involved in a good book or movie is somewhat rare for me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I see someone get hurt, I tend to remain calm.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other people's misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I'm sure I'm right about something, I don't waste much time listening to other people's arguments.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
After seeing a play or movie, I have felt as though I were one of the characters.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being in a tense emotional situation scares me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes don't feel much pity for them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am usually pretty effective in dealing with emergencies.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am often quite touched by things that I see happen.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I watch a good movie, I can very easily put myself in the place of	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I tend to lose control during emergencies.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to "put myself in his shoes" for a while.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I am reading an interesting story or novel, I imagine how I would feel if the events in the story were happening to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I see someone who badly needs help in an emergency, I go to pieces.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix G

THE STUDENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIP SCALE – SHORT FORM

Relationship With Students

Please reflect on the degree to which each of the following statements applies to your relationship with the majority of the students that you currently teach. Using the scale, indicate the appropriate bubble for each item.

Please indicate to what degree each of the following statements applies to your relationship with the majority of the students you currently teach.

	Definitely does not apply	Not really	Neutral, not sure	Applies somewhat	Definitely applies
I share an affectionate, warm relationship with most of my students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My students and I always seem to be struggling with each other.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If upset, most of my students will seek comfort from me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most of my students value their relationship with me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most of my students beam with pride when I praise them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most of my students spontaneously share information about themselves.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most of my students easily become angry with me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is easy to tune into what most of my students are feeling.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most of my students remain angry or resistant after being disciplined.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dealing with my students drains my energy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When my students are in a bad mood, I know it is going to be a difficult day.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most of my students' feelings towards me can be unpredictable or can change suddenly.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Many of my students are sneaky or manipulative with me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most of my students openly share their feelings and experiences with me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix H

TEACHER CONSENT FORM

My name is Elizabeth Felleman Hammel and I am a doctoral candidate in the Ph.D. program in Educational Psychology at The Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY), and Principal Investigator of a study (IRB # 10-06-180-0135) that will examine 5th-8th grade school teachers' beliefs about certain kinds of behaviors seen among middle school girls. Participants must currently teach 5th, 6th, 7th or 8th grade in any subject. If you give permission, you will be asked to complete a demographic questionnaire, read a series of short scenarios and answer some questions about them, fill out scales about teacher self-efficacy, feelings and your relationship to your students.

Your participation should take about 20 minutes. All identifying information and survey information will remain strictly confidential. You may opt out of the survey at any time, however once an online survey has been submitted, there is no way to identify the respondent.

The risk involved in this study is minimal, no more than might be encountered in everyday life. The benefits of your participation in this study will be in the contribution made to the understanding of how teachers and school policy can address the social and emotional needs of adolescents. There are no personal benefits from your participation.

I may publish the results of the study, but any identifying characteristics will not be used in any of the publications. If you would like a copy of the study, please email me with your address and I will send you a copy in the future.

If you complete the study, and choose to provide your email address, your name will be entered into a lottery to win a \$25 gift certificate to Amazon.com. Three email addresses will be randomly chosen at the conclusion of the study.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you agree to participate in the study, please type your initials in the box provided. You may email me at efelleman@gc.cuny.edu or my supervisor, Georgiana Tryon at gtryon@gc.cuny.edu if you have any questions. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact Kay Powell, IRB administrator at (212) 817-7525, kpowell@gc.cuny.edu.

Consent

This project (IRB# 10-06-180-0135) has been explained to me and I have had an opportunity to ask any questions that I may have and those questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that my participation in this study is totally voluntary and that I may withdraw from this study at any time with no repercussions. I have read this form and I understand this project. I give consent for my participation by writing my INITIALS in the box below.

Appendix I

LOTTERY SUBMISSION

Thank you for participating in this study! If you would like to be entered in a lottery to win a \$25 gift card to Amazon.com, please enter your email address below and I will contact you at the end of the study should your name be drawn. Three names will be randomly drawn at the conclusion of the study!

Please enter your email address if you would like to be entered into the lottery to win a \$25 Amazon.com gift card.

Email Address:

Appendix J

Table J.1

Summary of ANOVAs across Number of Years of Teaching categorized by Groups (N=83)

Vignette		<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Situational empathy						
Gossip	Between Groups	.51	2	.26	.19	.828
	Within Groups	108.35	80	1.35		
	Total	108.87	82			
Threats to relationships	Between Groups	.17	2	.08	.09	.911
	Within Groups	72.39	80	.90		
	Total	72.55	82			
Social exclusion	Between Groups	.24	2	.12	.10	.902
	Within Groups	92.56	80	1.16		
	Total	92.80	82			
Likelihood of intervention						
Gossip	Between Groups	.10	2	.05	.06	.942
	Within Groups	64.29	80	.80		
	Total	64.39	82			
Threats to relationships	Between Groups	1.16	2	.58	.77	.466
	Within Groups	60.50	80	.76		
	Total	61.66	82			
Social exclusion	Between Groups	1.14	2	.57	.80	.454
	Within Groups	57.08	80	.71		
	Total	58.22	82			
Degree of intervention						
Gossip	Between Groups	.07	2	.03	.08	.926
	Within Groups	34.68	80	.43		
	Total	34.75	82			
Threats to relationships	Between Groups	1.76	2	.88	1.22	.301
	Within Groups	57.88	80	.72		
	Total	59.64	82			
Social exclusion	Between Groups	1.68	2	.84	1.31	.275
	Within Groups	51.05	80	.64		
	Total	52.72	82			

Note: Categorized Groups by Years of Experience: 1 – 10 years of teaching experience ($n = 32$),

11 – 20 years of teaching experience ($n = 35$), 21 – 30 years of teaching experience ($n = 16$).

Table J.2

Independent Sample t-Tests between Teachers Beliefs by Age

	Teachers Age		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
	20 – 39 Yrs. (<i>n</i> = 37)	40+ Years (<i>n</i> = 46)			
Situational empathy					
Gossip	6.30	6.39	-.37	81	.714
Threats to relationships	6.32	6.35	-.11	81	.911
Social exclusion	7.03	6.76	1.13	81	.260
Likelihood of intervention					
Gossip	4.76	4.41	1.78	81	.079
Threats to relationships	4.46	4.33	.69	81	.490
Social exclusion	4.38	4.28	.51	81	.610
Degree of intervention					
Gossip	3.59	3.41	1.27	81	.209
Threats to relationships	3.32	3.04	1.50	81	.137
Social exclusion	3.57	3.48	.50	81	.617

Table J.3

Summary of ANOVAs across Number of Years of Teaching categorized by Groups (N = 75)

Vignette		<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
TSES Total score	Between Groups	579.84	2	289.92	1.49	.232
	Within Groups	14793.93	76	194.66		
	Total	15373.77	78			
TSES Classroom management	Between Groups	19.48	2	9.74	.50	.610
	Within Groups	1485.71	76	19.55		
	Total	1505.19	78			
TSES Student engagement	Between Groups	27.33	2	13.66	.69	.506
	Within Groups	1509.71	76	19.86		
	Total	1537.04	78			
TSES Instructional practices	Between Groups	60.77	2	30.39	1.98	.146
	Within Groups	1168.06	76	15.37		
	Total	1228.84	78			
TSES Student relationships	Between Groups	95.71	2	47.85	2.28	.109
	Within Groups	1593.66	76	20.97		
	Total	1689.37	78			

Table J.3 (continued)

Vignette		<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
IRI Fantasy	Between Groups	20.29	2	10.14	.32	.727
	Within Groups	2314.91	73	31.71		
	Total	2335.20	75			
IRI Perspective taking	Between Groups	4.90	2	2.45	.11	.895
	Within Groups	1617.05	73	22.15		
	Total	1621.95	75			
IRI Empathic concern	Between Groups	19.64	2	9.82	.68	.511
	Within Groups	1059.05	73	14.51		
	Total	1078.68	75			
IRI Personal distress	Between Groups	17.95	2	8.97	.44	.647
	Within Groups	1495.25	73	20.48		
	Total	1513.20	75			
STRS Total score	Between Groups	141.60	2	70.80	2.15	.124
	Within Groups	2373.28	72	32.96		
	Total	2514.88	74			
STRS Conflict	Between Groups	23.66	2	11.83	.82	.446
	Within Groups	1043.33	72	14.49		
	Total	1066.99	74			
STRS Closeness	Between Groups	51.84	2	25.92	2.60	.081
	Within Groups	717.94	72	9.97		
	Total	769.79	74			

Note: Categorized Groups by Years of Experience: 1 – 10 years of teaching experience ($n = 30$),

11 – 20 years of teaching experience ($n = 34$), 21 – 30 years of teaching experience ($n = 12$).

Table J.4

Independent Sample t-Tests between Teachers Beliefs by Level of Education

	Education level		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
	Bachelors degree (<i>n</i> = 14)	Bachelors degree (<i>n</i> = 65)			
TSES					
Total score	116.93	112.57	1.05	77	.295
Classroom management	31.50	30.77	.56	77	.576
Student engagement	27.93	27.29	.48	77	.630
Efficacy for instructional practices	31.21	30.48	.63	77	.532
Student relationship	26.29	24.03	1.66	77	.100
IRI					
Fantasy	13.31	15.08	-1.04	74	.300
Perspective taking	21.08	19.81	.89	74	.375
Empathic concern	22.23	21.79	.38	74	.708
Personal distress	8.38	8.25	.09	74	.925
STRS					
Total score	57.50	58.05	-.30	73	.768
Conflict	14.50	13.89	.51	73	.613
Closeness	30.00	29.94	.06	73	.951

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