3-28-2019

The Effect of Young Adult Literature on Adolescents' Acceptance of Relational Aggression

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

THE EFFECT OF YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE ON
ADOLESCENTS' ACCEPTANCE OF RELATIONAL AGGRESSION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

by

Ilisa Joy Lieberman-Leibovich

2019

To: Dean Michael R. Heithaus
College of Arts, Sciences and Education

This dissertation, written by Ilisa Joy Lieberman-Leibovich, and entitled The Effect of Young Adult Literature on Adolescents' Acceptance of Relational Aggression, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

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Date of Defense: March 28, 2019

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Andrés G. Gil
Vice President for Research and Economic Development
and Dean of the University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2019

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my Uncle Carl who inspired me to get a doctoral degree, may he rest in peace.

Greatness is not the fruit of birth, but of effort: it is not attained but by the greatest exertions; whereas to become insignificant costs no pains: to raise a stone to the top of a mountain requires great labour, but it will descend with the utmost velocity. ~ Proverb

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This expedition was one that was not taken alone. It would be with fault to not mention the group of continuous supporters that have held strong throughout this process I have gone through to complete this work: studying, writing, learning, and growing into the educational leader that I am today. I would like to acknowledge my parents who have supported this life-long aspiration from inception to finale and have served as council and emotional support throughout the process. To my major professor, Dr. Linda Spears-Bunton who ignited this journey with a message requesting me to complete my application to the Ed.D. program. Dr. Spears-Bunton who, met me as a young undergraduate, has fostered my constant curiosity and passion for literature going above and beyond her duties as a mentor. My methods professor, Dr. Victor Malo-Juvera who spent countless hours from far through text and over the phone sharing his expertise in research methods to ensure the quality of the research in the present study. Dr. Bruce Harvey who assisted with expanding my knowledge-base through a selection of literature to support the historical background of this project that there would be a staunch background and a clear direction. Dr. Sarah Mathews and Dr. Maria Lovett who inspired and pushed me to dig deeper and search further in my interviews and explication of the qualitative data.

In addition to my family and my dissertation committee members, I owe a great deal of gratitude to Dr. Maria Garcia whose constant check-ins reminded me to remain focused. To my cousin, Lindsey Rutledge, who first mentioned relational aggression to me and my dear friend Lisa Ivanik-Geller who introduced me to bibliotherapy. Dr. Eric Dwyer's memos and assistance with red tape was invaluable. Lastly, and beyond

measure, Dr. Leonard Bliss and Dr. Linda Bliss who have assisted me through this entire process through coursework, comprehensive exams, and this final project. Without their guidance this project would not have come to fruition.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

THE EFFECT OF YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE ON

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by

Ilisa Lieberman-Leibovich

Florida International University, 2019

Miami, Florida

Professor Linda Spears-Bunton, Major Professor

Though bullying in various manifestations have been studied at length, there remains a gap in the literature regarding deterring relational aggression through the use of a literature in the classroom. The present explanatory sequential mixed methods study ($n = 141$) sought to measure the effect of a literature-based instructional unit on adolescents' acceptance of relational aggression, a type of covert bullying that leverages friendships to hurt others psychologically and emotionally. Qualitative data were collected to further develop the quantitative results. The novel utilized for the literary unit of instruction with treatment groups was, *The Misfits*, by James Howe (2011). Participants in the study were middle grades, 6th and 8th grade, English language arts students attending a charter school in a major metropolitan school district. Eight classes participated in the study and were assigned conditions of treatment ($n = 4$) or control ($n = 4$). All participants were pre-tested and post-tested using the Diverse Adolescent Relational Aggression Scale (Horton, 2010). The qualitative data includes responses from 8 of the participants' interviews and notes from class discussions written in teachers' notebooks. Discussions were within the framework of literature and literacy instruction.

The ANCOVA results showed that treatment was effective in reducing acceptance of relationally aggressive behaviors ($p < .01$). Treatment participants with a HIGH pre and posttest ($n = 4$) and LOW posttest scoring participants whose scores decreased by one standard deviation ($n = 4$) of acceptance of relational aggression as demonstrated by the Diverse Adolescent Relational Aggression Scale were selected for interviews. The interviews revealed that for a literature-based unit of instruction to be effective, the novel needs to be meaningful and relevant to the participants.

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CHAPTER I

OVERVIEW

The present study was a mixed methods investigation which sought to examine the relationship between reading young adult (YA) novels and adolescents' acceptance of socially aggressive bullying behaviors. Mixed methods is an approach characterized by answering research questions through integrating both qualitative and quantitative research methods in a single study (Creswell, 2003; 2013). Young adult literature (YAL) is a burgeoning genre that arguably began in the late 1970s (Bachelder, Kelly, Kenney, & Small, 1980; Blakemore, 2015; Cart, 2016; Nilsen, Blasingame, Donelson, & Nilsen, 2013). The debate on the inception of the YAL genre does not mean that adolescents were not reading previously. Historically, adolescents, unconcerned with categorizations, have been reading and enjoying literature written for adults for centuries (Stevenson, 2011). Separate from adult novels, to attract younger readers, YAL explores profound social and personal subjects specifically relevant to adolescents (Cart, 2008; 2016). Another distinction from adult fiction which mainly focuses on adult characters, the main characters in YAL are young adults. Socially aggressive bullying, termed relational aggression (RA), is a type of non-physical bullying where the bully uses relationships, generally friendships, to victimize others (Horton, 2010). Relational aggression, sometimes referred to as indirect, or social aggression (Archer & Coyne, 2005), is characterized by demeaning victims through gossiping, threats of ending friendships, and isolating the victim (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). The present study explored adolescents' alterations in their level of acceptance of relational aggression after attaining updated knowledge of the negative effects of RA on victims. For the purposes of the present

study, acceptance of relational aggression denotes a continuum regarding adolescents' beliefs on whether aggressive behaviors are socially acceptable or not. Participants in the study acquired information on RA through a thematic unit of study which used a YA novel as an anchor text. The novel used in the present study was *The Misfits* written by James Howe (2011). *The Misfits* was specifically chosen as the text presents adolescent characters who experience RA for different reasons. For example, Addie is ridiculed for being a tall, headstrong female character and JoDan is marginalized for being an effeminate male who questions his sexuality. Bullying, including RA, includes distinct aggressive behaviors which are markedly different than isolated negative experiences.

The integral distinction between being bullying and other forms of aggression is the extent and consistency of the behavior. As of 2015, all 50 of the United States have passed anti-bullying legislation. These laws define bullying as involving specifically chosen victims who are repeatedly abused (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2017). Scholars have amended the definition to include victims of bullying usually have a lower social status than their aggressors (Smith & Morita, 1999). In the present study, social status, often mentioned as popularity (Mayeux, 2013), signifies the comparative regard and admiration given to certain individuals by their peers (Sauder, Lynn, & Podolny, 2012). Research on relational aggression portrays adolescents as using a combination of prosocial and aggressive behaviors in peer interactions to gain and maintain popularity (Adler & Adler, 1995; Hawley, 2007; Rodkin & Roisman, 2010). More succinctly, victims are usually adolescents who are less popular in the social context of the school they attend. Accordingly, the currency of social status is friendships and being well-known throughout a social community. In the context of the

present study, the social community is the school. Relationally aggressive behaviors challenge the customary understanding of bullying.

Traditionally, bullying has been thought of only in terms of overt actions involving physical altercations. Along these lines, a common perception regarding perpetrators of bullying is they are violent individuals who abuse their victims through brute force (e.g., kicking, pushing, and punching). The present study seeks to subvert the generalized notion of bullying and bring recognition to RA, a non-physical form of aggression. Another misconception about bullying is that the aggressive behavior only impacts the antagonists and their victims. Studies suggest that witnesses to bullying may suffer from anxiety, depression, and feelings of guilt even when they do not actively participate (Stopbullying.gov, 2017). Additionally, the overall climate of the educational center deteriorates as students begin to feel unsafe. In some circumstances, the psychological distress of being a bystander sets the path of a downward spiral beginning with truancy leading to failing out or dropping out of school (Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Björkovist, Österman, & Kaukiainen, 1996; Salmivalli, 2010). To better understand bullying in schools, the United States Department of Education and the United States Secret Service collaborated on the Safe School Initiative (SSI; Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy, Borum, & Modelski, 2002).

The SSI involved the combined efforts of law enforcement, behavioral science, and mental health professionals. The goal of the SSI was to determine possible motives behind perpetrators' violent behaviors in schools. The conclusion of the SSI heavily suggested the influence of teachers on bullying behaviors inside and outside the classroom (Vossekuil et al., 2002). Teachers are highly influential individuals in

students' lives (Mishna, Scarcello, Pepler, & Weiner, 2005). Several studies on bullying, intimate that teachers, seen as dominant figures in the classroom, may be able to diffuse situations prior to their culmination (Mishna et al., 2005; Naylor, Helen, Cossin, de Bettencourt, & Lemme, 2006; Vossekuil et al., 2002). Teachers' direct access to students affords them the opportunity to be a deterrent to bullying in the classroom (Labadie, Lieberman, Vargo, & Flamion, 2012). Teachers are able to discourage bullying, "by talking about it, building a safe school environment, and creating a community-wide bullying prevention strategy," (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018). Studies also indicate beliefs acquired through reading fictional narratives are integrated into real-world knowledge (Appel & Richter, 2007). Additionally, literature can be a powerful educational tool when utilized by teachers as means to model examples of prosocial behaviors for students (Hayakawa, 1939; Rosenblatt, 1938; 1968). Using literature to infuse prosocial behaviors is the totem of character education (Solomon, Watson, & Battishich 2001). Therefore, experiencing bullying through a unit of literary instructional may assist teens in reevaluating their views on maladaptive behaviors (Malo-Juvera, 2012). The power of the text's influence heightens teachers' ability to mold students' thoughts and behaviors. Consequently, informing teachers of the increasing prevalence and danger of bullying (through professional development classes, workshops, faculty meetings, etc.) is imperative (Jenson, Dieterich, Brisson, Bender, & Powell, 2010; Mishna et al., 2005). The importance of teachers' trainings on bullying is especially poignant considering the extreme violence associated with bullying in schools has increased from year to year (Kimball, n.d.; Jenson et al., 2010). Reader-Response Criticism asserts literature's ability to challenge people's beliefs, attitudes, and behavior.

The concept of literature as a source of power melds with the current movement in literacy instruction. The Common Core Standards Initiative (2016) for English Language Arts (ELA) extols the importance of reading complex texts to strengthen reading acumen and expand students' knowledge base. Under the Common Core Standards, ELA students are required to read and analyze engaging texts. The document states:

To build a foundation for college and career readiness, students must read widely and deeply from among a broad range of high-quality, increasingly challenging literary and informational texts. Students also acquire the habits of reading independently and closely, which are essential to their future success. (National Governors Association, 2010)

These restructured national standards clearly demark a movement away from superficial readings towards deeper, more meaningful textual analysis. The Common Core State Standards Initiative (2016) calls for a curriculum that engages students in intense exploration of texts. Critical thinking and problem-solving skills are required to be applied to the texts. Clearly, the latest instructional practice in ELA instruction lends itself as a vehicle through which students' thoughts, feelings, and beliefs can be discussed and understood on a deeper level than ever before required.

Bullying

The definition of bullying is generally understood to involve repeated anti-social behaviors, over time, to cause harm to a less-powerful individual (Beldean-Galea, Jurcau, & Tigan, 2010; Olweus, 1978; 2001; 2003). Acts of bullying in today's schools are far from being the product of modernization and technological advancements as they are sometimes attributed to. Over a century ago, Thomas Hughes chronicled his personal

accounts in the first bullying themed novel, *Tom Brown's School Days* (1857). In the past, bullying was considered a natural part of growing up (American Psychological Association, 2004; Minogue, 2002). Adults rarely intervened and offered little in the way of advice on how to resolve such altercations (Minogue, 2002). Robert Cormier (1974) renewed a focus on bullying in his novel, *The Chocolate War*. Cormier made readers question, "How could he extol the strength of a bully, allowing him to prevail while some school administrators and peers stood silent?" (Baer & Glasgow, 2008, p.79). Within the last 15 years bullying has mutated into rampant physical, verbal, and relational violence amongst adolescents. Around the globe, the rise of school shootings and adolescents' deaths by suicide have emphasized the immediacy for finding effective bullying preventions (Carney & Merrell, 2011). Indeed, the overall bullying statistics are shocking.

Research indicates, as many as 77% of children and young adolescents experience being bullied in some form during their schooling (Hoover, Oliver, & Hazler, 1992). A meta-analysis of 80 studies reported 35% of students are involved in bullying as the bully (Modecki, Minchin, Harbaugh, Guerra, & Runions, 2014). Vaillancourt et al. (2010) found that 23% of students experience bullying as victims. Over half of these victims stay home from school on a usual basis to avoid being bullied and are at an increased risk for dropping out of high school (Cornel, Gregory, Huang, & Fan, 2013). A common misconception is that technological advancements such as texting and social media have spearheaded the proliferation of bullying across the United States. Considering how popular these online platforms are, it is easy to see how widespread the miscalculation of the level of their involvement with bullying has become.

Acts of bullying are not bred through texts or social media outlets. An extensive survey conducted by Patchin (2016) for the Cyberbullying Research Center indicates a small percentage (3%) of adolescents reported cyberbullying as the sole method being employed to torment them. It can therefore be implied, bullying through technological advancements of any means (texting or social media outlets) is executed in conjunction with face-to-face bullying. The survey further reveals, most adolescents are bullied by someone known to them, in person, and found, 44% of bullying occurs at school and is face-to-face only (no communication through technology). Such statistics indicate to effectively combat maladaptive behaviors and promote the wellness of adolescents' mental and physical health, bullying cannot be viewed as a technology-based problem. When considering how to prevent the continuous spread of bullying in schools, it is important to recognize what aspects of these aggressive behaviors are the most detrimental to the mental and physical well-being of our adolescents. A form of bullying documented as causing extreme negative consequences to victims' psychological health is relational aggression.

Relational Aggression Defined

The term relational aggression has been attributed to the work of psychologists, Nicki Rae Crick and Jennifer K. Grotpeter (1995). Relational aggression (RA) has been defined as: methodical covert behavior that specifically targets others to cause emotional harm (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2004; Turiel, 1983, 2006; Underwood, Galen, & Paquet, 2001). Relational aggression accounts for an estimated 10% of overall bullying (Hemphill et al., 2010). A core demarcation of RA is abuse of social status where a person of high social influence uses their position to harm or coerce others (Kuykendall,

2012; Vaillancourt & Hymel, 2006). Social status refers to the popularity of an adolescent within a school's social climate. For example, two main groups of students considered to possess elevated social influence over their peers are athletes and student government representatives. It is generally accepted that relational aggression involves repeated behaviors on the part of the perpetrator, whose intention is to procure power over victims (Janssen, Craig, Boyce, & Pickett, 2004). A more recent development by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Gladden, Vivolo-Kantor, Hamburger, & Lumpkin, 2014), expanded the characterization of RA by adding, "behaviors may be highly likely to be repeated," dropping the previous definition's requirement to provide proof of repetition thereby protecting victims from foreseeable further manipulation. Specific behaviors RA employs include those "...behaviors that harm others through damage (or threat of damage) to relationships or feelings of acceptance, friendship, or group inclusion," (Crick, 1996, p. 77). These behaviors may be either direct or indirect in nature and include: name-calling, gossiping and social isolation or threats of withdrawal of friendship, enlisting friends to mistreat the victim, public embarrassment and sending harassing messages through electronic devices and social media (Archer & Coyne, 2005; Horton, 2010; Wong, 2009). For example, verbal threats to castoff a member within a friend group unless the individual does what is asked, also referred to as social exclusion, is a direct act of RA (Crick, Casas, & Nelson, 2002). In contrast, indirect forms of RA involve spreading rumors with the intention of inflicting damage on another person's relationships or reputation (Dailey, Frey, & Walker, 2015). An undercurrent of relational aggression is the rifts within friendship circles. The essential detail of RA being the bully and the victim were once friends. Therefore, the depth of the pain caused by the loss of a

friendship (as opposed to being mistreated by a someone who the victim expects to be cruel) is possibly what makes RA a more insidious forms of bullying than physical bullying. The work of leading bullying researcher, Dan Olweus has assisted the international educational community in understanding bullying as a vicious cycle (American Psychological Association, 2004). Relational aggression can be compared to other types of bullying in the way that they continue over time.

The cycle of RA victimization is similar to physically aggressive forms of bullying (See *Fig. 1*). The main aggressor initiates the process of victimization. Friends of the aggressor further promulgate negative treatment of the victim. Third-party bystanders, in close proximity to the occurrence, may say nothing. The term bystander refers to any person not directly involved in the bullying who witnesses the behavior (Olweus, 2004). A bystander is similar to a passerby of a car accident. The passerby is neither the initiator, nor propagator or target of bullying. Unlike the passerby though, inaction, on the part of a bystander against the aggressor, serves as empowerment for the cycle to continue (see Figure 1). Continued research on bullying is important as previous studies have shown victims suffer from loss of self-esteem and self-efficacy, have trouble formulating new relationships, and have a higher propensity to become depressed (Kushner et al., 2018; Owens, Slee, & Shute, 2000). More daunting, studies have shown victims of RA are at exponentially higher risk for engagement in suicide related behaviors than adolescents who do not experience bullying (Klomek, Marrocco, Kleinman, Schonfeld, Gould, 2007; Klomek, Sourander, & Gould, 2010; Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996; Olweus, 1978; Owens et al., 2000). Details of adolescents who have died by

suicide or acted as school shooters indicate victims were tormented by a more insidious form of bullying than physical aggression.

Figure 1: The Cycle of Relational Aggression.

As adolescents attain higher cognitive abilities, there is evidence that their engagement in physical aggression declines while their employment relationally aggressive behaviors increases (Björkqvist, Lagerspetz, & Kaukiainen, 1992; Côté, Vaillancourt, Barker, Nagin, & Tremblay, 2007). Studies have proposed, as adolescents mature, and their cognitive abilities increase, they switch to utilizing their increasing cognitive abilities of manipulation (Côté et al. 2007). This may be likened to the progression from infants' biting before they have language to voice their frustration. As adolescents' gain intellect they are able to consider and implement alternative ways to

demonstrate their dissatisfaction with their peers. Escalation in the intensity and extensiveness of bullying is believed to be the push that sends victims over the edge (Bonanno & Hymel, 2010; Weinhold, 2000).

School Shootings

On April 20, 1999, 17-year-old Dylan Klebold and 18-year-old Eric Harris were heavily armed. When they arrived at their destination Columbine High School, where they attended, in Littleton, Colorado, Klebold and Harris readied for a war. Their arsenal included: a semi-automatic pistol, Intratec TEC-DC9; an automatic rifle, Hi-Point 995 Carbine; a pump-action shotgun, Savage 67H; a double barrel sawed-off shotgun, Stevens 311D; 99 explosives; and four knives (Columbine High School, 2018). The massacre at Columbine high school, which rocked the nation and underscored the extreme dangers of bullying, was deemed a terrorist attack. In the months after the horrific event, it was revealed the shooters in the tragedy, Klebold and Harris, had been victims of extensive bullying including exclusion (Chyi & McCombs, 2004; Grinder 2007). Columbine quickly became a one-word phrase symbolizing the ultimate in deleterious effects of bullying. Regrettably, the attack is now a distant memory in the wake of the most recent school shootings in Parkland, Florida and Santa Fe, Texas.

In what has been named the Valentine's Day Rampage, Nikolas Cruz with an AR-15 semi-automatic rifle bypassed security measures at Stoneman Douglas High School and murdered 17 people. Through inquiries at the school, it was revealed:

To Cruz, the campus' sun-splashed courtyards were a dark place where he was mocked and ridiculed for his odd behavior, according to interviews with close

family friends, students and recently released police and mental health reports.

(Brown, 2018, para. 5-6)

In the aftermath of the Parkland, Florida shooting, students all over the country have joined a crusade for anti-gun legislation (Gomez, 2018) and Nikolas's brother, Zachary Kruz, launched an anti-bullying hotline (Madan, 2018). In the aftermath of the Santa Fe High School Shooting, May 18, 2018, the pursuit of answers on how to end school shootings became even more pressing. In Santa Fe, Texans mourned the loss of 10 victims of 17-year-old Dimitrios Pagourtzis (Ailworth, Oberman, & McGinty, 2018). Long before any of these atrocities, the literature forewarned the destructive consequences of bullying.

Four years prior to the tragedy of Columbine High, Adler and Adler (1995), explored the social dynamics of cliques starting from elementary school through high school. The most notable assertion in the article was the assessment of students who are treated as outsiders (1995). Adler and Adler explained the constant exclusionary practices of popular groups against specific students significantly aggravated those students' defensive behaviors. Hence, defensive behaviors may be discussed in congruence with retaliation or vengeful acts of revenge. Accordingly, Adler and Adler (1995) found, rejected students' defensive behaviors escalated as the pattern of rejection continued. One of the most correlative behaviors with heightened acts of revenge is exclusion.

Exclusion, or isolation, is a type of covert aggressive behavior where the victim is treated as an outcast (Naylor, Cowie, Cossin, de Bettencourt & Lemme 2006). Isolation is an implementation of power imbalance (Naylor et al., 2006, September). "Being

ejected from the clique thus represents the ultimate form of exclusion carrying severe consequences for individuals' social lives, appearance, and identity,” (Adler & Adler, 1985, p. 157). Isolation causes victims to feel worthless and inhibits them from seeking out new friendships (Owens et al., 2000, p. 366). The increase in adolescents' deaths by suicide has emphasized the immediacy of finding effective bullying preventions (Carney & Merrell, 2011) and has prompted the word *bullycide* to be added to the lexicon.

Bullycide

Attention to the grave effects of bullying was first generated by the suicide of three adolescent Norwegian boys in 1983 (Olweus, 1993). In March of 2010, the intensity built with headlines reporting on the tragic death by suicide of Phoebe Prince (Archer, 2010). As an end result of a long battle with intense RA, Prince's younger sister found her hanging in her own bedroom closet. An immigrant from Ireland, and new student to South Hadley high school, Prince had been barraged with psychological assaults both in school and out (Archer, 2010). Nine aggressors were eventually, “charged with various crimes ranging from assault to human rights violations to, in an unexpected twist, statutory rape,” (Archer, 2010). After her death, in a horrific display of blazoned disregard for human life, the perpetrators posted “accomplished” on the wall of Prince's social network page (Archer, 2010). Regrettably, Prince's story is not a solitary case of an adolescent's death by suicide attributed to bullying.

The literature supports a correlation between the involvement in bullying with increased risk for suicide related events among young people (Center for Disease Control and Prevention. 2014; Kim, Leventhal, Koh, & Boyce, 2009; Klomek et al., 2007; Klomek et al., 2010; Kuykendall, 2012). The pamphlet, *The Relationship between*

Bullying and Suicide: What We Know and What it means for Schools, published by The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2014) reported:

We know that bullying behavior and suicide-related behavior are closely related.

This means youth who report any involvement with bullying behavior are more likely to report high levels of suicide-related behavior than youth who do not report any involvement with bullying behavior.

Klomek and colleagues (2007), found that males who were both the aggressor and victim of bullying had a higher likelihood of suicidal behavior than those who were only victims of bullying. International statistics for 2014 revealed 50% of youth's death by suicides were related to bullying ("Bullying Suicide Statistics," 2014).

In response to the high correlation between bullying and victims' death by suicide, the term *bullycide* was added to the lexicon by Marr and Field (2001). In their book *Bullycide: Death at Playtime*, bullycide is a term used to denote the underlying reason for suicide is bullying (Marr & Field, 2001). Marr and Field's (2001) book set the stage for subsequent manuscripts: *Bullycide in America: Moms Speak out about the Bullying/Suicide Connection* (High, 2012) and *Bullycide: True Crimes Exposing the Influence Bullying has on Youth Suicide* (Scott, 2015). High (2012) presented the stories of several victims of bullycide through the eyes their mothers. The chapters detail the circumstances that led the victims to choose to take their lives. They also chronicle the struggles that their mothers went through to advocate for their children while dealing with the life crushing aftermath (Kuczynski, 2012). Scott (2015) shared the astounding statistics of bullying and explains bullycide in detail to bring public attention to these tragic incidents. Limber (2011) found that school climate has an association with the

type and extent of bullying that occurs within a school. Research supports the argument that the climate of the school is a major determinant of bullying factors (Lee, 2010; Limber, 2011).

School Climate

Research examining the connection between school climate and bullying is still in its early stages (Farina, 2014, p. 2). School climate is created through the relationships between districts, their individual schools, staff, students, and the communities they serve (National School Climate Center, 2012). Studies have shown that there is a correlation between a school's climate and the amount of bullying that occurs there (Klein, Cornell, & Konold, 2012; Mehta, 2011; National School Climate Center, 2012; Wang, Berry, & Swearer, 2013). Each school has been found to have a unique student body that behaves in relation to the school's social environment (Yang, Sharkey, Reed, Chen, & Dowdy, 2018). The literature supports the argument that students do not feel safe in schools with a high prevalence of RA (Goldstein, Young, & Boyd, 2008). The National School Climate Center (2012) defined a positive school climate as one that:

Supports youth to become meaningful leaders in the school climate improvement process; builds an authentic sense of ownership for their efforts to create a stronger school climate; creates opportunities to strengthen community bonds through youth-led engagement efforts; and strengthens youth and adult partnerships.

In contrast, Olweus' (2001) graphic of the cycle of bullying, *The Bullying Circle*, depicts the environment in which bullying propagates. Olweus (2003) graphically represents a cycle of bullying where the bully is not questioned or stopped by anyone and

is free to repeat the behavior. Bullying behavior is propagated by those who support the aggressor either through active or passive engagement (Tolonen, 1998). A person who actively engages in assisting the bullying is labeled an assistant (Olweus, 2005). Those who are passive onlookers are called bystanders (Olweus, 2005).

A separate study, conducted by Andreou and Bonoti (2010), investigated bullying through surveys and drawings. The researchers found that none of the students identified themselves as being an assistant (a person who helps a bully victimize others). In contrast, several students drew their classmates as assistants (Andreou & Bonoti, 2010). Students may not self-identify as proliferators of aggressive behavior as a result of the pervasiveness of bullying within American popular culture.

Popular Culture

Movie: Mean Girls. In general conversation, “mean girls” refers specifically to aggressive behaviors exhibited by girls ages 12 – 18. The movie *Mean Girls* (Michaels, Shimkin, & Waters, 2004) took on the moniker describing the actions of major characters in the film. *Mean Girls* is about a group of high school girls who bully everyone in their school including each other. The story line follows a young Lindsey Lohan, who plays Cady Heron, a transfer student from South Africa, to North Shore High School. Lindsey’s character transitions from outcast to being welcomed as a “mean girl,” and subsequently exchanges her marginalized friends for the more popular group, “The Plastics.” As the plot unfolds, Cady realizes that she does not like the person that she has become (acting precocious and treating other students in the school as second class) and spends the remainder of the movie attempting to regain the trust and friendship of her outcast friends. The movie gained a cult-like following with many groups of adolescent

girls emulating “The Plastics.” Out of the popularity of the film, amongst adolescents, “mean girls” is now a reference to girls’ being bullies. Nearly a decade later, the television series *13 Reasons Why* (Asher, Yorkey, & Aracki, 2018) transported bullying to the forefront of public discussion again.

Television Series: *13 Reasons Why*. In the first season of *13 Reasons Why*, the series tells the story of the fictional female character, Hannah Baker, who is a victim of bullying and ultimately dies by suicide (Asher et al., 2018). Hannah leaves behind a mysterious set of cassette tapes that are numbered one through 13. Each of the tapes initiates a flashback which documents the back story of the relationship that Hannah had with whoever the tape was created for. The tapes are in the first-person point-of-view of Hannah and explore the events that led her to make the decision to end her life. Each episode flips between the point of view of Hannah and of the character, Clay Jensen, a person who Hannah considered to be a potential love interest. In the second season, the pervasiveness of bullying in schools is amplified through additional characters’ narratives (Asher et al., 2018).

The first episode of the second season, “The First Polaroid,” focuses on the school’s climate. Specifically, the prosecution lawyer attempts to establish a pattern of activity that speaks to the acceptance of bullying at the school. The lawyer’s goal is to establish a pattern of non-response to bullying by the school’s administration as the main reason that Hannah did not get the help she needed. Splintering in a new direction from the first season (which focuses on the results of Hannah’s implosion, death by suicide), the second season engages the threat of the explosion of a victim’s rage. The second season adds the narrative of the fictional character, Tyler (a stereotypically marginalized

“nerdy” teenager) as his life falls into a downward spiral. Through a series of events, the show attempted to build the background, and capture the mindset, of a school shooter. Tyler’s character reels out of control after a fight with his only friend, and he concludes that he needs to kill all those classmates who he perceives mistreated him and ruined his life. Shown earlier in the season as having a hidden arsenal in his bedroom, Tyler arms himself and drives to the school the evening of a spring dance. The show attempted to analyze the decision-making pattern of a victim of RA who turns into a school shooter. Invariably, *Thirteen Reasons Why* brings into question what are schools doing to deter bullying?

Anti-Bullying Education

The Columbine massacre produced a wake of school administrators scurrying for anti-bullying programs (Jenson et al., 2010). The tragedy was also followed by an abundance of literature, including Cornell’s (2006) *School Violence: Fears Versus Facts*, insinuating that school violence was not a major issue of concern in the United States. Cornell (2006) used statistical data to establish that children in America are safe in their schools. Public school systems across the nation rapidly threw together a barrage of anti-bullying programs including assemblies and websites to address the situation (Jenson et al., 2010; Welker, 2010). Outwardly valiant attempts to provide anti-bullying programs in schools were highly visible in the months just after the Columbine shootings (Jenson et al., 2010). Previously attempted anti-bullying programs in schools throughout the United States have had a minimal effect on students’ behaviors (Ferguson, San Miguel, Kilburn, & Sanchez, 2007; Smith, Schneider, Smith, & Ananiadou, 2004). Smith et al. (2004) reported the effects of anti-bullying interventions that have previously been attempted in

the United States were “negligible or negative,” (p. 550). Scholarship, concentrating on bullying in schools, is disheartening. Victims who confide in their guidance counselor or teachers describe the cruelty they endure through being the center of gossip and left out by their peers. These adolescents explain how being a target of RA affects them physically (headaches and stomach aches), and emotionally (loss of self-esteem). Unfortunately, the cure for the problem remains a mystery (Olweus, 2003; Smith & Sharp, 1994). While all 50 states have passed laws against bullying and created anti-bullying curriculums to address the aggregate problem, the situation has only become more severe. Every year the number of bully-victims rises.

Currently, teachers, guidance counselors and administrators have insufficient means with which to implement the new laws. When situations are clear-cut as with instances of physical altercations, administrators can quickly remedy the situation by executing their authority to issue penalties. In such cases, administrators can implement punishment as dictated within their Student Code of Conduct Handbooks. Law enforcement officers may even be called in to assist with assault and battery charges. Unfortunately, cases involving bullying are often more complicated. For example, victims reporting to their guidance counselor or other administrator find they are often brushed off or the bully is spoken to, but does not receive an immediate punishment for the behavior and therefore may not be deterred from repeating it.

In the absence of significant consequences such as expulsion or being arrested, bullying continues. This results in victims’ psychological and physical wellbeing placed in jeopardy. An effective anti-bullying program takes into account the specific needs of students in a particular school (Astor, Benbensihy, & Estrada, 2012). As the core

content of the ELA course is literary based, ELA teachers often infuse novels into their curriculum. Novels, unlike other texts, have a length and depth that enables readers to:

[C]ultivate ways of reading and correlative ways of thinking that are sufficiently complex for our increasingly intricate and dynamic world. Because at it's *[sic]* aesthetic best, the novel tells us something more, some elusive and particular about our individual, mutable selves in transcendent and transforming ways.

(Irvine, 2008, p. 3)

Through a novel-infused curriculum, ELA teachers may be able to inspire students to engage in socially constructive behaviors. According to Labadie et al. (2012):

When teachers utilize literature with bullying themes in their classroom students learn the social constructs of empathy and compassion for others through their relationship to the literature. The literature models, for the students, positive behaviors in way that they are able to relate to it, internalize it, and apply this new knowledge in their everyday lives. (p. 97)

Anti-bullying education is not the first to consider using educational instruction to instill students with prosocial behaviors. Before anti-bullying education was a consideration, educators either directly or indirectly taught morality education.

Morality Education

There is a paucity in the research on the subject of education on morality (Solomon, et al., 2001). The reason for such a shortage is perhaps the historical background of moral education and the position of the church. Traditionally, the church maintained that the development of the moral character of children is the sole duty of the home and the church. Accordingly, deeming moral education as being a religious in

nature has hindered investigations of morality education in the classroom. In an attempt to bridge the gap in the literature, Solomon et al., (2001) explored the historical trek of moral/ prosocial education to what it has become today. According to Solomon and his colleagues (2001), there are six primary cognitive theories of morality development:

1. Moral behaviors are learned and mimicked;
2. Internalization of values or character traits;
3. Internalization of mental constructs (conscience);
4. Development of a personal understanding of moral values;
5. Autonomous altruism – in accordance with an internalized norm;
6. Normative altruism – in accordance with a norm established through modeling;

Rest (1983) illustrates separate cognitive progressions that work collaboratively to induce moral behavior: (a) moral sensitivity; (b) moral judgment; (c) moral motivation and; (d) moral character. Staub (1990) and Eisenberg and Miller (1987) offered an alternative standpoint that focused on self-directed pro-social behaviors. The scholars concentrated on: (a) cognitive variables; (b) affective-motivational variables; (c) behavioral competencies and; (d) personality factors. “The general expectation is that particular combinations of these variables increase the likelihood of autonomous prosocial action,” (Solomon et al., 2001, p. 567).

Whether explicitly stated or part of the “hidden curriculum” morality education has always been a part of general education in schools (Solomon et al., 2001, p. 573). The hidden curriculum can be defined as the, “covert pattern of socialization which prepares students to function in the existing workplace and in other social/political

spheres,” (Giroux & Penna, 2012). It was the findings of the Hartshorne and May (1928) study that put a halt to morality education in the United States. Hartshorne and May’s (1928) study suggested that children did not consistently act virtuously given different circumstances and morality education did not work. During the 1960s however, there was a resurgence and reinvention of morality education (Solomon et al., 2001).

In an investigation of 1960s moral education methodologies, Angell (1991) found several consistencies. Angell (1991) describes morality education as fostering such characteristics as group work, free expression, and a multicultural consciousness. Golub and Kolen (1976) and DeVries, Haney and Zan (1991) came to the same conclusions in their investigations of morality education. It may be surmised that cooperative learning groups lead to greater multicultural awareness and decreased instances of cross-cultural arguments (Solomon et al., 2001). Collaborative assignments may also kindle cross-cultural friendships. Slavin and Madden (1979) found that group activities proffered better results than course discussions about race and ethnicity. Taking a different approach, Torney, Oppenheim, and Farnen (1975) reported open discussions about culture inspired the development of prosocial behaviors. The positive effects of cross-cultural interactions proved to be expounded when in conjunction with instructional support (Solomon et al., 2001).

Other teacher guided prosocial development techniques include conflict resolution-mediation training programs. The conflicts that arise amongst the students are the focal point of such programs (Solomon et al., 2001). Students are taught steps to take in order to resolve their issues. Johnson and Johnson (1995) detail these steps as a therapeutic debate where personal emotions are expressed exposing arguments in order to

come to solutions. Evidence strongly suggests that the lessons learned through these sessions remain with the students long after the course is over (Solomon et al., 2001). Such lessons may be taught through a novel study. The backdrop for use of the novel within classrooms can be illustrated by the theoretical frameworks of reader-response, biopower, and bibliotherapy.

Theoretical Frameworks

True, This! —/Beneath the rule of men entirely great
The pen is mightier than the sword. Behold
The arch-enchanters wand! — itself is nothing! —
But taking sorcery from the master-hand
To paralyse the Cæsars, and to strike
The loud earth breathless! — Take away the sword —
States can be saved without it! (Bulwer-Lytton, 1839, 2.2.306-313)

Bulwer-Lytton was not the first to speak to the power of the written word and he certainly will not be the last. It can be deduced that Bulwer-Lytton declares that the theoretical stance adopted by the researcher is seated in the power of the pen.

Literature's ability to alter readers' minds, to coerce them to act or stand down on account of something they read is powerful. While there are many different modalities to text (e.g., newspapers, speeches, short stories) it is the novel that is considered the most powerful form of literature. The extensive length of novels (compared to excerpts in textbooks) enables individuals to open a door into an alternate existence. The interface which the reader and the text interact within makes it is possible for the reader to gain a personal understanding through the experiences of the fictional characters. This

interaction though, is not something that happens without effort. In addition to the reader taking on specific purpose for reading, the instructor must also use particular techniques to facilitate student learning. The ideology of teacher facilitated learning stems from the pedagogical underpinnings of pragmatism.

Emergence of Reader-Response: Pragmatism

Educators can facilitate robust *aesthetic* readings with reader-response questions and group discussions. Pragmatism is the idea that education can be approached in a systematic and scientific way where students learn more through their experiences and are motivated when working with subjects that are personal and therefore meaningful to them (Rosenblatt, 1968; 1978). Historically, pragmatism radically changed the process of dissemination of information to students to achieve primary learning goals (Kimball, n.d.). Educators were influenced to include hands-on projects and to create learning environments that enabled students to have the opportunity to have first-hand knowledge of whatever lesson they were learning (Dewey, 1916; Vygotsky, 1967). In today's classroom students complete projects and implement differentiated instructional strategies in order to attend to students' individual needs (Kimball). Differentiated instructional strategies are those that take into consideration the learning styles of students as unique individuals instead of a class collective (Tomlinson & Strickland, 2005). An example of a differentiated instructional strategy is the choice board, where students may choose what type of product they will complete to show mastery of a skill they have learned in class (Gregory & Chapman, 2013). The differences between the types of products that students may select are based on different intelligences e.g. using Howard Gardner's eight intelligences (See Appendix A). The current pedagogical

practice of attending to students' individual needs is referred to as differentiated instruction (Levy, 2010) or student-centered instruction (Estes, 2004).

Student-centered facilitation is becoming leading-edge instructional implementation (Estes, 2004; Kollmer, 2013). *Aesthetic* reading and teaching allows educators to approach highly complex concepts (Pike, 2007). Effective teaching occurs when there is a purpose set prior to the activity (Hayakawa, 1939). Hayakawa uses the comparison between a person who travels to a foreign place without any background knowledge and one who reads about the same location. The one who partakes in the reading process attains the most knowledge out of the experience. Without prior knowledge, students do not have a clear pathway to follow (1939). Most poignant to the pedagogy of Language Arts, is that knowledge is more precisely attained through reading rather than experiences (Hayakawa, 1939). Iser (1980) describes this process as an imaginative investigation of the reader's consciousness. At the end of the journey, the reader discovers what had previously seemed elusive and is forever changed (Iser, 1980, p.68). In the same way that the text is given life through its usage by a reader, the reader is imparted with experiences. Hayakawa asserts that reading can be a far better teacher than experience (1939). While the pragmatic pedagogies will stress on the importance of hands-on interaction as a basis for meaningful learning (Dewey, 1916; Vygotsky, 1967). Children do not learn simply from having been told; they must have been actively involved in a *transactional* process that honors and validates their own experiences (Pike, 2007; Rosenblatt, 1978). The term *transaction* signifies the interaction between the reader and the text, where the reader takes on new understandings while the text simultaneously transforms in meaning. The process is ongoing throughout the reading

engagement leaving both the reader and the text altered. Rosenblatt's (1978) *transactional* theory is a core component of reader-response criticism.

Reader-Response Criticism

According to Hayakawa (1939), teaching is effective when there is a purpose set prior to the activity. Hayakawa uses the comparison between a person who travels to a foreign place without any background knowledge and one who reads about the same location. The one who partakes in the reading process attains the most knowledge out of the experience. Without prior knowledge, students do not have a clear pathway to follow (1939). Most poignant to the pedagogy of English language arts, is that knowledge is more precisely attained through reading rather than experiences (Hayakawa, 1939).

Reader-Response Criticism is a stronghold of literary theory that focuses on reader's experiences. Introduced by seminal theorists such as, Louis M. Rosenblatt (1968); Stanley Fish (1980; 1999); Samuel Ichiye Hayakawa (1939; 1990); Roland Barthes (1975a; 1975b); and Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin (1990; 1994), reader-response criticism asserts that literature elicits emotional responses. Essentially, literature urges people to care about situations that occur outside of themselves. Reader-response critics hold that meaning is generated during the performance of reading and is unique to each reader within a social context. The Reader-Response Criticism movement presented the concept of multiple interpretations existing for the same text. Rosenblatt (1978) and Bakhtin (1994) asserted that there are different levels of engagement with text. As indicated above, Rosenblatt (1978) signified the range of experiences as *effere*nt, surface readings, and *aesthetic*, intense close readings. Bakhtin (1994) labeled these

dichotomous terms as *readerly*, texts that are straightforward and not open to interpretation and, *writerly*, texts that lend themselves to personal analysis.

Efferent and aesthetic stance. *Efferent* or *readerly*, texts require only a basic layer of comprehension. The reader's task in *efferent* reading is to regurgitate information found within a passage. A prevalent example of this type of reading occurs on standardized testing. When taking on the *efferent* stance, the reader is specifically applying active reading strategies to an informational text for the purpose of extracting information (Rosenblatt, 1994). Succinctly, *efferent* reading is achieved when the reader obtains specific information as when reading a manual to fix a leaking faucet and is able to then apply it to real-world situations. *Efferent* readings involve gathering information from the reading event to answer multiple choice or short response assessment questions. *Efferent* reading is tedious and routine. For example, sixth grade students are asked to choose between four types of organizational patterns after reading a non-fiction passage about the importance of wearing a helmet while riding a bike. *Efferent* reading does not require extensive cognition or scrutiny. In high contrast, *aesthetic*, or *writerly*, readings emphasize the transaction between the reader and the text.

The *aesthetic* stance, as introduced by Rosenblatt (1968), postulates an intimacy that is reached between the reader and the text driven by the reader's purpose. In the *aesthetic* stance, the reader's mind, the pages, the ink, meld and mesh, expand and contract while developing a narrative together. The *aesthetic* stance is achieved through an active engagement with the text when the reader's purpose is for pleasure or self-enlightenment. Examples of *aesthetic* reading include translating words into images through drawings, empathizing with fictional characters, recognizing historical and

cultural contexts, anticipating turns in the plot, and criticizing and evaluating the author's style (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009, p. 50) as expressed through discussions or writing (Rosenblatt, 1994). The *aesthetic* stance counters the previously held belief of the New Critics that that authentic meaning is held by the text alone for the reader to glean (Berg, 1980). They require higher order thinking skills and the complete attention of a captivated reader. *Aesthetic* readings are those that support the transformation of mundane details into activities that are personally meaningful thereby providing optimal enriching experiences.

Csikszentmihalyi (2009) asserts that the act of making meaning occurs when learners can relate their personal goals to a given activity. Knowledge acquisition is purposeful when the learner rationalizes its purpose and complete the task in an organized manner (p. 244). During the act of *aesthetic* reading, one does not simply engage in superficial meaning making. *Aesthetic* readings involve translating words into images, empathizing with fictional characters, recognizing historical and cultural contexts, anticipating turns in the plot, and criticizing and evaluating the author's style (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009, p. 50). *Aesthetic* reading can be described as: a pre-teenaged young adult sitting on a wooden bench in a picturesque state park reading the latest YA novel (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009, pp. 49-50). Reader-response theorists assert that *aesthetic* readings are capable of altering readers' thoughts, beliefs, and actions (Rosenblatt, 1938). The influence wielded by *aesthetic reading* is borne out of the intensity of the relationship between the reader and the text. This type of metacognitive activity can be further explored through bibliotherapy. The ideology of reader-response is furthered through the concept of the dialogic.

Dialogic. Rosenblatt (1968) accentuated the value of instituting the novel as a vehicle for moral exploration and growth. When students access a novel through personal connections, the literature may significantly alter their thoughts. Students should be able to describe how the literature has altered them in some fundamental way (Rosenblatt, 1968). The capacity for literature to adjust readers' thoughts is echoed in Bakhtin's (1994) ideology of "dialogism." Bakhtin adds a connotation to the musical term *polyphonic* to resound within texts. Accordingly, *polyphonic* comes to mean the capacity to have multiple voices. Texts have the capacity to explore multiple characters with distinct personalities each of whom a reader can engage with in discourse (Bakhtin, 1994).

Bakhtin's philosophical concept of *polyphony* is often referred to as "dialogics" in his texts (2011). "Dialogism" can be defined as the synergy of the reader and the text (Bakhtin, 1994). The act of reading causes a rippling effect wherein both the text's and the reader's pasts and future are simultaneously altered (Bakhtin, 2004). Accordingly, Bakhtin asserted that discourse changes each individual and in turn those individual's transformations influence the world around them (Holquist, 1990). To explain, everything that has come before the text is brought to the forefront for understanding (Bakhtin, 2004; Rosenblatt, 1968, 1971). Possibly, all prior knowledge may be applied to the unfamiliar text to formulate predictions and inferences by virtue of the new knowledge (Bakhtin, 2004; Rosenblatt, 1968, 1971).

It is the act of responding to a text that is the catalyst for understanding and attainment of information (Bakhtin, 2004). To advance his complex literary theory, Bakhtin inserted new additions to the vernacular (1994). Most notable concepts are

“chronotope” and “dialogism.” (Bakhtin, 1994). Literally translated to mean, “time-space,” chronotope signifies that text is written during a distinct time-period at a precise place and because of that, the text holds specific meaning related to those qualities (Bakhtin, 1994). “Dialogism” is the synthesis that occurs when a person interacts with the text (Bakhtin, 1994). The concept of chronotope echoes T.S. Eliot’s (1920) assertions expressed in the essay, *Tradition and the Individual Talent*. Eliot wrote:

The necessity that he shall conform, that he shall cohere, is not one-sided; what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. (p. 44)

Dialogism is a theory wherein intertextuality can be used as a force to concurrently alter the meaning derived from past and future texts (Bakhtin, 1994). When readers use all their previous knowledge, and apply it to a new text, a strong interpersonal relationship may be formed (Bakhtin, 1994; Rosenblatt, 1968). Bakhtin pushed *dialogism* further by including a moral component (1994). Bakhtin asserted that there is a moral obligation for readers to form these bonds between themselves and the experiences they share with the text (Bakhtin, 1994). The moral obligation of a reader to engage *aesthetically* with text may be tied to individuals’ self-efficacy, the belief in one’s ability to succeed and rise above particular circumstances. *Dialogism* flows almost seamlessly with Foucault’s ideology of *biopower*. Vermeulen (2012) argued that this interconnectedness between the reader and the text instills the reader with this sense-of-self. By demonstrating through the text alternate possibilities, individuals become informed about such opportunities that exist in the world and are inspired. Such inspiration empowers them to

seek to achieve what they never even believed was possible prior to their engagement with the text. Foucault (1990) termed this experience, biopower.

Biopower

Biopower is a term coined by Foucault (1990) in his first volume of, *The History of Sexuality*. The term *biopower* assigns a symbol to the manipulation of constituents belonging to a nation through socialization (Vermeulen, 2012). In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1990) illustrated the transformation from sovereign power to the development of biopower. Sovereign power is understood as the power that heads of state had over their populace. Biopower is the harnessing of control over individual decisions which clarifies how the ancestry of the novel connects to autonomy over personal thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and actions (Vermeulen, 2012). Foucault (1990) explained that during the time of sovereign power, citizens were controlled by fear. Fear of severe punishments including torture and death. Essentially, people were forced to subscribe to the same ideologies of their ruler or suffer severe consequences. In strong contrast with modern Western governmental structures, citizens were punished with higher taxes, relinquishment of privileges, and death for exercising individualism. Throughout history, nations ruled by a sovereign power have not allowed the public to make such choices and used heavy censorship to control them. Censorship withholds people from reading about unfamiliar individuals and circumstances.

The practice of censorship can be dated back to Rome in 443 BC. At that time, it was considered an honorable task of the government to cultivate the character of the populace (Newth, 2010). This was done through selecting reading material for specific content that matched the values of those in power. They believed in the influence of text,

and the possibility of readers to understand and realize experiences and existences beyond themselves. The fear was that erudite citizens would rise-up and question their current leader's practices. It is in this way that biopower can be defined as the ability of individuals to harness what is learned through personally selected literature to form one's personal disposition and world view. Vermeulen (2012) explains: "Remarkably, very comparable claims have been made for the cultural work traditionally done by the genre of the novel" (p. 6). Moretti (2004), provides an example of this through his criticism on *bildungsroman* novels. The *bildungsroman* is a genre of novels that are written specifically to acculturate the populace. Moretti (2004) states, the purpose of these novels is to "fuse external compulsion and internal impulses into a new unity" until the reader seamlessly portrays the affectations accepted by the mainstream culture (16). In this way, "the novel penetrates the life of the individual most efficiently by disguising its implicit normativity as mere reality, instead of making these norms explicit," (Vermeulen, 2012, p. 389). Vermeulen (2012), similarly to Rosenblatt (1994), asserted that the *transaction* between the reader and the novel actively ignites the biopower generated within the text. In this way, the novel has been used as a tool for socialization.

In this context, the biopower of literature is its ability to effectively alter a reader's thoughts and behavior. This relationship can be developed through Foucault (1979) discussion of the conversion from absolute monarchy to human liberty as causing a revolution: "from the epic to the novel, from the noble deed to the secret singularity" (p. 193). As conscientization is a process that moves from knowing to acting, the novel is perceived as a vehicle to independent thinking taking power away from the king. Watt (2001) expressed that through a new literary perspective, readers of novels are able create

self-identities and individualize themselves through aesthetic readings. In Arnold Weinstein's words, literature is, "the great bridge that enables us to exit our precincts, that enables other places and other lives to come to us, asking us to 'try it on, try it out'" (2011, p.8). The theoretical framework of bibliotherapy also speaks to the possibility of harnessing the power of literature through leveraging newly attained knowledge. Bibliotherapists emphasize the responsibility in sharing literature with those who may learn and heal from engaging with it.

Bibliotherapy

In the literature, bibliotherapy is referred to by many terms including, biblioeducation, library therapeutics, biblioprophyllaxis, literatherapy, bibliocounseling, bibliopsychology, and tutorial group therapy (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1993). As there are various terms for bibliotherapy, there are also varying definitions of the treatment (Lu, 2008). Bibliotherapy may be defined as: The process wherein educational professionals assist students in personal problem resolution through reading literature (Sullivan & Strang, 2003). The actual term *bibliotherapy* did not come into use until after 1900 along with the establishment of libraries within mental hospitals (Brown, 1975). Since this emergence, bibliotherapy, has gained recognition as a respected educational practice (Lehr, 1980; Lenkowsky, 1987; Smith & Burkhalter, 1987). By the 1940s teachers were actively utilizing bibliotherapy techniques in the classroom (Brown, 1975, p. 180). Educators have the unique opportunity to effectively implement bibliotherapy. In education, bibliotherapy can be used for psychological maturity, life adjustment, and character development (Brown, 1975). Bibliotherapy shares the underlying supposition of the *aesthetic* stance: readers' thoughts and behaviors may be influenced through

reading literature (Heath, Sheen, Leavy, Young, & Money, 2005). Where bibliotherapy differentiates from reader-response is within the reader's stance.

Where Reader-Response Criticism focuses on attaining lived experiences through reading (Rosenblatt, 1994), bibliotherapy seeks to harnesses the power of that experience to ameliorate the psychologically distressed. For example: An ELA teacher using reader-response might use a novel with an entire class to help them understand the repercussions of deforestation. In this case, the intention could be to galvanize their ecological consciousness. Differently, a guidance counselor practicing bibliotherapy will discuss with an individual female student personal details regarding what is causing her psychological distress. If, for instance, the girl was having trouble dealing with the death of a sibling, the guidance counselor would select a novel which focusses on a protagonist going through that type of loss. In this way, the novel is used to elucidate for her that there are others that share this same grief. Thus, enabling her to feel part of society instead of an outsider. In this vain, bibliotherapy is at times utilized as an alternative or augmentation to medication. The earliest mention of the use of books as therapy comes from the ancient Greeks (Brown, 1975; Castaneda, 2013; Moses, 2013). As acknowledgement of the power of reading Greeks inscribed, "Place of Healing for the Soul" over library entrances (Brown, 1975). Roman encyclopedist Aulus Cornelius Celsus also believed in the healing capacity of literature (Brown, 1975). Several historical documents provide accounts of books described as having curative properties for the emotionally disturbed (Brown, 1975, p. 13).

Bibliotherapy is a type of therapeutic reading that is used in both the medical and educational fields. Bibliotherapy can be defined as, "the use of selected

reading materials as therapeutic adjuvants in medicine and psychiatry; guidance in the solution of personal problems through directed reading,” (Brown, 1975, p. 1). Directed Reading-Thinking Activity (DR-TA) is a teaching strategy developed by Stauffer in 1969. Essentially, the teacher instructs students on how to effectively utilize the reading strategies that highly proficient readers use to understand difficult text. Directed Reading-Thinking Activities involve during and after reading strategies. While engaged in the reading process, the student is prompted to make predictions and stop periodically to question what is happening in the plot (Stauffer, 1969). After reading, students are encouraged to review their predictions and questions, make revisions if necessary, and create new predictions about what will come next (Stauffer, 1969). Directed Reading-Thinking Activities enable teachers to facilitate students’ entry into a text in a way that they could not have on their own. In a general classroom setting, DR-TA is used to analyze text. Bibliotherapists use this technique with individuals or small groups to assist students with psychological discontent (Brown, 1975). Bibliotherapy is not only employed by psychiatrists, but also by persons involved with children’s psychological wellbeing including librarians, social workers, school resource officers, counselors, etc. (Brown, 1975, p. 1) and can be used across cultures (Freitag & Ottens, 1999). The tool that most offers the opportunity to engage with text in the ways described by reader-response, biopower, and bibliotherapy is the novel.

Novels

“Anyone who doubts the power of books to root themselves in the developing psyche has only to consider the impact of J. K. Rowling’s Harry Potter series,” (Brown, 2017). A distinct type of text that offers depth and volume of characters involved in

intense situations are novels. By nature, novels are longer than most of the excerpts that students are exposed to at school. The novel's extended length heightens the level of intimacy students may achieve during their interaction with text. Rosenblatt's (1994) transactional theory imparts the idea that the essence of the interrelationship between the text and the reader is that readers are individuals, humans. Rosenblatt delves further explaining that language itself is an action that is initiated within the human brain which engages in a "transaction" with a particular environment and is unique for each individual (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 1059). While reading, the text serves as an environment in which the human mind explores the world through the words that are written on the page. As in *effferent* reading the reader, brings forth previous knowledge and individual understandings of the world. During an *aesthetic* reading, the reader and the text merge creating a new landscape within the mind of the reader and the typecast letters on the pages. During this *transaction*, the reader and the text, together, create a new narrative. Engagement between the reader and the text is not always possible, and is determined by the reader's stance (Rosenblatt, 1994). The emergence of the novel as an educational tool was first introduced at the end of the seventeenth century (Boulukos, 2011).

It is little wonder that novels are thought to have significant educational value. When reading short passages, students are limited to *effferent* readings where their purpose is to find facts. Reading a novel introduces an alternate modality to reading. Windows leading into these fantastic worlds may be unlocked as a result of the vast deviance in personal pursuit. While the pragmatic pedagogies stress on the importance of hands-on interaction as a basis for meaningful learning (Dewey, 1916; Vygotsky, 1967), Hayakawa asserts that *aesthetic* reading can be a more effective teacher than real life

experience (1939). Knowledge is not attained without engagement on the part of the learner. Children do not learn simply from having been told; they must be actively involved in a transactional process that honors and validates their own experiences (Rosenblatt, 1978). Probst (1988) explained that there is a clear difference in engagement between when a student reads a story in a textbook as opposed to a novel.

Novels can captivate students across a multitude of reading acumen levels and multicultural backgrounds. Text reaches readers on a level that is both personal and meaningful to them. Thus, readers' cultural backgrounds often shape their responses to literature as they consider their world-view and present disposition. By design, the extended length of novels enables readers to become attached to the characters within the text in way that produces an array of emotional states (Anderson, Fielding, & Wilson, 1998). As readers, we get to know people, places, and far-off places. When entering the novel, a reader becomes a part of the text. During the reading process, readers enter the realm of the novel not as an onlooker, but as a character that becomes essential in the story. In becoming personally connected to the text, readers may be provoked to be directly concerned with the situations that the characters are in (Anderson et al., 1998). Literature is written to make you care about the people, places, circumstances, etc. Understanding the impact literature may have on readers' thoughts, educators should be cautious about the texts that their students engage with. Hayakawa (1990) warned that some texts include messages extolling hate and immoral behavior. Therefore, novels should be vetted prior to their use in the classroom. When appropriately selected, novels not only encompass a span of emotions within a multitude of conditions designed to evoke readers' feelings (Malo-Juvera, 2012) they also lend themselves to fulfill the seven

conditions necessary to increase students' motivation to read as noted by Gambrell (2011):

1. Reading tasks and activities should be relevant to students' lives.
2. They should have access to a wide range of reading materials.
3. They should have ample opportunity to engage in sustained reading.
4. They need opportunities to make choices about what they read and how they complete literacy tasks.
5. They need opportunities to socially interact with others about the text they are reading.
6. They need opportunities to experience success with challenging texts.
7. Classroom incentives should reflect the value and importance of reading.

It has been shown that positive encounters with novels in the classroom, impels students to continue reading at home (Anderson et al., 1988; Gambrell, 2011).

Independent reading is an extremely important component to developing students' reading comprehension. Commonly understood that to make gains in reading comprehension, one must read. Studies have shown a strong correlation between reading for extended periods of time and growth in all five aspects of reading: phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (Anderson et al., 1988; Greaney, 1980; Guthrie & Greaney, 1991; Taylor, Frye, & Maruyama, 1990). Research has revealed among long-term benefits of independent reading is an increase students' overall academic success (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; Schiefele et al., 2012). An explanation for this could stem from the increased internal motivation of students to

overcome their reading deficiencies in order to maintain connectedness with a text that is highly engaging (Malo-Juvera, 2011; Rosenblatt, 1938).

A genre of novels that seek to resonate with adolescents is YAL.

Young Adult Literature as Exploration

The definition of what comprises the category of Young Adult literature (YAL) is ever-changing. In a broad sense, the stories YAL includes texts that are specifically designed to interest adolescents (Bachelder et al., 1980; Blakemore, 2015; Cart, 2016; Nilsen et al., 2013). At its heart, YAL stories portray the life occurrences of young adults through the eyes of adolescent protagonists. YAL covers a wide range of topics. Some recurrent themes within YA literature are identity, self-discovery, journeys, coming of age, survival, interpersonal relationships including family and romantic, controversial societal issues, and the inclusion of diverse characters (Bodart, Barrineau, & Flamino, 2011). Some popular subjects include love and sexuality, drugs, music, popular culture, and sports. Darker topics are addressed as well: suicide ideation, depression, abuse, war, illness, death and dying are presented in a variety of settings posed in the past, future, and life on other planets. While the target audience for YAL includes ages 12-18, readership spans individuals 10-25 years old (Cart, 2008). This expansion of ages of readership of YAL may be attributed to popular YAL series such as *Harry Potter*, *The Hunger Games*, *Twilight*, etc. that have multiple novels published over a long period of time. In a world that is in constant flux, adolescents need opportunities to connect with characters issues, conflicts, morals, and ethics that are like them (Bushman, 1997; Roberts, 2013). Young adults go through many changes and challenges throughout their journey towards adulthood.

Not dissimilar from adults, adolescents seek answers to their questions about life's challenges. They want to feel understood and part of a group. Adolescent literature covers a broad spectrum of transitional situations that occur during growing-up. YA novels enable adolescents between the ages of childhood and adulthood to safely participate in life experiences and at times feel like part of a faction of likeminded individuals. A YA novel that includes various bullying situations from multiple perspectives is *The Misfits*.

The Novel (*The Misfits*)

There are many novels that involve bullying including characters that are bullies, victims and bystanders (Aurbach, 2016). Many of the novels focus on one a single topic loosely or directly related to bullying. The novel *The Misfits* (Howe, 2011) was specifically selected for this study on the basis of its unique presentation of the victims' encounters with bullying. In the novel, Howe (2011) enables readers to view the world through multiple the perspectives of "The Gang of Five." One of the most endearing attributes of the "gang's" combined personality is that The Gang of Five has only four members. The group decided upon this to leave the door open for another misfit to join them at any time. Each of the four seventh graders in this tightknit group of friends serves as a representative for selected archetypal/stereotypical victims of bullying: Addie, is a female who is extremely intelligent and taller than everyone else in the school; Bobby is overweight; Jo a.k.a. JoDan is struggling with his sexuality and is described as having effeminate mannerisms, and the final member, Skeezie is a funky punk rocker. Addie is the leader of the group and runs their meetings.

At the opening of the novel, Addie has decided that the main issue that she wants to tackle is justice. To motivate school officials to pay attention to her grievances, she chooses to stop participating in the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance and remains in her seat. Addie explains that she cannot participate because while pledge promises equality for all, to her it seems as though we are quite far away from everyone being treated as equal in the United States. As the story progresses, Addie proposes to create a third party, "The Freedom Party," for the school election. The slogan: Sticks and stones may break our bones, but names will break our spirits." The group promotes their campaign by creating posters with messages such as: "No loser," and, "no fairy." In the short run the posters gain much lip service amongst the student body, and a trip to the principal's office. During this meeting the administration is convinced by Bobby that the No-Name party does have a purpose. In the conclusion of the novel, the group does not win the election, but the No-Name campaign brings The Misfits' concerns center stage leaving the entire class to think about their actions. This election opens up a new narrative for the students at the school and offers the opportunity for all students to discuss their experiences with bullying without fear of being ridiculed. The true proof of their success was shown through the creation of No-Name Week, which was then observed every year after. The groups' mission had successfully transformed the social climate of the school by illuminating the problem of bullying. The backdrop for use of novels such as *The Revealers* within classrooms can be illustrated by the requirements as set forth by the Common Core Initiative.

Common Core Initiative and ELA

During the 1990's the Standards and Accountability Movement sought extreme educational reform (Standards and Accountability, 2012). The National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) determined that if the United States is to maintain its position as an international powerhouse of intellect and prestige, there was a need for major changes in curriculum and instruction of core studies. These changes included the emphasis on close readings as a crucial instructional strategy. According to the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), close reading defined as, "engaging with a text of sufficient complexity directly and examining meaning thoroughly and methodically," requires students to engage in meaningful ways with literature and analyze complex text (PARCC, 2011, p. 7). They determined that standards outlining educational expectations for students in grades K-12 needed to be substantially more rigorous (Standards and Accountability, 2012). The answer to this call for action was the creation of the Common Core Initiative. Currently, the Common Core Standards of English Language Arts have been established around the country as the standards for curriculum, instruction, and assessment in grades K-12 (PARCC, 2011). Analyzing literature places students in the role of literary critic. Students actively draw from the author's use of literary techniques and devices including figurative language, symbolism, etc. It is commonly understood that figurative language and symbolism are traditional applications of connotative language in literature and other texts. Figurative language is the use of connotative language such as a metaphor which compares two unlike things in nature, stating that one thing is the other. For example, the statement, the little girl is an angel, compares a little

girl to an angel. To expand upon this, an example of symbolism would be the use of the word “angel” instead of “the little girl” within the text. A further analysis of symbol of the little girl as an angel could be her positive interactions with other characters within a text. The action of making meaning occurs when learners relate their personal goals to a given activity. The meaning is purposeful when learners rationalize its purpose and complete the task in an organized manner (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009, p. 244). Rosenblatt (1994) termed the reader’s purpose for reading, the reader’s *stance*. Rosenblatt asserted there are two *stances* that readers may take while engaging with text (a) an *aesthetic* stance, which focuses on the experience of reading while it is happening and (b) the *effferent* stance, focusing on what can be taken away after the reading has been completed.

As previously discussed, in the *aesthetic* stance, the reader and the text are enveloped in the development of a story. Alternatively, reading to retain specific information is considered by Rosenblatt (1994) to be the *effferent* stance. An example of *effferent* reading may involve students preparing for a final exam or standardized assessment that calculates reading comprehension acumen. In this case, students abstract-out pertinent information through connecting with the text through applying background knowledge to the text, usually within a set time frame. In this example of *effferent* reading, to activate prior knowledge, a set of active reading strategies is employed. Duke and Pearson (2017), offer a series of strategies that readers may use when taking a reading comprehension assessment. A component of this method requires readers to consider if there is anything they can connect the current reading to that they have read in another novel or text (intertextuality), saw on television or in a movie, or

experienced in life that could be related to the current text and using the text in addition to their prior knowledge to:

1. Construct questions while reading and adjust their understanding of the text as they progress through the text
2. Make inferences and drawing conclusions about what is not explicitly stated
3. Make predictions, think about what might happen next
4. Visualize what is happening within the text by drawing pictures in their mind or sketching on paper

Reading through the text in this way focusses on what pieces of the text will be important when answering comprehension questions. *Efferent* reading focuses on the utilitarian purpose of the text as a tool. Taken together, aesthetic and efferent stances lead readers to have vastly different experiences. According to Rosenblatt (1938) literature provides an avenue for writers to voice geopolitical frustrations including “antisocial ideas, repressed urges, and anti-authoritarian desires to strike back at those who create social restrictions,” (Malo-Juvera, 2012, p. 9). Foucault (1990) furthers this argument and expresses the potential for literature to act as a vehicle of change for the oppressed and suppressed. Readers are able to explore the world in ways that they could not even conceive of. According to Malo-Juvera (2012):

...[L]iterature allows readers to exercise their senses more intensely than they would normally be able to do and because it provides readers the opportunity to safely experience events that would normally be impossible or unwise to experience. The ability to sympathize or identify with the experience of characters

in literature is the basis of the cathartic benefits of literature; in order to achieve this, a primarily aesthetic reading is required.

In addition to being a gateway towards *aesthetic* personal enlightenment and catharsis, studies indicate that there is a strong correlation between reading for pleasure and academic success (Palani 2012; Strauss, 2014; Wilhelm & Smith, 2014). According to Palani (2012), *aesthetic* readings assist students in developing critical thinking skills and generating new ideas. The correlation between reading and academic success is most likely the rationale for the change in the English language arts standards.

The state of Florida, adopted the Florida Standards (a version of the Common Core Initiative), echoes this necessity for both *aesthetic* and *effereent* readings in ELA classes (Florida Standards, 2015). As previously discussed, the Common Core Initiative leans heavily on close reading and analysis of complex texts. Though there is controversy on whether The Common Core Initiative only supports the reading of informational text (Zunshine, 2015) the standards include an appendix of text exemplars pointing to a multitude of novels that may be used as anchor texts (Common Core Initiative (PARCC, 2011). The Language Arts Florida Standards encourages ELA teachers to hold class discussions where students are given the opportunity to talk about themselves as a means of making connections with text (Florida Standards, 2015). Therefore, an argument can be made that the importance for *aesthetic* readings, deep meaningful interactions with literature, is acknowledged and supported by the Florida Department of Education and thereby, The United States Department of Education.

Statement of the Problem

In consideration of mounting headlines reporting bullying related school shootings and *bullycide*, it is crucial to find ways of ameliorating this epidemic. Results of school-wide anti-bullying programs have proved to be disappointing. There is a gap in the literature concerning classroom-level instruction of fictional literature and adolescents' acceptance of bullying behaviors. This investigation was undertaken to examine the relationship between reading the novel, *The Misfits*, and adolescents' acceptance of relational aggression.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this explanatory sequential mixed method research was to determine the effect of a literature-based intervention, on adolescents' acceptance of relational aggression. This study addressed adolescents' acceptance of relational aggression, a type of non-physical bullying. An explanatory sequential mixed methods design (QUAN→qual) is a 2-phased design. The first phase initiates the study with a pretest survey and collection of quantitative data followed by the implementation of an intervention. The survey is then re-administered for posttest data collection and analysis. Phase two of the study includes using the analysis of the quantitative data to select participants and to develop interview questions for qualitative data collection and analysis. The study is finalized with the integration of qualitative and quantitative results. In the first quantitative stage of the study, the Diverse Adolescent Relational Aggression Scale (DARAS; Horton, 2010) was administered to sixth and eighth grade middle school students to provide a baseline of participants' acceptance of relational aggression followed by a thematic literary unit of instruction. Participants in the experimental group

were taught using a bullying themed novel, *The Misfits*, while students in the control group were taught using a novel that did not have any reference to bullying. The second, qualitative stage was conducted as a follow-up to the quantitative results to help explain the quantitative results. A group of participants were selected using analysis of the quantitative data. Interviews and small group discussions explored participants' perceptions of relational aggression. The rationale for collecting both quantitative and qualitative results is to integrate the two forms of data to bring deeper insight into the problem than would be obtained through one method (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). This study included middle school aged children as the literature supports that the highest frequency of bullying occurs during these years (Tusinski, 2008).

Significance of the Study

As with biological diseases that mutate through the sands of time, so has bullying and its effects mutated. It is not as it was in *Tom Brown's* day, where one just needed to make it through the day with the ability to return home where bullies could not follow (Hughes, 1857). In the past, going home was a welcomed haven to those bullied at school. Presently, the abuse follows the victim into his or her home through social networking sites and cell phones leaving no reprieve. As documented in news across the nation, the effects of bullying have been the cause of severe deterioration of mental health leading to the victim's death by suicide or lashing out. In either case of implosion (suicide) or explosion (homicide), the lives of those youth are lost forever. The school shootings of 1999 in Columbine and 2007 at Virginia Tech are testaments that the reigning in of bullying is long overdue. It is important to note that while these cases were highly publicized, as it is with other circumstances involving victims of extreme violence,

there are far more cases than the public is aware of. Other, less known situations have occurred in that have “Littleton, Colorado; Springfield, Oregon; West Paducah, Kentucky; and Jonesboro, Arkansas” (Vossekuil et al., 2002). The disconcerting statistics of known cases are quite appalling.

While citizens are disheartened by news coverage of bullying situations, current research fails to examine the relationship between bullying behavior and social and moral reasoning. Such a failure is counterintuitive as it is understood that children’s concepts of social events influence their behavior (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2004). It is therefore understood that the need for this study is to save lives; the lives of the victims who feel so hopeless that they need to take their own lives, as well as those who are so overcome with hatred that they turn to vehemently violent acts as an answer.

Research Questions

Quantitative Questions:

RQ1. Do participants who read the novel *The Misfits* have lower acceptance of relational aggression than participants who do not read the novel?

RQ2. After reading *The Misfits*, do participants who scored a high level of pretest acceptance of relational aggression have lower posttest acceptance of relational aggression?

Exploratory Questions:

RQ3. What perceptions do post-treatment middle school students who show high acceptance of aggressive behaviors on the *Diverse Adolescent Relational Aggression Scale* (Horton, 2010) have regarding relational aggression?

RQ4. What perceptions do treatment middle school students who showed a decrease of at least 10 points (one standard deviation; $s = 10.340$) from pretest to posttest and whose posttest score was LOW ($n = 4$) on the *Diverse Adolescent Relational Aggression Scale* (Horton, 2010) have regarding relational aggression?

Hypotheses

- H_A1. When adjusted for pretest acceptance of relational aggression, the mean posttest acceptance of relational aggression for participants who have read *The Misfits* will be significantly lower than the mean posttest acceptance of relational aggression of participants who do not read *The Misfits* ($p < .05$).
- H_A2. After reading *The Misfits*, treatment participants who show a HIGH level of pretest acceptance of relational aggression will show a significant decrease in posttest acceptance of relational aggression ($p < .05$).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to gain insights into the knowledge base and use of YA novels in the language arts classroom as a valuable educational tool. It was undertaken to expand the literature on the ability of aesthetic readings to influence students' acceptance and engagement in relationally aggressive behaviors. This review of literature sets forth the theoretical bases of reader-response theory and bibliotherapy and their stance on the power of aesthetic readings on the psyche of the adolescent. Widely-used instructional approaches in the language arts classroom are reader-response strategies. Reader-response strategies offer students latitude in responding to what they read and encourage diverse responses. Murfin (1991) explained, "[it] focuses on what texts do to—or in—the mind of the reader, rather than regarding a text as something with properties exclusively its own," (p. 253). This instructional strategy follows the pedagogy of reader-response theory and bibliotherapy.

Reader-Response Theory

Often in literary circles the question is posed whether meaning is derived through the text or the reader. In the introduction to, *Is There a Text In This Class?: The Authority of Interpretive Communities*, Stanley Fish (1980) asserts that this inquiry is based on what he calls a "Fallacy" (p. 2). This erroneous belief is born from one of two presumptions: (a) there is absolutely no way to determine the intent of the author and meaning is given by the reader or (b) individual readers are too diverse for meaning to be derived through them and therefore it is the text alone that holds the meaning (Fish, 1980). It is within these presumptions that Reader Response Theory was borne.

As the text comes to life through reader engagement, the reader is imparted with new experiences. Iser (1980) described this process as an imaginative investigation of the reader's consciousness. The text and the reader are part of a reciprocal relationship. At the end of the journey, the reader may discover something previously elusive and is forever changed (Iser, 1980, p.68). The main controversy in ELA pedagogy has been between two competing bodies of literary criticism, the new critics and reader-response. This debate comes down to a difference in theory between the text's content and the reader's objective. Major concerns have arisen over the emphasis to be placed on teaching literature or focusing on the reader-response to the literature (Squire, 1991, p.13). The reign of new criticism, which spanned from the 1930s onwards through the 1960s, insisted that meaning was spawned directly from the text. The main consideration of new criticism was the focus on tight readings of print whereby the reader would become null and a non-existent factor in the interpretation of the reading (Benton, 2005). It was believed that if the text was read correctly that there could only be one true meaning derived from it. An example would be a student taking a standardized reading comprehension assessment. The function of reading would be to answer the questions with the best answer. In this case, the content would be the passages and would hold the answers to the questions being asked. Students are taught that the answers they seek are either directly in the text or may be inferred from the text in addition to their prior knowledge. In this situation, prior knowledge is not a personal connection with the text but is a universal understanding of a subject. An illustration of this could be a question of author's purpose. One answer choice might be that the author's purpose was to tell an amusing story in the passage. It is conceived that every student reading the passage

would come to the same conclusion about the passage and would be able to select the correct answer or write the appropriate response. The reason for reading is purely academic in nature and the reader attains an antiseptic interpretation of the reading. This type of reading is what reader-response critics would call *efferent* reading. In *efferent* readings, it is the content of the words in the text that hold the key to the answers. Reader-response theorists consider *efferent* reading only one level of reading engagement. *Aesthetic* reading is much more in-depth.

In *aesthetic* reading, reader-response criticism explicates that the drive for reading is the experience. The content of the text is a gateway for the reader to enter another realm. Reader-response criticism focuses on the reader's engagement with the literature and subsequent interpretation as to how meaning is created (Squire, 1991). A pre-teenaged young adult in a picturesque state park reading a dystopian young adult novel on a bench would be the scene for an *aesthetic* reading (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009). Among the benefits of *aesthetic* reading is the ability for readers to identify with characters that are different from themselves and to experience events that would normally be compromising or impossible. Reader-response theorists posit that literature has the ability to alter readers' thoughts and behaviors (Barthes, 1975; Rosenblatt, 1968; Tomkins, 1980). Literature, above all other texts, lends itself to a variety of reader interpretations (Barthes, 1975). Barthes (1975) contended, texts that restrict readers' imaginations by offering strict storylines, are inferior, *readerly* texts. *Readerly texts* can be considered those that call for *efferent* readings (Rosenblatt, 1968). An *efferent* reading is one that neither elicits emotional responses nor requires readers to devote any time to considering its message. *Efferent* readings may be conducted while studying or taking a

test. Usually, *effere* readings involve short passages or excerpts in school textbooks that are taken from a longer story or novel and require the reader to answer substantive questions. In high contrast, *writerly texts* invite readers to be an actively engaged (Barthes, 1975).

Rosenblatt (1968) termed this type of reader-text engagement *aesthetic* reading. Accordingly, *aesthetic* reading (Rosenblatt, 1968) of a *writerly* text (Barthes, 1975) emphasizes reading as a process. Most importantly, *aesthetic* reading is a personal process which facilitates an individual's open-mindedness and construction of new meanings and understandings (Bakhtin, 1994; Barthes, 1999; Fish, 1980; Hayakawa, 1939, 1990; Rosenblatt, 1968, 1978). Rosenblatt (1978, 1982) contended *aesthetic* reading is a transactional process involving a two-directional pathway that between the reader and the text. During this exchange, "the literary work exists in the live circuit..." (Rosenblatt, 1968, p. 25), knowledge is generated simultaneously as the text informs the reader, and the reader brings forth all prior knowledge to the text. Rosenblatt (1978, 1982) referred to the evocation of this process as a poem. Eliot's essay explicating the relationship between the writer and poetry can be applied here to succinctly describe the reader-text relationship. From the perspective of Eliot (1920):

It is a concentration, and a new thing resulting from the concentration, of a very great number of experiences which to the practical and active person would not seem to be experiences at all; it is a concentration which does not happen consciously or of deliberation. (para. 11).

The transaction between the reader and the text can thus be considered an innate skill. Conversely, the novel also has a natural affinity to make connections (Graff, 2007). "It's

[the novel's] 'spirit' naturally communicated itself at the mere contact with it," (p.20). Thus, as readers process text they experience "momentary understandings" (Langer, 1992, p. 37) that may change as the text unfolds. Iser (1980) has contended that this process of updating one's interpretation is essential to the creation of a literary work by a reader. Thus, by its very nature, engagement in the literacy act assumes an active reader whose interpretations are not stagnant but continually shaped by the influx of new information and the connections made between this new information and one's previous interpretation. Fish (1980) has contended that as "interpretive communities" interact, new interpretations are derived from the coalescence of divergent views about the text. Thus, engagement in the literacy act as it is situated within a literary discussion assumes an active participant in the discussion who approaches it with an individual interpretation that may be altered or shaped by the thoughts of other members of the interpretive community. *Aesthetic* readings call for educators to function as facilitators of learning.

Reader-Response Studies

Few studies involving the effect of reader-response on students' perceptions and behavior have been published to date. Current studies include Mallik (2010), Malo-Juvera (2012), and Zeitsiff (2014). Through student-centered lessons Mallik (2010) introduced students to literature that opened discussions relating to socio-political topics. Mallik (2010) explored the development of social consciousness through aesthetic readings of multicultural literature. Students experienced an environment constructed to aesthetically engage students with multicultural texts selected for their themes of social justice. The goal of Mallik's (2010) project was to : (a) foster and facilitate a rich aesthetic reading experience that generates excitement and interest in the reading process;

(b) support the readers' coherent expression of their aesthetic reading experience through class discussions, personal journals, and projects; and (c) support the readers' development of social consciousness and social awareness when aesthetically engaged with multicultural literature that is socio-political in nature (Mallik, 2010). Malo-Juvera (2012) investigated the influence of literature in adolescents' perception and acceptance of rape myth. Students read the novel *Speak*, whose main character is a teenage girl who struggles with the horrifying experience of being raped by a schoolmate at a party (Malo-Juvera, 2012). Malo-Juvera sought to examine the benefits of reading novels beyond standardized testing preparation. Zeitsiff (2014) explored the connection between aesthetic readings and students' self-efficacy of American literature. Malo-Juvera (2012) and Mallik (2010) found that the use of literature was effective in altering students' understanding of rape myth and social consciousness respectively. Zeitsiff (2014) had similar findings with the implementation of aesthetic readings and reader-response strategies on students' comprehension of literature. Reader-response shares the theoretical underpinnings of bibliotherapy.

Bullying

In the past, bullying consisted of face-to-face "physical aggression and indirect behavior such as verbal threats" (Harachi, Catalano, & Hawkins, 1999, p. 279). In today's technologically savvy world, bullies can torment their victims from the comfort of their own bedrooms (Hymel & Swearer, 2011). Prior to cell phones and social networking sites, students could look forward to going home and finding peace and solace outside of school (Archer, 2010; Bhat, 2008; Campbell, 2005). In this postmodern world, bullies can and do attack through social media, which follows the victim

everywhere he/she goes, offering no escape from the abuse (Archer, 2010; Bhat, 2008; Campbell, 2005; Hymel & Swearer, 2011). Methods include sending defamatory messages through text messages, e-mails, and social media outlets including forwarding sensitive private information with the intention of humiliating the victim publicly (Campbell, 2005, p. 69). Bhat (2008) expressed that though cyber bullying does not happen on the school campus the effects of the behavior are felt there. One of the greatest difficulties in counteracting bullying and cyber bullying is the lack of empirical research available (Bhat, 2008; Hymel & Swearer, 2011; Olweus, 2003; Smith & Sharp, 1994).

Major road-blocks to anti-bullying programs have been the lack of funding for further research and costly materials including teacher and administrator trainings (Mishna, Scarcello, Pepler, & Wiener, 2005; Olweus, 2003). This leaves many unanswered questions for those in educational settings as to how to deal with bullying appropriately (Mishna et al., 2005; Olweus, 2003). Scholarship concentrating on bullying in schools unravels like episodes of the television series *House*¹. While the negative repercussions of bullying are well-known, including loss of self-esteem, suicidal, and homicidal ideation, research is at a loss for an answer to the problem (Smith & Sharp, 1994; Olweus, 2003).

Research on Bullying

“[B]ullying unfolds in the social context of the peer group, the classroom, the school, the family and the larger community,” (Mishna et al., 2005, p.719). The following section examines the research related to bullying. The literature on bullying

¹ *House* is a television series that depicts an extremely gifted doctor whose job is to identify and treat patients with rare, mysterious, and difficult diseases

has exploded over past two decades including the extent of bullying (Beldean-Galea et al., 2010). Included in these studies is an extensive investigation of possible gender differences in bullying (Naylor et al., 2006; Olweus, 1978, 2003; Owens et al., 2000).

Gender and Bullying

While earlier studies had demonstrated boys as the main perpetrators of bullying (Olweus, 1978), more recent studies added discussions of girls' aggressive behaviors (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Naylor et al., 2006; Owens et al., 2000). Crick and Grotpeter (1995) introduced an additional way of examining aggressive behavior that they termed relational aggression. Other terms used to discuss this behavior are indirect aggression and social aggression (Archer & Coyne, 2005; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). This form of bullying is often dubbed, "mean girls" bullying (Ringrose, 2006; Ryalls, 2011; Stephens, 2014) in the theme of RA being a type of bullying that girls subscribe to when attacking other girls' social standing (Centrella, 2013; Crothers, Field, & Kolbert, 2005; Leff, Kupersmidt, & Power, 2003; Parisien, 2014). Other studies show that boys are comparably as likely to engage in RA as girls (Björkqvist, 2018; Juliano, Werner, & Cassidy, 2006; Seals & Young, 2003; Swearer, 2008; Wang et al., 2012). Negative repercussions of relational aggression including depression, low self-esteem, and loneliness for both victims (Prinstein, Boergers, & Vernberg, 2001) and aggressors (Crick, Ostrov, & Werner, 2006) effect both boys and girls. As a way to glean a better understanding of bullying and possibly determine deterrents for the behavior, extensive literature has focused on students' understanding and acceptance of bullying (Russel, Kraus, & Ceccherini, 2010).

Adolescents' Understanding and Acceptance of Bullying

According to the research, students often believe bullying behaviors to be normal (Limber & Small, 2003; Mishna et al., 2005). After interviewing students about their school's climate after the Santa Fe, Texas shooting, journalists Ailworth, Oberman, and McGinty (2018) reported:

“Ms. [Grace] Johnson said she doesn't think bullying is pervasive at Santa Fe High School, which she added, 'has the sorts of social cliques commonly found in American high schools.' Ms. Johnson stated: 'I guess there was just normal bullying,' she said. 'I don't think it was bullying like you'll see in a movie or anything with people being thrown into lockers. I didn't see that. It [the bullying] was very, very minor,'”

Owens, Slee, and Shute (2000) offered insight on how students perceive bullying in the classroom.

In their study, teachers' concerns included victimized students pretending that they were not affected by being bullied (Owens et al., 2000). The teachers believed that victims did not want to give bullies the satisfaction of knowing that they had been effective (Owens et al., 2000). While it is possible that victimized students think about their attacker in this way, in another study, actual interviews provided that the victims did not want to bother anyone with their problems (Smith & Sharp, 1994). This type of thinking evidences the loss of self-esteem that a victim has when enduring prolonged attacks (Boulton & Smith, 1994; Owens et al., 2000). Other symptoms of chronic victimization are difficulty concentrating, physical illness, and insomnia (Smith & Sharp, 1994).

Sentse, Veenstra, Kiuru, and Salmuvalli (2015) illuminate further repercussions of quietly accepting being victimized. In their longitudinal study, they found acceptance of bullying increased bullying behaviors (Sentse et al., 2015). Essentially, the climate of bullying is self-propagating:

The pro-bullying classroom norm seems to make it more likely that children who score relatively high on popularity or rejection (or low on acceptance) will perceive bullying as legitimate behavior to receive positive feedback or attain social prestige and a respected reputation as compared to others. (p. 945)

After completing interviews with victims, Owens et al., concluded that though the students may not outwardly show they have been psychologically damaged, the “victims endure a great deal of pain” (2000, p. 367). In some cases, victims will stay home from school to avoid exposure. Some of the most extreme circumstances end in the victim’s death by suicide. This was the case with 12-year-old Coby Bleakney. Bleakney stayed home for several days to avoid being bullied.

When his father told him that he needed to return to school, Bleakney told them he loved him, got himself ready to get on the school bus, and at the last moment changed his mind and shot himself in his bedroom (Somerville, 2018). The likelihood of bullying occurring is compounded in group settings (Sentse et al., 2014). To make matters worse, adolescents perceive popularity to be correlated with aggressive behaviors (Clemans & Graber, 2016). With such ramifications of bullying as death by suicide, several studies have explored anti-bullying interventions and preventions.

Research on Anti-Bullying Interventions and Preventions

Bullying can be interpreted as an umbrella term that encompasses a myriad of anti-social behaviors from physical violence to verbal abuse and exclusion. Relational aggression (RA) is a subset of bullying that involves non-physical attacks. Essentially, RA is characterized by extorting friendships and social relationships (Crick & Gotpeter, 1995). Research projects from multiple theories and perspectives such as social cognitive learning and information processing have attempted to resolve the issue of bullying through the development of effective interventions and/ or preventions. Promising results were found in other countries implementing whole-school anti-bullying programs (Olweus, 2003). Unfortunately, schools in the U.S. did not achieve similar results to those in other countries (Merrell, Gueldner, Ross, & Isava, 2008). It is possible that the multicultural make-up of schools' demographics in the U.S. was what made the students impervious to these international whole-school anti-bullying programs. All educational learning houses have endeavored to develop research based anti-bullying programs. Unfortunately, most studies examined general bullying, leaving the very salient form of bullying (RA) absent from studies attempting to explain or reduce acceptance of and engagement in bullying behaviors.

Anti-bullying programs have attempted to decrease bullying in several alternative ways. Those that have shown the most promising results apply the theoretical frameworks of reader-response through dramatic instruction social cognitive learning, and information processing. As previously discussed, dramatic instruction is the employment of drama activities that are specifically selected to broaden students' understanding of course material. Students learn skills through active engagement in

role-playing. Simply, social cognitive theory is the theoretical perspective that asserts one may acquire new knowledge through watching the actions of others (Bandura, 2004; Joronen, Konu, Rankin, & Astedt-Kurki, 2012). Information processing theory correlates the way the brain processes information to a computer storing and retaining information (Biggam & Power, 1999).

Social Cognitive Theory

Social cognitive theory defines human behavior in terms of the interactions between internal and environmental factors (Bandura, 2004; Joronen, Konu, Rankin, & Astedt-Kurki, 2012). The social cognitive studies examined in this paper concentrate on the role social relationships play within the scope of adolescents' acceptance of relational aggression. Each of the studies credited Bandura's research as the underpinning of their own. In concordance with Bandura and his associates, Barbaranelli, Capara, and Pastorelli (1996), social cognitive studies focus on mini cultures created within cliques. Mini-societies establish social norms that are acceptable within their unique group (Bandura et al., 1996). If individual members of a group frequently participate in bullying behaviors, others within the group will adopt the behavior as well (Bandura et al., 1996).

Vicarious learning. Vicarious learning is a social cognitive theory arguing learning can be attained through personal observations and the feedback of others (Beale, 2001; Joronen et al., 2012). As dramatic instruction assumes that learning involves self-reflection and personal interaction with the environment, it is a form of vicarious learning (Joronen et al., 2012). Dramatic instruction is referred to as "educational drama" (Hertzberg, 2003), psychoeducational drama (Beale, 2001), or process drama (Joronen et

al., 2012) interchangeably depending on the purpose of the drama class. Educational drama can broadly be defined as: “[R]ole-taking, either to understand a social situation more thoroughly or to experience imaginatively via identification in social situations” (Hertzberg, 2003). Instruction using role-play engages students in higher order thinking skills of analysis and synthesis to create meaning from the text.

Several studies sought to establish dramatic instruction as an anti-bullying practice (Baer & Glasgow, 2008; Hertzberg, 2003; and Macy, 2005). Dramatic instruction employs Rosenblatt’s (1978) transactional theory during open class discussions (Baer & Glasgow, 2008; Hertzberg, 2003; and Macy, 2005). Transaction theory, as discussed in Chapter 1, describes what happens during the action of *aesthetic* reading. *Aesthetic* reading is achieved when the reader’s focus is on the pleasurable experience that may occur during reading. While reading in the *aesthetic* stance, the reader is not concerned with anything aside from the experience, the *transaction*, which transpires between the reader and the text where the reader and the text take turns influencing the other (Rosenblatt, 1994). Finally, a synthesis or organization, more or less coherent and complete, emerges, the result of a to-and-fro interplay between reader and text (p. 6). Hertzberg (2003) and Macy (2008) examined written responses for evidence of possible transactions between the students and the literature. They looked for the type of emotional language present in reflection journals to assess how the lessons were being received. Additionally, they wanted to discern how much progress the students were making academically. The studies found dramatic instruction to be a catalyst to create new meanings and understandings of bullying (Baer & Glasgow, 2008; Hertzberg, 2003;

Macy, 2005). Hertzberg (2003), found students were able to build connections between the fictional characters and real-life situations.

Macy (2005) sought out examples of aesthetic readings where the students were able to create personal experiences for themselves through the reading of the text. One example of this was when Ellen read examples of the *Ugly Duckling* to the class (Macy, 2005). Ellen engaged her students in a discussion about the imagery used in the text and veered the conversation towards the students' personal feelings about the text (Macy, 2005). By focusing dramatic instruction as an instructional strategy, students safely experienced bullying from the perspective of both the aggressor and the victim (Hertzberg, 2003). Discussions held after the dramatic instruction demonstrated the children's learning growth and that this type of instruction greatly impacted their personal schema. When one of the students identified a character in the literature as a bully, the other children were eager to offer justification for the finding. This type of role-play allows the actor to engage in situations in a safe environment (Beale, 2001; Hertzberg, 2003; Joronen et al., 2012).

Both the Beale (2001) and Joronen et al. (2012) studies focused on the creation of a classroom environment where students felt safe and secure. The two studies followed from Bandura's (1996) theory that if the community at large partakes in positive actions, individuals within that community will be more likely to engage in positive behaviors. Beale (2001) and Joronen et al. (2012) provided informational packets to teachers and students participating in the study. The packets included discussion starters, questions and open-ended statements, to activate students' prior knowledge and to get them excited about the activities (Beale, 2001; Joronen et al., 2012). In the Beale (2001)

study, students took it upon themselves to create a play on account of what they had learned about bullying. The students called their play “Bullybusters” and performed it for their entire school (Beale, 2001). The play portrayed different bullying scenarios in which the roles of the Bullying Circle (Olweus, 2003) were acted out (Beale, 2001). Each scenario ended with either the victims defending themselves against the bully or the bystanders sticking up for the victim and acting out against the bully (Beale, 2001). After watching the play, all students returned to their classrooms where they and their teachers discussed what they had seen (Beale, 2001).

Similarly, Joronen et al. (2012) also involved students engaging with multiple bullying situations. Instead of a play put on by one group for the entire school (Beale, 2001), Joronen et al. (2012) involved students from all participating classes in a series of drama sessions. Questions to start discussions were provided by the researchers (Joronen et al., 2012). Questions were created to make students feel at ease with their group and to add to the discourse. An additional component to both programs was parent participation. Beale (2001) invited parents to watch the performance. Joronen et al. (2012) incorporated parent participation through home activities such as interviews and parent nights hosted by the drama teacher. An added component to the study was face-to-face and online counseling sessions for each participant. Participants also completed the Social Relationships Scale, which was administered before and after the intervention (e.g., “classmates intervene if someone is being bullied”). Joronen et al. (2012) reported that there was a statistically significant difference in self-reported victimization between the pre-test and post-test of the control and intervention groups. Beale (2001) arrived at a similar conclusion, finding a 20% reduction in bullying reports. Both studies discussed

the possibility of drama programs enhancing social relationships and creating a positive cohesive learning environment (Beale, 2001; Joronen et al., 2012). From this we can come to better understand that the role of the bystander is an important part of the bullying cycle. Understanding bystanders' motivations during a bullying situation and being able to educate adolescents concerning what to do if they are witnesses to bullying, could lead to a reduction in bullying.

Bystander motivation. Studies by Espelage et al. (2012) and Rigby and Johnson (2006) both sought to examine bystanders' motivations. Specifically, both studies sought to understand ~~know~~ why bystanders fell into one of three categories (Espelage et al., 2012; Rigby & Johnson, 2006): supporters of the bully, passive onlookers, or defenders of the victim as described by Olweus (2003). Espelage et al. (2012) hypothesized that participants who had positive attitudes towards bullying would be less empathetic and unwilling to intervene. In concurrence with Bandura (1996) they thought social groups where levels of bullying were higher, individuals would be less likely to intervene (Espelage et al., 2012). On the other hand, Rigby and Johnson (2006) evaluated bystander intervention in terms of self-efficacy, a social cognition construct. In their study it was expected that bystanders would help in situations where they felt that they would be able to positively affect outcomes (Rigby & Johnson, 2006).

Rigby and Johnson (2006) showed participants different bullying scenes in videos. Participants were asked to identify situations of physical and relational aggression similar to any that they witnessed in school and how often they occurred. Participants answered using an anonymous questionnaire that they filled out with a Likert-scale ranging from "every day" to "hardly ever". Afterwards, participants were shown bullying episodes

where bystanders acted in the different roles presented in Olweus' Bullying Circle (2003): as supporting the bully, ignoring the situation, or defending the victim. Follow-up questions for this portion of the investigation asked if students would also have stood up for the victim (Rigby & Johnson, 2006). Responses offered a Likert-scale ranging from "I certainly would" to "I probably would not". Participants were then asked to complete several additional surveys, Rigby and Johnson (2006) assessed them using four scales: (a) Victimization Scale; (b) the Bullying Others Scale; (c) the Perceived Self-Efficacy Scale; and (d) the Social Desirability Scale. Additionally, students were shown pictures depicting bullying scenes and were asked if adults in their life would want them to assist the bully or defend the victim (Rigby & Johnson, 2006).

Espelage et al. (2012) had participants complete several surveys: Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI), Positive Attitudes toward Bullying, self-reported bullying behavior, willingness to intervene in bullying episodes (Espelage et al., 2012). The results of the study included that there was a high correlation between bullying and an unwillingness to intervene during episodes (Espelage et al., 2012).

Information Processing

Information processing theorists believe that learning is attained through personal construction of knowledge (Biggam & Power, 1999; Hall, 2006 Feb; Menesini et al., 2003). The constructivism and information processing studies examined in this paper research study concentrated on the role the learning environment plays within the scope of adolescents' acceptance of relational aggression. Problem based learning (PBL) is a core strategy utilized in constructivist classrooms (Biggam & Power, 1999; Hall, 2006; Rubin-Vaughan, Pepler, Brown & Craig, 2011; Sapouna et al., 2010). Problem

Based Learning strategies enable students to engage with new knowledge by taking ownership of problems by constructing their own solutions (Yu et al., 2018). Two studies, Sapouna, et al., (2010); and Rubin-Vaughan et al., (2011), engaged participants in PBL through virtual environments. Sapouna et al. (2010) and Rubin-Vaughan et al. (2011) assessed interventions implemented through computer programs specifically developed to prevent bullying. Taking a different approach, Biggam and Power (1999); and Hall (2006) used scenario sets to determine the problem-solving abilities of their participants. This was used to gauge the type of response that participants thought would be effective in thwarting bullying attacks.

Virtual learning. Constructivism posits that virtual games involving interactive play create a zone of proximal development by allowing for children to act more maturely than their developmental stage (Rubin-Vaughan et al., 2011). Sapouna et al. (2010) and Rubin-Vaughan et al. (2011) both saw their investigations as related to virtual learning. Sapouna et al. (2010) examined the effectiveness of the program *Fear Not!* (Fun with Emphatic Agents to Achieve Novel Outcomes in Teaching). Rubin-Vaughan et al., (2011) examined the game *Quest for the Golden Rule*. Virtual reality platforms allow participants to safely engage in conflicts that are similar to those that may be experienced in real life.

Both *Fear Not!* (Sapouna et al., 2010) and *Quest for the Golden Rule* (Rubin-Vaughan, et al., 2011) were created not only to increase bystander intervention, but also to increase victims' repertoire of coping mechanisms and to enhance their overall problem-solving skills related to bullying. *Quest for the Golden Rule* was designed for Grades 2 to 5 (Rubin-Vaughan et al., 2011). Participants in the Sapouna et al. (2010)

study were between the ages of 7 and 8. Both programs involve a 3D animated school in which stock characters take on the specific roles exhibited in bullying incidents: victims, bullies, and bystanders (Rubin-Vaughan et al., 2011; Sapouna et al., 2010). The programs work through a three-step process.

The participants are first introduced to the characters through a bullying scenario. In the introductory scenarios, the character of the victim does not have any coping strategies (Rubin-Vaughan et al., 2011; Sapouna et al., 2010). Once the scenario has played out, the participant is able to type in suggestions to assist the victim character and prevent further victimization (Rubin-Vaughan et al., 2011; Sapouna et al., 2010). In the third step, the module continues with the victim implementing the suggested strategy (Rubin-Vaughan, et al., 2011; Sapouna et al., 2010). The characters in each program have a certain amount of artificial intelligence (AI) and are able to learn from their experiences in their simulations (Rubin-Vaughan et al., 2011; Sapouna et al., 2010). The intent is that as the scenarios progress, victims (the participants) become empowered through the process of enhancing their coping strategies and being able to practice them in a safe environment (Rubin-Vaughan et al., 2011; Sapouna et al., 2010).

Following each module, participants can assist the victim character by typing in suggestions that would prevent them from being victimized further (Rubin-Vaughan et al., 2011; Sapouna et al., 2010). The developers of both programs included a range of potential suggestions, each corresponding to a parameter ranging from never successful to always successful according to previous research and the type of bullying (aggressive or relational) to maintain a realistic feel (Rubin-Vaughan et al., 2011; Sapouna et al., 2010). A major difference between the programs is that in *Quest for the Golden Rule*

students cannot move forward through the game without providing a “prosocial solution” for the victim character (Rubin-Vaughan et al., 2011). Additionally, the *Quest for the Golden Rule* program is accompanied by a booklet including additional activities (Rubin-Vaughan, et al., 2011). Students are encouraged to complete supplementary activities at home (Rubin-Vaughan et al., 2011). In their concluding statements, Rubin-Vaughan et al. (2011); and Sapouna et al. (2010) asserted both programs were effective bullying preventions. Rubin-Vaughan et al. (2011) added that they believed this program could be used with students of various ages and could therefore be implemented as a whole-school prevention program. Other promising information processing studies involve focusing on problem solving aptitude.

Problem solving aptitude. Biggam and Power (1999) and Hall (2006) are also information processing studies focusing on problem solving. Biggam and Power (1999) focused on the problem-solving capabilities of bullies and hypothesized that bullies would be better at problem solving than their victim counterparts. Congruous to the virtual learning studies (Rubin-Vaughan et al., 2011; Sapouna et al., 2010), Hall (2006) sought to empower victims by equipping them with problem solving strategies to combat bullying.

Biggam and Power (1999) posited that in contrast to bullies, victims have inadequate problem-solving abilities and increased use of counterproductive behaviors when attempting to deal with problem situations. They also estimated that being unable to effectively solve problems creates psychological disturbance and distress (Biggam & Power, 1999). Participants in the study were males ranging in age from 16-21 who were incarcerated at a large Young Offender Institution (Biggam & Power, 1999). Findings

were similar to those of Gini (2005) and Menesini et al. (2003) where victims provided ineffective solutions to bullying situations. Biggam and Power discovered that victims consider and engage in self-harm as problem-solving strategy.

From a different vantage point, Hall investigated the problem-solving abilities of victims from the point-of-view of the school guidance counselor. Hall (2006) asserted that victims are often non-confrontational and do not advocate for themselves. Hall (2006) anticipated that if victims are taught, through PBL activities, to defend themselves against bullies, the behavior will stop and the victims will no longer be targeted (Hall, 2006). Students were identified by the guidance counselor as being victims of bullying (Hall, 2006). Prior to any action, teachers of the identified students were asked to observe the students for three weeks and to complete behavioral observation forms for each student (Hall, 2006). The intervention was similar to that of Rubin-Vaughan et al. (2011) and Sapouna et al. (2010). While participants in those studies watched bullying scenarios in a computerized simulation (Rubin-Vaughan et al., 2011; Sapouna et al., 2010) participants in this study evaluated real-world scenarios with fictional characters facing each type of bullying (Hall, 2006). The main differences between the virtual learning approaches of Rubin-Vaughan et al. (2011) and Sapouna et al. (2010) and this study were that the scenarios were read aloud to the participants and discussed as a group. Participants debated with one another during several counseling sessions aimed at teaching students how to effectively identify, apply, and practice strategies to reduce both physical and relational bullying (Hall, 2006). After the intervention the participants' teachers were asked to complete behavior reports again (Hall, 2006). The teachers'

reports showed the victims engaged in more assertive behavior and were able to effectively handle bullying situations (Hall, 2006).

Summary

In consideration of the growing number of bullying offenses, public school systems across the nation have attempted to remedy the problem through a multitude of interventions and/ or prevention programs (Welker, 2010). Circumstances have become increasingly dangerous, sometimes even leading to victims' death by suicide (Hymel & Swearer, 2011). It is obvious that a new approach needs to be taken. Social cognitive researchers theorize that people learn from engaging with their environment and watching the behavior of others (Bandura, 1996). The social cognitive studies discussed ~~in this paper~~ herein, focused on the influence of the group on bullying behaviors (Beale, 2001; Espelange et al., 2012; Gini, 2006; Joronen et al., 2012; Rigby & Johnson, 2006). Information processing researchers, who believe that individuals construct their own meaning through interactions with their environment, have focused on equipping victims with strategies to deflect bullying situations (Biggam & Power, 1999; Hall, 2006; Sapouna et al., 2010; Rubin-Vaughan et al., 2011). All studies examined within this ~~paper~~ review of the literature found positive results and concluded that their approaches could be implemented with students to prevent bullying. Additionally, "Literature can be a useful way of raising awareness of bullying and increasing empathy for those who experience it," (Smith & Sharp, 1994, p.101).

Literature with bullying themes can facilitates students' learning of social constructs including empathy and compassion for others through their relationship to the literature (Hertzberg, 2003; Macy, 2005). The research literature herein exhibits positive

behaviors in a way that students can relate, internalize, and apply this new knowledge in their everyday lives. The same way that people generally learn can be applied to teaching students how not to be bullies (Smith & Sharp, 1994). They must be constantly engaged in conversations about literature that includes situations that explicitly model for them appropriate behaviors so that they can adopt the behaviors for themselves.

This study examined the effect of a reader-response based novel study of *The Misfits* on adolescents' acceptance of RA. This novel study was part of required reading for English language arts classes in a middle school and addressed gaps in the research. The purpose of this study was to measure the effect of a reader-response novel unit on adolescents' acceptance of RA. The following chapter describes the methods used in this study to determine the effect of treatment and to address the gaps in the literature. Chapter 3 of this paper discusses the methods of the study.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

The purpose of this explanatory sequential mixed-methods study was to assess the effect of a literature-based intervention using the *Diverse Adolescent Relational Aggression Scale* (DARAS; Horton, 2010) and further explain the statistical results through individuals' voices, framed within the theoretical frameworks of reader-response and bibliotherapy. Individual participants' experiences were compared and compiled to provide a more comprehensive understanding of relational aggression. Chapter III describes the research methodology and methods. The chapter describes the design, participants, procedures, instruments, and data collection and analysis procedures.

Methods

Mixed methods denotes the use of a growing methodology in educational research (Bazeley, 2003; Johnson, & Gray, 2010; Leech, Dellinger, Brannagan, & Tanaka, 2010; Teddlie & Tashakkorie, 2009, 2010) that combines quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis in a single study (See Fig. 2 for further information). The foundation of mixed methods research designs is that the blending of the two research approaches allows for a more complete picture of the data than would conducting two separate studies.

Figure 2. Design of Study.

Mixed methods studies are designed to explore answers of both quantitative and qualitative research questions. Taking a typology-based approach (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011), the present study is an adaptation of the follow-up variation of an explanatory sequential mixed methods study. The study implemented the strands in two phases: collection and analysis of quantitative data were collected followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data. In this variation, a follow-up qualitative phase (collecting and analyzing data from interviews, class discussions, and the teachers' notebooks) was driven by the quantitative results. The adaption made to the design was the addition of a literature-based intervention implemented between the pretest and posttest (see *Fig. 3* for further information). In the second phase of the study - to help explain the quantitative results - interviews with selected participants were conducted to attain a deeper understanding of students' attitudes and behaviors (Creswell & Plano

Clark, 2011, p. 85). The aim of this explanatory sequential mixed methods study was to measure the effect of a literature-based intervention, reading the novel *The Misfits*, on adolescents' acceptance of relational aggression and gain a deeper understanding of this relationship through participants' insights regarding their experiences with the novel.

Research Questions

RQ1. Do participants who participate in a literary unit of instruction of *The Misfits* have lower acceptance of relational aggression than participants who do not participate in a literary instruction of the novel *The Misfits*.

RQ2. After reading *The Misfits*, do participants who scored a HIGH level of pretest acceptance of relational aggression (one standard deviation above the mean) have lower posttest acceptance of relational aggression?

Exploratory questions addressed by this study were:

RQ3. What perceptions do post-treatment middle school students who show a HIGH acceptance of aggressive behaviors on the post-test *Diverse Adolescent Relational Aggression Scale* (Horton, 2010) have regarding relational aggression?

RQ4. What perceptions do treatment middle school students who showed a decrease of at least 10 points from pretest to posttest and whose posttest score was LOW ($n = 4$) on the *Diverse Adolescent Relational Aggression Scale* (Horton, 2010) have regarding relational aggression?

Mixed Methods Design

A mixed methods design was appropriate for this study. According to Guba and Lincoln, there are instances when “mixed methodologies (strategies) may make perfectly

good sense,” (2005, p. 200). Mixed methods studies do not rest on the devices of either quantitative or qualitative inquiry. Instead, the two methodologies are combined to provide more complete answers to research questions (Creswell, et al., 2009; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) and can also add insights and understanding that might be missed when only a single method is used (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Mixed methods is an effective research design encompassing philosophical assumptions as well as methods of inquiry (Creswell, 2013). Johnson, McGowan, and Turner (2010) state that mixed methods research, “tends to give primacy to research questions, while at the same time taking epistemology and theoretical perspectives very seriously,” (p. 65).

There is agreement that employing both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies enhance a study by spring-boarding robust understandings of social reality in addition to offering in-depth explanations of the statistical results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Oakley, 1999). Research in education, which usually examines the impact of innovative curriculum designs, may be enriched through employing mixed methods.

Figure 3. Model of Methods Design.

Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Design

Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) describe basic frameworks for mixed methods designs. Each design is meant to be a guide for mixed methods researchers and can be adapted to meet the needs of the study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). To address the questions of the study, the framework of the explanatory sequential mixed methods design was adapted with the addition of an intervention between quantitative data collection. As the researcher did not have the ability to randomly select students, in this study participants a convenience sample was used. In education, often the only way that researchers attain participants or risk not being able to conduct the study is by using convenience sampling (Reichardt, 2009). Considering the participants' experiences with the intervention was the core of this study, it matched the follow-up explanations variant of an explanatory sequential design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Two studies that implemented this design in a similar way were Lai, Rimmer, Barstow, Javanov, and Bickel's (2016) and Merida-Gonzales's (2017).

In their study, Lai et al. (2016) presented a two-phase study. The first phase of the Lai et al. (2016) study began with quantitative data collection before and after an intervention of physical exercise. In the second phase of the study, participants discontinued intervention workouts for 3 weeks before being interviewed regarding their perceptions during the intervention phase. Similarly, Merida-Gonzales (2017) presented a two-phase study that began with quantitative data collection before and after a music intervention was implemented. The intent of this intervention was to raise students' math scores. In the second phase, students were interviewed to examine their experiences during the intervention. The present study also consisted of two sequential phases.

For the present study, the first phase involved collecting quantitative data through the DARAS before and after the implementation of an intervention. In the first phase, the intervention, consisted of an 8-week literary unit of instruction with quantitative data from surveys collected pre and post intervention. Participants in the experimental group read the novel, *The Misfits*. This novel was selected for its appropriateness for middle school students and that it had a bullying theme. The novel follows a group of four friends who are each a victim of relational aggression. The control group read, *Weasel*, a novel that does not have a bullying theme. During Phase II of this study, pretest and posttest results were used to select participants and develop an interview protocol. It should be noted that the priority (Creswell, et al., 2003; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) in the study was given to the quantitative aspect. The qualitative data collection and analysis were used to explain and enrich the quantitative findings (Creswell, 2003; Ivonka & Kawamura, 2010; Tashakkori & Teddlie 1998). The two phases were linked (Hanson, Creswell, Plano Clark, Petska, & Creswell, 2005) through the selection of the eight participants for interviews and development of the interview protocol. To gain a deeper understanding of how adolescents experience a literary unit of instruction focusing on bullying, interview participants were selected from the treatment group. The results of the two phases were integrated during the discussion of the results of the entire study. Phase II data analysis focused on supporting the validity of the intervention (Creswell, Feters, Plano Clark, & Morales, 2009; Feters, Curry, & Creswell, 2013).

Setting

The setting for this study was a municipal charter middle school in a large urban city. To attend the school, parents must complete an application to be submitted to a

lottery. Parents are notified through e-mail of their child's acceptance to the school. Parents are required to fulfill service hours each school year for each child attending. Service hours can be attained through donating items to the school, physically attending and or assisting with school functions, and participating in school fundraisers. Each year several prospective students are wait-listed. The total student body of this school is approximately 1400 students.

Approximately 650 of those students are enrolled in the middle school with each grade having an equal number of students. The school is equipped with smartboards, computers, I-pads, and laptop carts with Internet access through LAN and wireless connections are located in several classrooms. There are eight laptop carts referred to as Carts on Wheels (COWs) that teachers may checkout through an online sign-up. There is a group of high achieving computer science students who may apply to be a part of the Technology Team at the school that assists with the movement and maintenance of the COWs and desktop computers. Students also have personal access on the school's network. Each student is given a personal username and password to use the school's network. Additionally, each student is also provided with their own personal e-mail address for educational purposes. All of these factors add layers to the school's climate.

School Climate

A school's environment is a major factor in the extent and type of bullying that occurs there (National School Climate Center, 2012; Wang, Berry, & Swearer, 2013). According to students, the school's climate is positive and nurturing. As a part of the schools' charter, the school has a vision and a mission statement that both call for strong relationships between the district, staff, students and community. In addition to

administration and teachers, the school employs personnel specifically to assist with behavior management in the common areas of the school including bathrooms, hallways, and the cafeteria. Students may engage with a staff member on a more personal level through mentorships and clubs. Every teacher in the school is required to sponsor at least one club. Some associates have also chosen to sponsor some of the clubs. Several of the teachers spend their personal time assisting students with homework, mentoring and guidance. Additionally, after school programs and clubs that require more time and commitment than those offered during club days are sponsored by several faculty members. Clubs include, drama, art, and Future Educators of America (FEA).

Engaging with students in extracurricular activities is meant to cultivate strong relationships between the teachers and the students. In consideration of the relationship, students should feel comfortable reporting bullying to their teachers, associates, and administration. Fist-fights at the school are infrequent. Most of the bullying reported at the school are forms of relational aggression. According to the research literature, the highest number of reports of bullying instances concern situations that occur in the cafeteria (Parault, Davis & Pellegrini, 2007). An increase in negative behaviors in the cafeteria has proved to be an issue at the charter school as evidenced by the number of written complaints to the guidance counselor regarding instances of bullying in the cafeteria. To alleviate some of the bullying issues, the media center is open to the students. The media center is called “Starbooks” and has several seating choices for students to relax in a well-monitored environment. There are at least two adults supervising the media center at all times.

Teachers

This study was conducted with two teachers at the same school site. Both teachers are female and have each taught English language arts on the middle school level. Teachers A and B have worked together on the same team for over 12 years and have often taught the same students. The team is called the English language arts (ELA) team and consists of teachers of reading and language arts. Every team at the school meets on a weekly basis to discuss best practices in teaching strategies, and school business in general and as it specifically relates to the language arts department.

Teacher A

Teacher A is a 33-year veteran teacher, mother of four adult aged children, and grandmother to 10 grandchildren. Beginning at a private school teaching English language arts and social studies, Teacher A transferred to the charter school and continued instructing eighth grade American History and English language arts to sixth and eighth grade students. Teacher A is well-known for being soft spoken, having wonderful classroom management skills?, and having good rapport with students and teachers. This has been documented through emails praising Teacher A's efforts in the classroom and through her mentorship program.

Teacher B

Teacher B is a 14-year teacher and mother of three young children. Teacher B began teaching advanced eighth grade language arts in an inner-city school in South Florida for two years before transferring to the charter school. Teacher B started at the charter school teaching remedial and intensive reading in addition to language arts

courses with sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students as well as the elective course, drama.

Informed Consent

Participants in both the treatment and control groups were sent home with parental consent (see Appendix B) and student assent (see Appendix C) forms two – three weeks before the start of the study. The consent forms explained the purpose of the study to examine students’ acceptance of relational aggression, a type of non-physical bullying. Education of bullying awareness and prevention strategies are required by the school district where the study was conducted. The forms explained that instruction provided during the study is a required part of the language arts curriculum and that consent was only necessary for participant surveys.

Procedures

As indicated above, the present study followed the procedures of explanatory sequential mixed methods design. The literature units aligned with the general curriculum of English language arts courses as outlined in the Language Arts Florida Standards (LAFS).

***The Misfits* Literature Unit Instruction and Intervention**

The literature unit of instruction lasted for 8 weeks. The daily on goings of the school, fire drills, assemblies, and other special events added to the amount of time it took to complete the literature unit. Reading was completed inside the classroom and was also assigned as homework. As discussed in Chapter 1, students in the treatment groups read a novel with a bullying theme, *The Misfits* (Howe, 2011). The novel, *The Misfits*, tells the fictional story of a group of friends that are victims of RA. Reading

consisted of research-based reading strategies including: listening to the audio version of the novel on CD, pair reading with a partner, reading in small groups of 3-5 students, and teacher-led readings of specific scenes (Blachowicz & Ogle, 2008; Probst, 1998; 2000), and sustained silent reading.

All classes met during their regularly scheduled class time. Each class met five days a week for 52-minute sessions. All lesson plans were in alignment with the Language Arts Florida Standards (LAFS; See Appendix E for further information). This includes students' being challenged through *aesthetic* readings and engaging in an array of instructional activities including: grammar, vocabulary, textual evidence, central idea, analyzing dialogue, discussions and short research projects. As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, *aesthetic* reading refers to the stance, or reader's purpose for reading. In the *aesthetic* posture, the reader's purpose in engaging in the act of reading is to enjoy the act of reading. In accordance with special education mandates, students were given several options of projects for the novels through choice boards. Two main instructional strategies, active reading and differentiated instruction were at the core of this literature unit:

1. Active reading. In Chapter 1, active reading is explained as the process followed during *efferent* reading. To review, active reading is a set of metacognitive activities that effective readers apply when reading critically. Active reading occurs when the reader is engaged with the text and consciously applies strategies to critically analyze the text. Some strategies taught within this literary instructional unit included, questioning, visualizing, clarifying, predicting and reacting and connecting.

2. Differentiated instruction. Lesson plans focused on research-based instruction that considers the unique needs of the learners the lessons are designed for (Tomlinson & Strickland, 2005). For the present study, one strategy of differentiated instruction implemented was the choice board (See Appendix E for further information).

Choice boards have been increasing in popularity amongst educators across all disciplines. They allow teachers to easily differentiate instruction by offering students a choice of what product to create showing mastery of skills or concepts. According to Gregory and Chapman (2013):

Choice boards give students multiple ways of processing information and rehearsing content and skills. Students may work alone or with one or more partners to complete the tasks that they choose. Students may choose three in a row from a tic-tac-toe style choice board and then make a free choice, or they can create their own tasks for a wild card. Choice boards can have multiple-choice boards and lines, shapes, formats, and options, and they may be organized around multiple intelligences. (p. 156)

During the first week of the study, students completed *The Diverse Adolescent Relational Aggression Scale*. During the second through ninth week of the study, all students were engaged in a thematic unit using a novel as the anchor text. To assess reading comprehension, students completed interactive journals, short response and differentiated instructional strategies including choice boards (See Appendix E for detailed information). Students also engaged in literature circles and completed interactive packets including short-response questions. Short-response questions were

taken from the article on Simon and Shuster's website, "Reading Group Guide for *The Misfits*," (2017). There were eleven reader-response questions that were used for short papers and discussions:

1. Celebrating one's individuality is a strong theme throughout *The Misfits*. Choose one character, and using details from the book, explain how this character demonstrates her or his individuality.
2. Bobby, Skeezie, Addie, and Joe base the platform for their new political party on banishing name-calling. However, they are guilty of calling people names themselves. Cite examples throughout the book where they fall into this trap. Is name-calling a natural part of who we are, or is it learned? Give examples from the novel where name calling is positive and/or fun.
3. Examine and discuss the following pairings: Bobby and Mr. Kellerman, Addie and Ms. Wyman, Joe and Colin. How does each relationship demonstrate how people who seem different may actually be alike?
4. Bobby is surprised to discover that Pam was not popular when she was his age. How is this eye-opening, and ultimately, inspiring, for Bobby?
5. Although the No-Name Party ultimately loses the student council election, Bobby puts the loss into perspective by saying "sometimes it is about winning something much bigger." How does the No-Name Party "win"?
6. Define "misfit" as it relates to the novel. At the end of the story, are Addie, Bobby, Skeezie, and Joe really misfits? Explain your answer.
7. Does *The Misfits* present a realistic portrayal of life in middle school or junior high? In your experience, what aspects are realistic and which are not?

8. What is the difference between seeing someone as “different from” you and “less than” you?
9. Define “courage.” Which characters in the book show courage? Point out quotes and scenes in the book that demonstrate bravery.
10. Bobby decides to stop being a “get along type of guy” and stand up for himself and for others. Find characters in the book who, because of Bobby’s courage, change and stand up for themselves.
11. Horton, Dr. Seuss’s faithful elephant, says, “And it should be, it should be, it SHOULD be like that!” Is it better for fiction to reflect the way things are or point the way to how things should be? Justify your answer.

Discussion Guidelines

Three to five students were assigned to participate in group discussions together. Discussions were run by the student participants with limited interaction with the teacher to allow students to speak freely amongst their peers. Guidelines for the discussion group were discussed in class as were written on the Discussion Task Cards as a reference. Discussion Task Cards (See Appendix E for further information), developed by the researcher, were used for each discussion. The task cards included: director, vocabulary, quotes, connections, summary, and photography. Each task was explained previously during other class discussions. Directions for each task card were reviewed for participants prior to the first discussion group session.

The Director Card was given to selected participants by the teacher. The Director Card demarcated the responsibilities of being the in the leader of the discussion. The directors ensured the discussions remained on topic and asked group members probing

questions to maintain the momentum of the discussions. The Vocabulary Card delineated responsibility for the selected group member to find words that were unfamiliar to the group and to define them. Similarly, the bearer of the Quote Card was responsible for locating important quotes within the predefined pages (by the teacher) and to explain why the quotes were chosen and how they related to the discussion questions. The Connection Card required a member of the team to make connections between *The Misfits*: text-text, text-self, and text-world connections. The Summary Card required the bearer to write a two or three sentence summary of the reading. The final card, the Photography Card, entailed a member of the discussion group to find a picture or create a drawing that answered the discussion questions in some way. This card also required a written response explaining the connection between the drawing and the discussion questions. Time allotted for discussions was determined by the teacher. At the end of the small group discussions, the teacher selected one discussion director to begin the large group (whole class) discussion.

Large group discussions followed the reciprocal teaching method. Large group, for the purposes of this paper, refers to whole-class participation. The research-based approach of reciprocal teaching improves reading comprehension through focusing on the skills of questioning, clarifying, summarizing, and predicting (Oczkus, 2018). As previously discussed, active reading strategies involve applying background knowledge to the text to. Participants were expected to generate questions about the reading, answer those questions through clarification while reading further in the text, summarize what they had read in a few words, and predict what might happen next in the text. Large group discussions may promote collective feelings of community (Kohn, 1996) which

has been shown to heighten the effectiveness of the reciprocal teaching strategy (Oczkus, 2018). An additional component to large group discussions was that they might have “allow[ed] students to benefit from the rich backgrounds and ideas of their classmates,” (Oczkus, 2018, p. 121). Ground rules were set prior to the first large group discussion to ensure a safe environment to discuss the complicated issues of bullying and relational aggression. Gorski (2018) - as a part of his EdChange project to increase multicultural awareness – offers seven widely used ground rules:

1. Listen actively -- respect others when they are talking.
2. Speak from your own experience instead of generalizing ("I" instead of "they," "we," and "you").
3. Do not be afraid to respectfully challenge one another by asking questions, but refrain from personal attacks, focus on ideas.
4. Participate to the fullest of your ability -- community growth depends on the inclusion of every individual voice.
5. Instead of invalidating somebody else's story with your own spin on her or his experience, share your own story and experience.
6. The goal is not to agree -- it is to gain a deeper understanding.
7. Be conscious of body language and nonverbal responses they can be as disrespectful as words.

The ground rules were explained to the students. Biweekly teacher-made quizzes and the final exam aligned to the lessons’ objectives were given to students for formative evaluation but were not included as data. Quizzes consisted of multiple-choice questions including vocabulary and short response questions. For the final exam

participants were asked to select one of the reader response questions to expand into a one-page essay. Those scores were recorded toward the students' course work in accordance with the school requirements.

Control Group Instruction

Participants in the control group ($n = 78$) participated in a literary unit of instruction simultaneously to the treatment group. The novel study of *Weasel*, took 9 weeks. Instruction covered the Language Arts Florida Standards for reading literature. Participants answered the following questions in writers' journals and discussed their answers in class:

1. When Weasel is found dead and Nathan tells Ezra what has happened, discuss possible reasons why Ezra picks up the shovel to bury Weasel.
2. *Weasel* is one of many stories in which the forces of good and evil are clearly drawn, compare this novel with another one that explores this dichotomy.
3. Nathan regrets not taking the opportunity to kill an evil man. Discuss the repercussions that killing Weasel would have had on Nathan and his family?
4. How does the support of others help us persevere and reach a goal?

Phase I

Participant Selection Process

The participants in the first phase of the study were a convenience sample of the students in Teacher A's and B's classes (See Table 3.1 for further information). The school's population consists of 50% Hispanic/Chicano/a, 37% Black, and 10% White during the year the study was conducted. (Approximate values are given to protect

confidentiality.) Emphasis was placed on the quantitative strand of this study therefore, participants were chosen who would assist in an in-depth of understanding of the quantitative data (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016) of adolescents' acceptance of relational aggression. Participants were sixth grade ($n = 98$) and eighth grade ($n = 44$) students. Participants ranged in age from 10 to 14 years old.

Table 3.1

Class Details

Class	Teacher A/B	Condition	Grade	Ages	<i>n</i> Male	<i>n</i> Female	<i>n</i>
1	A	Control	8	13-14	12	11	23
2	A	Control	6	11-12	9	15	25
3	A	Control	6	11-12	6	11	17
4	A	Treatment	6	11-12	11	9	20
5	B	Control	6	11-12	7	6	13
6	B	Treatment	6	11-12	6	7	13
7	B	Treatment	8	13-15	10	7	17
8	B	Treatment	8	13-14	9	4	13
				Total	70	71	141

Quantitative Sources of Data

Data were first gathered through the *Diverse Adolescent Relational Aggression Scale* (Horton, 2010). The scale was administered to all participants during their ELA class one week prior to beginning the literary unit of instruction.

After collecting all consent forms, the teachers administered the *Diverse Adolescent Relational Aggression Scale (DARAS)* to all students prior to beginning the

literature intervention. The literature-based intervention lasted for 8 weeks. After concluding the literature intervention, the teachers administered the DARAS for posttest analysis. The pretest was administered prior to the intervention. The posttest was given after the completion of the intervention.

Instrument

This study used the *Diverse Adolescent Relational Aggression Survey* (See Appendix D; DARAS). The scale consists 28 items designed to measure the perception of how acceptable it is to engage in relationally aggressive behaviors under varying conditions such it is okay to post negative things about someone on social media (Horton, 2010). The *Diverse Adolescent Relational Aggression Scale*:

[W]as worded positively to describe relational aggression behaviors and influences and were scaled in a four-point Likert format: (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) agree, and (4) strongly agree. To score this measure the responses were calculated in two ways: (1) the sum of all the items were totaled for a score, and (2) the average of all the items were totaled for a score. The items were scored so that higher scores indicate more relational aggression. (Horton, 2010)

Four factors addressed by the scale are gender, family functioning, peer relationships and community. Questions 1-9, 14-19, and 27-28 give respondents statements that exemplify relationally aggressive behaviors and are answered on a 4-point Likert-style scale (A = strongly disagree to D = strongly disagree). Questions 11-13 give respondents statements regarding the association between gender and engagement in relationally aggressive behaviors on a 4-point Likert-style scale (A = strongly disagree to D = strongly disagree). Questions 20 and 24 give respondents statements relating to their knowledge of adults'

acceptance of relational aggression on a 4-point Likert-style scale (A = strongly disagree to D = strongly disagree). Questions 21 and 25 give respondents statements relating to their knowledge of their parents' acceptance of relational aggression on a 4-point Likert-style scale (A = strongly disagree to D = strongly disagree). Questions 22-23 and 25 give respondents' statements relating to their knowledge of their friends' acceptance of relational aggression on a 4-point Likert-style scale (A = strongly disagree to D = strongly disagree).

The *Diverse Adolescent Relational Aggression Scale* was tested for internal consistency by Horton (2010) who achieved a Cronbach's alpha of .78 for items 1-14 and .70 (Marotta, 2015). Marotta (2015) provided a Cronbach's alpha of .872. Subsequent studies have found it to have Cronbach's alpha values of .72 (Bibi, & Malik, 2016) and .76 (Mukhar & Mahmood, 2018).

Higher scores on the DARAS are indicative of a higher level of acceptance of relational aggression. The scores will be used to create a baseline portrait of the students' acceptance of relationally aggressive behaviors.

Data Collection

The DARAS (Horton, 2010) was administered to all participants in the study before and after the literature-based intervention.

Pretests. The week prior to beginning the novel units, participants were given the DARAS (Horton, 2010) as the pretest to measure their level of acceptance of RA. A scantron on Google Forms was created for the study. Participants keyed their answers into the Google scantron. Participants were instructed to type in their last five digits of their lunch identification number for confidentiality. In addition to the 28 questions on

the DARAS, the Google scantron included demographic questions that asked for the participant's gender, age, and ethnicity. Participants were informed that their answers would be confidential, that the survey answers could only be viewed by the researcher and was under password protection. It was requested of the participants that their answers should be a true reflection of their thoughts about and engagement in relational aggression. It was discussed that there were no wrong or right answers. It was also explained that their answers would not have any influence on their grades.

Posttests. In week 10, following the intervention, participants were given a posttest using the DARAS (Horton, 2010). After the scores of the DARAS were recorded in an MS Excel spreadsheet, they were compared to the pretest scores to select participants for the interviews. All classes in the study were posttested subsequent to the final exams on their respective novels. Testing of the DARAS was conducted between the pretest and posttest dates. As with the pretest, participants keyed their answers into a Google scantron. Participants were instructed to again type in their last five digits of their lunch identification number for confidentiality and so their scores could be matched with the pretest scores.

Statistical Analysis

Data were entered into and analyzed using the SPSS 25 statistical program. Tests were conducted on null hypotheses using $\alpha = .05$. Sample size power analysis revealed that to detect a standardized treatment effect of .5 with a power level of .80, sample sizes for two groups would need to be 53.

Null hypotheses and analysis. Null hypotheses were analyzed utilizing the following statistical procedures:

1. *When adjusted for pretest acceptance of relational aggression, the mean posttest acceptance of relational aggression for participants who have read The Misfits will be greater than or equal to the mean posttest acceptance of relational aggression of participants who do not read The Misfits ($p < .05$).*

A 2 (group) x 2 (sex) x 2 (instructor) x 2 (grade) one-way ANCOVA was conducted to measure differences in acceptance of relational aggression between treatment and control groups, using pretest acceptance of relational aggression as a covariate.

2. *Participants who show a high level of pretest rape myth acceptance and read The Misfits will have a higher or equal mean acceptance of relational aggression scores adjusted for pretest than participants who did not read The Misfits ($p < .05$).* Participants were divided into a HIGH acceptance of relational aggression group ($n = 17$): participants with pretest scores 1 standard deviation above the mean ($\bar{x} = 70.03$, $s = 10.340$) of all pretest acceptance of relational aggression scores; and LOW acceptance of relational aggression: participants with pretest scores 1 standard deviation below the mean of all pretest acceptance of relational aggression scores ($n = 27$). An ANCOVA using pretest acceptance of relational as a covariate was conducted comparing posttest acceptance of relational aggression in the HIGH acceptance of relational aggression group who read *The Misfits* (HIGH acceptance of relational aggression Treatment) to participants in the HIGH acceptance of relational aggression group who did not read *The Misfits* (HIGH acceptance of relational aggression Control; $p < .05$).

Null interaction hypotheses and analysis. The following null interaction hypotheses were tested using a 2 (group; treatment or control) x 2 (sex) x 2 (instructor; A or B) x 2 (grade level; 6 or 8) ANCOVA ($p < .05$).

1. *In the population, there will be no interaction between group and sex in posttest acceptance of relational aggression adjusted for pretest acceptance of relational aggression ($p < .05$).*
2. *In the population, there will be no interaction between group and instructor in posttest acceptance of relational aggression adjusted for pretest acceptance of relational aggression ($p < .05$).*
3. *In the population, there will be no interaction between group and grade level in posttest acceptance of relational aggression adjusted for pretest acceptance of relational aggression ($p < .05$).*

Statistical Analysis of the *Diverse Adolescent Relational Aggression Scale*.

Cronbach's alpha was calculated for the Diverse Adolescent Relational Aggression Scale to determine internal consistency.

Phase II: Qualitative Data

In an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, the quantitative data can inform the sampling procedure and point toward the types of exploratory questions to ask in the second phase (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Qualitative data were collected throughout the literature-based unit and during interviews in the second phase of the study. The purpose of the qualitative component of the data was add to the narrative of the quantitative results (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

Exploratory research questions:

RQ3. What perceptions do post-treatment middle school students who show a HIGH acceptance of aggressive behaviors on the post-test *Diverse Adolescent Relational Aggression Scale* (Horton, 2010) have regarding relational aggression?

RQ4. What perceptions do treatment middle school students who show a HIGH pretest acceptance of aggressive behaviors with a LOW posttest score on the *Diverse Adolescent Relational Aggression Scale* (Horton, 2010) have regarding relational aggression?

Participant Selection Process

The present study followed the follow-up variation of the explanatory sequential mixed methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In this variation type of an explanatory sequential mixed methods study, a few individuals from the first phase are identified and purposefully selected from the larger sample to be participants in the second phase (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Creswell and Plano Clark (2013) suggest that participants selected for Phase II interviews should those that will best develop, or inform, the quantitative results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The participant selection process in the second phase of the study was completed at the culmination of the literary intervention (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

Another best practice in selecting qualitative participants is to be mindful that sample sizes need to be manageable (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). A total of eight students were selected; a manageable number of interviewees considering the time needed for interviews, transcription, coding and analysis. The researcher chose

participants for the qualitative phase that would best answer the qualitative research questions. Interview participants were also selected based their pretest and posttest scores on the *Diverse Adolescent Relational Aggression Scale*.

Participants scoring HIGH on both pretest and posttest ($n = 4$) and those who showed a decrease of at least 10 points from pretest to posttest and whose posttest score was LOW ($n = 4$), and were extremely vocal in class discussions exhibiting insight into the socially aggressive behaviors of themselves and their peers were selected for interviews.

Participants

The researcher selected eight students, who met the previously mentioned criteria, for interviews to glean further insight into the quantitative results in Phase I. Eight students were selected from the surveys to be interviewed. The purpose of the interviews was to investigate students' acceptance of relational aggression through their voices and their perceived influence the novel had on their participation in relationally aggressive behaviors.

Data Collection

The purpose of the interviews and small group discussions were to gain an in-depth understanding of adolescents' perception of the literature-based intervention targeted to reduce relational aggression to determine what activities, in the intervention, aided or didn't support, the participants' changing their level of acceptance of relational aggression (RA). Teacher A and B also took notes in a notebooks regarding students' responses to lessons, discussions, and other comments pertaining to their understanding and acceptance of RA.

Interview Protocol Development

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with predesigned interview questions (See Appendix F). The interview protocol was developed using the quantitative results from Phase I of the study. Considering the purpose of the interviews was to elaborate on the statistical tests (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) the interviews focused on participants' perceptions of RA and the novel, *The Misfits*. More specifically, if the novel contributed to participants' posttest responses. As suggested by Merriam (2002; 2009) Questions used in the qualitative interviews were be developed through open-ended questions that allowed for flexibility and minimal structure.

Findings in previous research served as the foundation for the interview questions of the present study. For example, studies concerning adolescents' perception of relational aggression in Crick and Grotpeter (1995), Horton (2010), and Marotta, (2015) and numerous school climate studies including those by Farina (2014), National School Climate Center (2012), Wang, Berry, and Swearer (2013), and Yang et al. (2018). The interview protocol included questions asking what the participants thought about the novel and its coverage of RA, how they describe themselves as friends, and what role they believed the school's climate and administrators had on their behavior.

System for Data Tracking

Advances in quantitative research includes the use of Quantitative Data Analysis Software (QDAS; Gilbert, Jackson, & di Gregorio, 2014). The researcher chose to use the Dedoose QDAS. The researcher found the program to be user friendly and did not take extensive time to learn to use it to analyze the quantitative data. The program was convenient for the researcher to manage interview information more efficiently. Digitally

recorded interviews were transcribed into MS Word documents. The documents were then uploaded into the Dedoose QDAS program for easy management and storage. All information was password protected on the researcher's personal computer and another password was used for the Dedoose program. Field notes served as a guide for keeping track of the order of the interviews and participants' pseudonyms.

Coding Procedure

Analysis of the participants' responses to the open-ended interview questions quantitative data was used to gain an in-depth understanding of the quantitative data. From the onset of the study, the researcher began jotting down notes and pre-coding thoughts that seemed "worthy of attention," (Saldaña, 2013, p. 19) in the researcher's journal. Data from all discussions, interviews, and researcher's notes were coded.

Our codes show how we select, separate, and sort data to begin an analytic accounting of them. Qualitative codes take segments of data apart, name them in concise terms, and propose an analytic handle to develop abstract ideas for interpreting each segment of data. (Charmaz, 2006, p. 45)

Saldaña (2013) suggested that coding is cyclical and should be completed through more than one cycle.

Three cycles of coding were conducted on the qualitative data. Coding methods selected were those that would best answer the research questions (Saldaña, 2013). In the first cycle, researcher's notes and class discussions were coded using the method of initial coding. During initial coding, it is important to keep an open-mind to wherever the data leads (Charmaz, 2006, p. 46). This involves identifying with the data through deep

reflection on subtle differences and similarities within it (Saldaña, 2013). The first codes that began to emerge were jotted down and then transferred into the Dedoose program.

In the second and third cycle of coding, computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, Dedoose (2018), was used to facilitate the analysis of structural coding (Saldaña, 2013) to further categorize the data. The second cycle used the structural method (Saldaña, 2013) of coding to advance comparisons and relationships within the data. To enhance credibility, trustworthiness, and organization, code landscaping (Saldaña, 2013) was created using the Dedoose program between the second and third cycles of coding the qualitative data. During the third cycle of coding, the qualitative data was reorganized and reanalyzed using axial coding (Saldaña, 2013) to establish dominant codes from less important ones.

Debriefing

All participants received a presentation from the school guidance counselor regarding bullying. The guidance counselor reviewed the county's bullying policy and anonymous bullying reporting forms and 24-hour suicide hotline. Participants in treatment groups were given the opportunity to discuss any issues that arose during the novel study of *The Misfits*. Participants chosen for interviews were given the opportunity to discuss any issues that arose during or after the interviews.

Delimitations of Study

The researcher considered the choices made throughout the study and the delimitations attached to those decisions:

1. The intervention was limited to studying the, *The Misfits*, a novel with one - type of relational aggression (i.e., intense name calling.)
2. Participants' acceptance of relational aggression was measured by one instrument (*The Diverse Relational Aggression Scale*). This instrument only measured self-reported acceptance of relational aggression, not knowledge about it.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter presents the results from a literary-based intervention, reading the novel *The Misfits*, to reduce adolescents' acceptance of relational aggression. Relational aggression is a form of bullying that places emphasis on harming the victim's friendships and social status (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). In the context of the present study, social status refers to the relative respect, competence, and admiration afforded to particular people in a society (Sauder, Lynn & Podolny, 2012). This chapter presents sample data, results of analyses of the *Diverse Adolescent Relational Aggression Scale* pre- and posttest scores, and selected responses to interview questions.

Phase I: Quantitative Data

The current explanatory sequential mixed methods study used quantitative and qualitative research methods to evaluate the effectiveness of a literary based intervention. This two-phased study began with quantitative data collection and analysis, which was followed by qualitative data collection and analysis undertaken in order to further explain the results of the quantitative data analysis. Students completed the *Diverse Adolescent Relational Aggression Scale* (DARAS) to provide information regarding their degree of acceptance of relational aggression. One goal of the current study was to assess if there were changes in students' responses associated with program implementation. Explicitly, the study was undertaken to determine whether the students who read the novel *The Misfits* demonstrated less post-implementation acceptance of relational aggression than did students in the control group, who did not read a novel with a bullying theme.

Research Questions

The research questions for the quantitative phase of this study were:

RQ1. Do participants who participate in a literary unit of instruction of *The Misfits* have lower acceptance of relational aggression than participants who do not participate in a literary instruction of the novel *The Misfits*.

RQ2. After reading *The Misfits*, do participants who scored a HIGH level of pretest acceptance of relational aggression have lower posttest acceptance of relational aggression?

Sample

Participants were sixth ($n = 95$) and eighth grade ($n = 46$) students from eight language arts classes in a charter school in South Florida (total $n = 141$). The sample was 47.5% boys ($n = 67$) and 52.5% girls ($n = 74$). Participants' age (see Table 4.1 for further information) ranged from 11-14 years ($x = 12.26$, $s = 1.067$). Participants in the study were Hispanic/Latino/a (56.7%, $n = 80$); Black (29.1%, $n = 41$); White (12 %, $n = 17$); Pacific Islander/Asian (1.4%, $n = 2$) and Multiracial (.7%, $n = 1$).

Four classes (student $n = 78$) were assigned to control and four classes were assigned to treatment (student $n = 63$). There were two teachers (Teacher A and Teacher B) in the study. Curriculum mandates of the school prohibited Teacher A from using *The Misfits* in more than one of her classes. Teacher A taught four classes involved in the study (total student $n = 85$; one treatment class, student $n = 20$; three control classes, student $n = 65$) and Teacher B had four classes (total student $n = 56$; three treatment classes, student $n = 42$; one control class, student $n = 15$). In order to maintain a roughly even amount of participants in treatment and control classes, Teacher B taught four

courses English language arts courses, one control and three treatment. The one control group class taught by Teacher B was randomly selected. Participants in the control group were in sixth ($n = 55$) and eighth grade ($n = 23$). Participants in the treatment group were also in sixth ($n = 41$) and eighth grade ($n = 22$). The control group consisted of 47.4% boys ($n = 37$) and 47.6% girls ($n = 41$). The treatment group consisted of 51.5% boys ($n = 34$) and 48.5% girls ($n = 31$).

Table 4.1

Participant Demographics

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Age		
11	40	28.4
12	50	35.5
13	25	13.7
14	26	18.4
Sex		
Female	74	52.5
Male	67	47.5
Race/Ethnicity		
Hispanic/Latino/a	80	56.7
White	17	12
Black	41	29.1
Pacific Islander/ Asian	1.4	2
Multiracial	.7	1

All participants completed the DARAS (Horton, 2010). Pretest scores on the DARAS for the control group were $\bar{X} = 70.35$, and for the treatment group $s = 9.7$ and $\bar{X} = 69.25$, $s = 10.22$. Posttest scores on the DARAS for the control group were $\bar{X} = 72.571$, $s = 10.22$ and for the treatment group were $\bar{X} = 64.98$, $s = 9.23$ (See Table 4.2).

Table 4.2

DARAS Scores

Group	Posttest Scores	
	Mean	Std. Error
Control	72.571 ^a	1.015
Treatment	64.982 ^a	1.124

a. Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: Pretest = 70.03.

Analysis of Diverse Adolescent Relational Aggression Scale

The following section presents data and analyses of the DARAS. Pretest scores on the DARAS ranged from 28 to 100. Internal reliability was determined for the entire scale yielding a Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha = .829$).

Attrition

There were 171 participants who took the pretest DARAS, 141 participants completed the DARAS posttest. Students who did not complete the DARAS posttest had been transferred out of the class from either Teacher A's or Teacher B's class into another ELA course that was not part of the study and were therefore not included in the final spreadsheet for the study. In addition, there were three participants who transferred from one period of the researcher's class to another period later or earlier in the day. Those three students were included in the final spreadsheet for the study.

Tests of the Null Hypotheses

H₀₁: When adjusted for pretest acceptance of relational aggression, the mean posttest acceptance score of relational aggression for participants who have read *The Misfits* will be greater than or equal to the mean posttest acceptance score of relational aggression of participants who do not read *The Misfits* ($p < .05$) as measured by the DARAS (Horton, 2010).

A preliminary test to evaluate homogeneity of slopes was assessed by Levene's Test. Using the DARAS posttest scores as a dependent variable, DARAS pretest scores as a covariate, and Group (treatment or control) as the independent variable results revealed the degree of relational aggression was normally distributed for both groups and that there was homogeneity of variance. It was found that relationship between the covariate and the dependent variable did not differ significantly as a function of the independent variable $F(1, 139) = .615, p = .058$.

Interactions were tested using a 2 (group) x 2 (sex) x 2 (instructor) x 2 (grade) one-way ANCOVA using DARAS pretest scores as a covariate and the DARAS posttest scores as the dependent variable was conducted to measure differences in acceptance of relational aggression between treatment and control groups. The ANCOVA was significant for Group, $F(1, 141) = 14.788, p = .000, \eta^2 = .001$. Thus, we reject the null hypothesis and accept that when adjusted for pretest acceptance of relational aggression, the mean acceptance of relational aggression for participants who have read *The Misfits* will be significantly lower than the mean posttest acceptance of relational aggression of participants who do not read *The Misfits* ($p < .001$).

The ANCOVA was not significant for Sex, $F(1, 141) = .10, p = .919$. We can therefore conclude that when adjusted for pretest acceptance of relational aggression boys' and girls' posttest scores on the DARAS were not significantly different.

The ANCOVA was not significant for Teacher, $F(1, 141) = .006, p = .941$. Thus, we can conclude that the effect of being in classes taught by Teacher A or Teacher B did not significantly affect participants' acceptance of relational aggression scores.

The ANCOVA was not significant for Grade, $F(1, 141) = .135, p = .714$. Thus, we can conclude that the effect of being in different grades did not significantly affect participants' acceptance of relational aggression scores.

H₀2. After reading *The Misfits*, treatment participants who scored a HIGH level of pretest acceptance of relational aggression will have a posttest score equal or higher than their pretest score as measured by the DARAS. Following the results of the ANCOVA, we can conclude that there was a statistically significant decrease in acceptance of relational aggression from pretest to posttest. Therefore, we must reject the null hypothesis. Thus, the alternative hypothesis must be accepted: Treatment participants who scored HIGH on the pretest as measured by the DARAS will score significantly lower on posttest.

For the testing of null hypothesis 2, participants were divided according to pretest scores of the DARAS into two groups: HIGH acceptance of relational aggression: participants with pretest scores 1 standard deviation above the mean of all pretest DARAS scores ($\geq 80, n = 17$); and LOW acceptance of relational aggression: participants with pretest scores 1 standard deviation below the mean of all pretest acceptance of relational aggression scores ($\leq 60, n = 27$). Pretest DARAS ($\bar{x} = 70.03, s = 10.3$).

An ANCOVA using pretest DARAS scores as a covariate was conducted comparing posttest DARAS scores between participants with High acceptance of relational aggression in the treatment group (DARAS posttest $\bar{x} = 73.08$, $n = 12$) and participants with High acceptance of relational aggression in the control group (DARAS posttest $\bar{x} = 89.00$, $n = 15$). Results showed a statistical significance between group means, $F(1, 27) = 15.460$, $p = .001$. Thus, we reject the null hypothesis and can conclude that there was a difference in posttest acceptance of relational aggression between participants with HIGH pretest score on acceptance of relational aggression who read *The Misfits* and participants with HIGH pretest acceptance of relational aggression who did not read *The Misfits*.

The results of the ANCOVA with participants who show a HIGH score on the DARAS also provided analysis of the following interaction hypotheses:

1. *In the sample of HIGH scoring participants, there will be no significant interaction between Group and Sex in posttest acceptance of relational aggression ($p < .05$). The ANCOVA was not significant for interaction between Group and Sex, $F(1, 27) = .568$, $p = .017$. Thus, we fail to reject the null and we cannot conclude that the effect of group varied by sex in adjusted posttest acceptance of relational aggression.*
2. *In the sample, there will be no significant interaction between Group and Teacher in posttest acceptance of relational aggression ($p < .05$). The ANCOVA was significant for interaction between Group and Teacher, $F(1, 27) = 1.92$, $p = .180$.*

Thus, we accept the null and must conclude that the effect of group varied by instructor in adjusted posttest acceptance of relational aggression.

3. *In the sample, there will be no significant interaction between Group and Grade level in adjusted posttest acceptance of relational aggression ($p > .05$). The ANCOVA was not significant for interaction between Group and Grade level, $F(1, 27) = .017, p = .897$. Thus, we fail to reject the null and cannot conclude that the effect of group varied by grade level in adjusted posttest acceptance of relational aggression.*

Phase II: Qualitative Data

In Phase II of the study, the pretest and posttest assessment scores, along with Teacher A's and B's recommendations, were used to select eight participants for interviews. The selected participants were asked and agreed to participate in interviews. The eight students were also a part of whole-class and small group discussions. Notes were taken in teachers' notebooks before, during, and after discussions and interviews. The qualitative data were collected to further explain the results of Phase I and thereby enhance the literature on adolescents' acceptance of relational aggression.

The main aspects of the section are discussions of the data collection process, the qualitative data analysis software (QDAS) used to keep track of the data, relevant responses to the interview questions, and a summary of the themes. As Creswell (2007) cogently explained, the purpose of the qualitative methods part of mixed methods research is to explore and understand the meaning people attribute to a social or human problem. In this study, it was included to explore and understand the meaning students who were in the treatment group attributed to their (high or low levels of) acceptance of

relational aggression. Central to the problem of this study was a gap in research which explored acceptance of relational aggression in middle school from the perspectives and experiences of adolescents.

Exploratory Research Questions

The research questions for the Phase II qualitative phase of this study were:

RQ3. What perceptions do post-treatment middle school students who show a HIGH acceptance of aggressive behaviors on the post-test *Diverse Adolescent Relational Aggression Scale* (Horton, 2010) have regarding relational aggression?

RQ4. What perceptions do treatment middle school students who showed a decrease of at least 10 points from pretest to posttest and whose posttest score was LOW ($n = 4$) on the *Diverse Adolescent Relational Aggression Scale* (Horton, 2010) have regarding relational aggression?

Interview Participants

Participants were sixth ($n = 2$) and eighth grade ($n = 6$) students from two language arts classes in a charter school in South Florida (See Table 4.3 for more information). The sample was 62.5% boys ($n = 5$) and 37.5% girls ($n = 3$). Participants in Phase II of the study were 50% Black ($n = 4$), 25% Hispanic/Latino/a ($n = 2$), 12 % White ($n = 1$); and 12% Multiracial ($n = 1$). Three participants, Eugene, Shang, and Adam were chosen because both their pretest and posttest scores were in the HIGH range (scores > 80). Merida had a HIGH range scores and was extremely vocal during discussions. Four participants: Florian, Belle, Tiana, and Flynn, were chosen because their scores dropped at least 1 standard deviation from pretest to posttest.

Table 4.3

Interview Participants' Demographics

Participant	Sex	Grade Level	Race/Ethnicity	Pretest Score	Adjusted Posttest Score	Change in Scores
HIGH Posttest						
Eugene	M	8	Hispanic	92	100	+ 8
Adam	M	8	Hispanic	89	94	+ 5
Shang	M	6	Black	88	86	- 2
Merida	F	8	Black	83	86	+ 3
LOW Posttest						
Florian	M	8	Black	65	55	-10
Belle	F	8	White	67	39	-28
Tiana	F	6	Bi-racial	60	49	-11
Flynn	M	8	Black	81	38	-17

What follows is a brief overview of each participant. The names of each participant in this study are pseudonyms selected by the researcher.

Eugene. Eugene is a 14-year old, Hispanic male student in the eighth grade. Eugene is a professional dancer and would often be tired in class after working late the previous evening. Eugene has an older sister who has small children that he often is the caregiver for. Eugene is characteristically different from other students in the eighth grade in height, personal appearance, and personality. Eugene is taller than most students in the grade and wears his hair in what is typically referred to as a man bun. Eugene's hair served as a type of symbol demarking what separated him from his classmates as

there were no other students in the school who wore their hair in that way. This served as a conversation starter for almost the entire year. In the last week of school, Eugene decided to cut his hair, sparking new vigor into the discussion of Eugene's hair. Eugene was friends with mostly the popular students in the eighth grade Eugene initiated and engaged in many arguments in the classroom arising from one student's proclivity for entering in conversations that he was not originally a part of. Eugene had a HIGH score on the survey (90) and increased two points in the posttest (100).

Adam. Adam is a 13-year old, Hispanic male student in the eighth grade. Adam had several schedule changes during the school year. He started off in the morning class, transferred into the afternoon class, and then returned to the morning class. Adam felt that the morning class was a better class, but that he had more fun in the afternoon class. Adam was often hungry in class and said that he did not have lunch or money to purchase lunch. Adam explained that his mother had been ill, and his father was working nights and just kept forgetting to give him money for his account or to go food shopping. Adam started out in a LOW score on the survey (74) and raised 25 points (99) on the posttest.

Shang. Shang is a 12-year old, Black male student in the sixth grade. Shang is tall and a member of the track team. He is interested in all sports and talks about the middle school teams, soccer, football, and track in class often. Shang had a small group of close friends that he would sit with during class. This group chose to sit in front of Teacher B's desk and would often talk to her about their lives and ask questions about personal matters. A concern that arose during a conversation was Shang's attitude towards a female student in the school that had done something inappropriate with a male student in a classroom the previous year. Shang voiced that it was the girl's fault that

other people were talking about her because of her choices. According to Teacher B, Shang also told some secrets that his friends would share with him privately during class time embarrassing them. Shang scored in the HIGH range on the pretest survey (88) and dropped three points on the posttest (86).

Merida. Merida is a 14-year-old, Black female in the eighth grade. She was chosen for the interview because of her willingness to share and her insight during classroom discussions. Merida was usually outspoken during whole-group discussions where she dominated the conversation. In small group discussions, which were often more challenging, Merida was less involved. During the initial whole-class discussions Merida was interested in having her ideas about the novel and relational aggression shared. Merida was well-known in the eighth grade, but often would separate herself and sit alone in the back of the room. Other students would complain about Merida and express that they did not like her for various reasons including she was not nice to them. They would also include that she was not aware of this. Merida scored HIGH (83) on the pretest survey and stayed HIGH (86) on the posttest.

Flynn. Flynn is a 14-year-old, Black male student in the eighth grade. Flynn is one of the tallest students in the school and is well-known amongst his classmates. He plays football in his spare time. Usually, Flynn is good-natured and often participates in class discussions. Flynn was most vocal during small group sessions. At times, Flynn would engage in negative banter with other students. There was a specific student that he would consistently argue with for significant periods of time across the room and would need to be redirected to continue classwork. He would always explain that the other

person started with him. Flynn started with a HIGH score on the survey (69) and dropped 17 points (52).

Florian. Florian is a 14-year-old, Black male student in the eighth grade. At the end of Florian's seventh grade year he was involved in a situation that violated the Student Code of Conduct. As a result, Florian was suspended into the current year and he missed the first week of school. Prior to his arrival, classmates described Florian as being disruptive to the classroom learning environment. They described Florian as having poor impulse control, consistent physical movement around the classroom, non-compliance of classroom rules, and initiation of physical altercations. When Florian returned to school, his behavior was significantly different than described. Florian's classmates were impressed with the positive changes in his classroom behavior. During the school year, he became extremely popular throughout the entire eighth grade class. Florian had a score of (60) during pretest and dropped 10 points in the posttest (50).

Belle. Belle is a 14-year-old, White, female student in the eighth grade. Belle joined the school as a new student in the second week of the school year. At first light, it appeared Belle made friends quickly, however Belle explained that she had known some of the students from elementary school. Belle shared that some of the girls that she became friends with had been mean to her, or bullied her, in elementary school. Belle is extremely quiet and soft-spoken. In the classroom Belle has a small group of other girls that she talks to during group activities. Belle completed her work meticulously and spent most of her time in class perfecting what she did before handing it in. Belle scored (54) during pretest and went down 10 points on the posttest (44).

Tiana. Tiana is a 12-year-old, Mixed race female in the sixth grade. Tiana had a select group of friends in the class that she would talk to exclusively and often needed to be redirected to complete classwork. During group-work, if Tiana was placed in a group that was not comprised of the girls in her small clique, Tiana would turn around in her chair and look for her friends to see where they were sitting. At times, she needed several reminders to work with the group to maintain momentum on assignments. When working with members of the clique, Tiana took charge and served as the director of the group and would make sure that everything was completed. Tiana was usually quiet in class unless responding to discussion questions. Tiana scored (50) on pretest and went down 11 points (39) in the posttest.

Qualitative Data Gathering Process

The research setting for this study was a charter middle school in a major metropolitan school district in South Florida. Data were gathered primarily from two sources: interviews and researcher notes during class discussions. Participants were eight students who were purposefully selected from Phase I of the study. The primary objective of Phase II of this research study was to explore and determine how adolescents describe their experiences regarding relational aggression at the middle school level.

Interviews. Quality interviews are filled with rich data deepened with words that reveal the respondents' perspectives (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The researcher determined that collecting and analyzing data concerning language arts students' descriptions of their experiences with relational aggression would vastly improve this study's credibility (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). After the interview participants were selected; semi-structured interviews were conducted.

Selection of participants. Creswell and Plano Clarke (2013) impress the importance of selecting appropriate candidates for interviews. Interview participants should be knowledgeable about the topic of discussion. Another note of importance is acquiring participants who will be willing to openly and honestly share information or “their story” (Creswell, 2007, p. 133). A main component for being chosen as a participant for the interviews was the individual’s willingness to participate in class. Participants in Phase II of the study were selected from treatment groups in Phase I that had either both HIGH pretest and posttest (> 80) scores or their scores dropped at least 1 standard deviation from pretest to posttest and their posttest score was in the LOW (< 60) range.

Interview protocol. To prepare for the interviews, the researcher developed a set of questions (Appendix F). The questions were used as guidelines to facilitate conversations and could be altered as the researcher saw fit (Moustakas, 1994). They were aimed to induce participants’ to fully describe their experience (Moustakas, 1994) with the novel and their acceptance of relational aggression. The purpose of preparing interview questions in advance was also to be conscious of creating a comfortable atmosphere beginning with small talk (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Collecting and organizing interview data. During interviews, participants had the opportunity to expand upon their answers that would not be possible with only the survey responses. Interviews were digitally recorded, and notes were written down in the teachers’ notebooks. The digital recordings were transcribed and notes were typed out in MS Word and then uploaded into the Dedoose Qualitative Data Analysis Software. The

Dedoose program was utilized to enhance, not replace, the researcher's inductive process with the transcriptions and notes.

Member checking. A vital strategy used to enhance the quality of the findings in qualitative research is member checking (Stake, 2010). Member checking was used to verify that the transcriptions were correct and to confirm the researcher's notes. The interviewees had the opportunity to read the transcripts of their interviews and discuss their thoughts with the researcher and made changes if desired.

Additionally, after the interviews were put into tables, the researcher discovered that some of the interview participants had not responded to some of the research questions in detail. The researcher was able to meet with some of the interview participants for follow-up interviews to arrive at further clarity. The results of the additional interviews were included in the interview results. Interviews and teachers' notebooks data were coded through three cycles of analysis.

Coding. Themes and patterns within the transcribed interviews began to emerge during initial coding. Interviews and researcher notes were coded in three separate cycles. The researcher chose specific coding methods for each cycle that would best answer the research questions (Saldaña, 2013). Cycle one was a first review of the qualitative data. The teachers' notebooks, including notes from class discussions were coded using the initial coding method, sometimes referred to as open coding (Charmaz, 2006). During initial coding, the researcher became immersed in the data, reading and re-reading. Braun and Clarke (2006) referred to this process as "Familiarization with the Data," (p. 79). Following Saldaña's (2013) advice that interviews should be listened to at least once and notes jotted down in the teachers' notebooks, interviews were reviewed prior to

initiating coding. The first codes that began to emerge were written in the teachers' notebooks and then all information was uploaded into the Dedoose QDAS. During the first cycle of analysis, the researcher notes - taken during class discussions - were read line-by-line to construct initial codes (Saldaña, 2013). The Dedoose program allowed the researcher to easily designate codes for select pieces of text. The first codes to emerge were: personality, conversations, relational aggression, feeling of superiority, popularity, class climate, clique, friends, reputation, gender issues, intertextuality (See *Fig. 5* for a visual representation of the initial coding).

During second and third cycle coding, Dedoose (2018), was used to assist with data management. The structural method (Saldaña, 2013) of coding was used in the second cycle of coding to enhance comparisons and relationships within the data. To enhance credibility, trustworthiness, and organization, code landscaping (Saldaña, 2013) was created using the Dedoose program between the second and third cycles of coding the qualitative data. Dominant codes that emerged during this second cycle were: relatable, school climate, parental involvement, fake, and friendships (See *Fig. 6* for visual representation of third cycle coding).

During the third cycle of coding, the qualitative data were reorganized and reanalyzed using axial coding (Saldaña, 2013) to distinguish dominant codes from less important ones. The Dedoose program also assisted in counting the frequencies of the codes that were applied to the data. Additionally, Dedoose aided the researcher in locating words and phrases to organize the data into categories and subcategories. Categories were then used to construct themes. Word maps were created using the codes that were applied to specific portions of text in Dedoose (see *Fig. 5* and *Fig. 6*). Figures

5 and 6 visually display the most frequently applied codes with larger fonts. The visualizations assisted the researcher with verifying dominant the codes in each cycle.

Figure 4. Visual model of Word Cloud from cycle one initial coding from Dedoose.

Figure 5. Visual model of Word Cloud from the second cycle of coding from Dedoose.

During this process of examining and reexamining the transcripts, themes began to emerge. Tables were created into a new Word document, and the transcripts were copied and pasted into them. Four themes emerged from the transcripts that assisted with answering the research questions: relatability, fake friends, aggressive humor and school climate. Once the themes were established and noted on the transcripts, interviews were then spliced into new tables according to interview questions. This was done to assist with analyzing the interview questions, according to the study's research questions.

Merriam defines internal validity as the relationship that one's findings has with reality (2002). The research findings of several bullying and relational aggression studies support this study's connection to reality. Throughout this description of the data, the researcher looked to the literature regarding relational aggression's prevalence, (Hemphill et al., 2010); negative effects (Klomek et al., 2007; Klomek et al., 2010; Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996; Olweus, 1992; Owens et al., 2000); aggressive humor (Rossing, 2016; Salmivalli, Kärnä, & Poskiparta, 2010; Vinson, 2006; Wimsatt, 2014); and relationship to a school's climate (Klein, Cornell, & Konold, 2012; Mehta, 2011; National School Climate Center, 2012; Wang, Berry, & Swearer, 2013) to establish that relational aggression is a problem of great significance to society. In qualitative research, the researcher is an integral instrument (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Teacher's Notebooks

"Qualitative field notes are an essential component of rigorous qualitative research," (Phillipi & Lauderdale, 2018, p. 381). The teachers took notes both during class discussions and small group discussions. Student's responses including the number of times that they engaged in deep conversations were noted. Information detailed in this

notebook was used to assist in the selection of interview participants and to write the descriptions of interview participants. This included Eugene's home life and talent in dance, as well as Shang's discussions including sports and his peers. The student who spoke the most during class was Merida.

Merida was noted the most for her responses especially the insight that she had regarding the school's climate and the interactions between students specifically relationally aggressive behaviors. During a small group discussion, Merida shared that she makes something that she called, "diss tapes." Merida's definition of a "diss tape" is an original rap or song meant to roast your friends. Merida explained that she had uploaded some of her raps onto a social media website for music and played one of them for Teacher B after a class session.

Interview Responses

A central theme in the novel, *The Misfits*, revolves around the premise that calling someone names hurts them emotionally and socially (an aspect of relational aggression). The novel confronts the previously held notions that behaving in this way, bullying through physical and relational aggressiveness, are a natural part of growing up (American Psychological Association, 2004; Minogue, 2002). When asked the first question (How would you describe your connection to the novel, *The Misfits*, which we read in class?) the researcher was interested in what interview participants' perceptions were of the novel specifically their thoughts on the theme of the novel. There was a difference between participants' responses from the HIGH posttest score group and LOW posttest score group (see Table 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, and 4.7 for further information).

Participants' connections with the novel. Treatment participants who scored HIGH in pretest and posttest as measured by the *Diverse Relational Aggression Scale* found themselves unable to make a connection with the novel. Eugene and Merida expressed that the novel was not “real” enough” and they were not able to engage with the novel because of this (see table 4.4 for further information). In follow-up questions, these participants stated that suicide and/or school shootings would have made the novel more relevant to them. Eugene stated, “Well... I’m like older than most of the other students. I could care less about it [*The Misfits*]. Like, I care about if they [victims of bullying] kill themselves...” Shang explained that, “Like in that show *Thirteen Reasons Why*, that girl, she killed herself, that was real.” Merida expressed that the novel was, “very childish and not for like an eighth grader.” Though Eugene and Merida both explained that the novel was not on their maturity level, they did not have the same perception on name calling. Eugene stated, “I think that people do get upset when other people call them names.”

When asked to further explain, Eugene said that although he knew that calling other people names hurt their feelings, that he did so on purpose. He stated that it was “weak” and showing of a lesser social status to allow someone to “mess with you” and not say anything back. The statements by Eugene are similar to those found in other studies (Mayeux et al., 2011; Hawley, 2007; Rodkin & Roisman, 2010). Eugene also stated that reading the novel did not reveal anything that he did not know already. Merida stated, “Everyone in middle school gets name called. Everyone just brushes it off. It has to be more real. Like you aren’t going to kill yourself just because someone calls

you one name.” Students in the mid-low posttest scoring group did not experience the novel in the same way.

Students in the mid-low posttest scoring group described the novel as being relatable. Florian, Belle, Tiana, and Flynn all explained that in school they had experiences being called names or a close friend had been called names and understood that this was hurtful. In this group, the interview participants explained that the novel, *The Misfits*, made them think about people and themselves in a different way. While reading the novel in conjunction with class discussions, LOW posttest scoring treatment participants expressed they realized the importance of 1) thinking before saying or doing something mean to someone else and 2) stepping in when someone is acting aggressively towards others. Belle explained that even with her experiences of being the victim of relational aggression, she had not thought to speak up for other victims if she saw this happening. Belle stated that she had experienced being the victim of relational aggression before, with other girls calling her names and purposefully leaving her out of the group to make her feel bad. The novel reminded her of that time and class discussions made her realize the importance of intervening on behalf of the victim.

Table 4.4

Participants' Quotations About Connections to the Novel – Relatability

Participants	Quotes: Connection to the novel	Quotes: Other connections
HIGH Posttest		
Eugene	It definitely made me think about things. But I already knew that bullying was wrong. Like I don't think it's ok, but I will still do it. Like, I know what I'm doing wrong. I just, it's just who I am.	You've seen <i>Thirteen Reasons Why</i> (television series) right? You know, Like I don't know how to explain it. It would have to be more like that.
Adam	Like if someone were to kill themselves it would be more bold. More like presentable. You could listen to it.	Like in <i>George</i> (the novel). I've never made fun of gay people. I would be their friend, but if they would start flirting with me then ... it would be over.
Shang	They weren't real. That novel that we read was like, it's about an election and it didn't make like any sense. So it wasn't real enough.	It needs to be something that happens in someone's life... Like in <i>Thirteen Reasons Why</i> (Television Series). The girl kills herself, that's real.
Merida	Not really, [able to make a connection to the novel]... not like – the Amanda Todd story?	One of the first girls (Amanda Todd) that was bullied so much that she killed herself.
LOW Posttest		
Florian	The book was also about popularity. I'm going to say popularity because they cared about who was popular and instead of learning about the person and like what they are capable of they only cared about how popular they were.	Like in <i>George</i> (the novel). I learned not to judge people if they are gay. Like people need to care about more about other people than themselves.
Belle	They were real. That novel that we read was like, it's about treating people with respect.	In the fifth grade, XX used to bully me, call me names and tell the other girls to be mean to me.

Participants' Quotations About Connections to the Novel – Relatability (continued)

Participants	Quotes: Connection to the novel	Quotes: Other connections
Tiana	It was a lot like this school. Like the vice president and the president, they were worried more about those who were popular not about what was going on in the school and how they could help out.	Like in <i>Thirteen Reasons Why</i> ? They cared a lot about being popular, and it was the popular kids being the worst.
Flynn	It made me think about other people more. I used to. I used to [call others names]. But now, it's like, they're another one of you. Like, we're all children. Let 'em be. If you don't like them just stay away from them.	Because I mean, I think that <i>George</i> made me think about it more... before I used to make fun of people that were like weird, and now I don't.

Fake friends. During the interviews, six of the participants brought up the concept of *fake friends*. The interview participants described being a *fake* friend as saying mean things about someone “behind their back,” and then “going and sitting with them during lunch” as if nothing happened. There is a dearth in the literature discussing fake friendships. A topic closely related to this concept is termed *mean girls* (Ringrose, 2006; Ryalls, 2011; Stephens, 2014).

As previously discussed, *mean girls* is a type of relational aggression (RA) that girls subscribe to when destroying other girls' social status (Centrella, 2013; Crothers, Field, & Kolbert, 2005; Parisien, 2014). In this context, social status is equated to popularity. Differently than *mean girls*, that describes this behavior as one that only girls participate in, being *fake* includes all adolescents. Considering this behavior flows with the pattern of socially aggressive behaviors attributed to relational aggression, the

researcher asked follow-up questions to further investigate the participants' perceptions and acceptance of relational aggression.

Table 4.5

Participants' Definitions and Descriptions of Fake Friends

Participants	Definitions of fake friends	Examples of being a fake friend
HIGH Posttest		
Eugene	Like when you are present with them. And you talk about them when you are not with them you talk about them behind their back, you talk crap about them.	Like this school is very fake to each other. But that's just like being a person, like you're going to talk crap about someone every once in a while.
Adam	Fake means, they will be your friend and then when somebody else is talkin' 'bout you, then they'll start talking about you too	At our school someone will talk about you behind your back, and then sit with you at lunch as if nothing happened.
HIGH Posttest		
Shang	Fake is like when you try to like get information from people, like your friends so that you can get the info. to share with your other friends.	Fake? Yeah, sometimes I can be fake. I guess like I will fake-out my friend and say that I will not share his secret when I know that I will
Merida	Fake can also be like, you tell me a secret and then I go and tell someone else. Even though I'm not talking trash about you, I just told someone's secret that's fake too.	I had a fake friend... she was like oh, come over my house, and the next day... she told the girls in the group chat like, oh, I don't like her...
LOW Posttest		
Tiana	So like that's fake basically, when you are talking about other people.	Basically, everyone is fake... And everyone does this. And but what can you do? You just have to stay out of it?

Participants' Definitions and Descriptions of Fake Friends (continued)

Participants	Definitions of fake friends	Examples of being a fake friend
LOW Posttest		
Flynn	Everybody's fake over here – they don't fight. Ya. Like, I don't mean that they will fight, but like they will go on social media [and make posts]	Here they will talk about you behind your back and then invite you to sit with them at lunch.

Aggressive Humor. Interview participants discussed their perceptions of aggressive humor (See Table 4.6 for further information.) Interview participants brought up a type of joking termed *roasting* which is a form of aggressive humor. Aggressive humor, such as roasting, may be described as saying mean things to another person to in a joking manner (Rossing, 2016). Historically, the celebrity roast began as a great honor among actors in 1949 with the Friars' Club (Cantor, 2011). This tradition has begun to raise in notoriety amongst adolescents with the recent "roastings" of pop culture celebrities such as James Franco and Justin Bieber (Fox, 2018). In a small group discussion, interview participants Eugene, Adam, and Merida agreed that it is acceptable to joke around with friends but not with others that you are not friends with. The participants termed this type of humor, "roasting." In the literature, roasting is discussed as aggressive humor (Vinson, 2006; Wimsatt, 2014). According to the interview participants, when someone is not a friend, then this type of joking is not acceptable and is considered a form of verbal assault.

Table 4.6

Participants' Definitions and Descriptions of Roasting

Participants	Definition of roasting	Experiences with roasting
HIGH Posttest		
Adam	Roasting means, talking about you [saying negative things] to your face.	If you're with your friends and you're roasting each other that is ok. Unless you can tell that they are really serious about it [what they have said]. I've seen it get ugly.
Shang	Roasting is like- you make fun of your friend- like using an inside joke to be funny.	Usually when my friends roast, it is funny, and we laugh. We also shout across the room- Oh you've been roasted, or just say 'roast.'
Merida	When you talk crap about your friend as a joke to her.	There is a group that calls themselves The Plastics. Like from the movie the <i>Mean Girls</i> .
LOW Posttest		
Florian	When you talk about your friend and he's there and you say things that are true but not really nice.	Like, I don't usually roast my friends because it is still saying things that are not that nice about someone, but I've heard it like every day.
Tiana	Like that's roasting, when you're making fun of your friend but like, you're not really making fun of her it's like a joke.	Kids do this every day, like my friends don't like do it that much because it can be hurtful.

School climate. During interviews, participants brought up the climate of the school as a factor in reducing bullying including relational aggression in the school (See Table 4.7 for further information). Interview participants compared the charter school to other public schools in the area. The participants believed that the charter school was a safer environment because of the expectations of the administrators and other school personnel that served as mentors for the student body. Shang said that he thought it was a specific support faculty member, Johnson, who was the main deterrent of bullying in the school. During Shang's interview, other students in the class agreed that they believed Johnson is a driving force in creating a positive climate at the school. There is extensive literature in support of the connection between school climate and students' participation and acceptance of bullying behaviors (Klein, Cornell, & Konold, 2012; Mehta, 2011; National School Climate Center, 2012; Wang, Berry, & Swearer, 2013).

Table 4.7

Participants' Perceptions of Their School's Climate

Participants	Perceptions of School's Climate
HIGH Posttest	
Eugene	Um, no. I just think that it is the home environment that they are in [that contributes to adolescents' personality]. How people treat them. Like how, like the neighborhood that they are in. Like the way that their parents treat them or they think they are ghetto and stuff like that. The amount of people and like different races, and I'm not trying to be racist. The type of kids that come here are different. It is the people that are around me. Like sometimes I make bad decisions, but here they just drop it [at another school this might lead to a physical fight].
Shang	It's not about the guidance counselor or administration. It's Johnson, everyone talks to him about everything. Even if someone doesn't tell him directly, he finds out what's going on and does whatever he can to deal with the problem. It doesn't matter what it is, Johnson settles it. Johnson knows about SnapChat and Insta[gram] and everything else. Things would be so much worse without him.
LOW Posttest	
Belle	The guidance counselors are good. They really do care. Like they are good for their job. They like what they are doing so they are good for their job. I like them. The teachers they put a smile on their face all day, and they care about us. But if they do not, then I would not tell them anything at all. At other schools teachers say things like, oh they don't care, they just want their money. I liked the interim-sub he tried to relate to us, he gave us relevant work. We like things that relate to us. When teachers give us a whole novel it's just boring. We had to write essays, but I would like for them to be about something that I want to write about. Like what do I want to be?

Summary of Qualitative Data

The second part of Chapter 4, Phase II of the study, focused on the qualitative data collection process. Within this part of the study, possible explanations for the

decrease in participants' acceptance of relational aggression. Interviewees that scored in the HIGH acceptance of relational aggression on both pretest and posttest did not relate to the novel, *The Misfits*. They felt that the scenarios presented in the text were not intense enough to be relatable. Eugene stated, "The novel is not for kids my age. Like I'm older than everyone. No one in the book killed themselves or tried to. It wasn't that real."

During the reading and reexamination of the transcripts four themes emerged: relatability, fake friends, aggressive humor and school climate. A more detailed discussion will take place in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The present study was an explanatory sequential mixed-methods investigation. The investigation was primarily concerned with the effectiveness of a novel unit on adolescents' acceptance of relational aggression and secondarily, how select treatment participants related to the novel. Treatment sought to widen participants' understanding of relational aggression through critical reading. The goal of the study was for treatment participants would be guided to become less accepting of aggressive behavior and perhaps less likely to engage in them. The heart of the present study was Rosenblatt's (1978) reader-response theory.

Rosenblatt's reader-response theory conceptualized the readers' stance as signifying a reader's purpose for engaging in the act of reading a text. According to Rosenblatt (1994) there are two distinct readers' stances, *efferent* and *aesthetic*. In the *efferent* stance, readers are concerned with what can be taken away from the text. Therefore, *efferent* reading may be considered a simple, surface level, engagement of reading. The purpose for reading is utilitarian, to answer multiple choice and questions on assessments. In contrast, taking the *aesthetic* stance, a reader is focused on the act of reading the text for the joy of becoming lost in the text (1994). The *aesthetic* stance in its purest form may be equated to reading for pleasure. Clark and Rumbold (2006) assert pleasure reading is a personal experience that "typically involves materials that reflect our own choice, at a time and place that suits us," (p. 6). Czikszenmihalyi (2009), paints the image of *aesthetic* reading using a scenic park as the backdrop. Such imagery showcases the concept that the focus of *aesthetic* reading is for enjoyment. Additionally,

the second, qualitative phase, sought to uncover participants' perceptions of relational aggression in ways that were not captured by the first, quantitative phase's survey. Quantitatively framed research questions focused the effect of the literary based intervention on participants' level of acceptance of relational aggression as measured by the *Diverse Adolescent Relational Aggression Scale* (DARAS). Exploratory questions concerned how select treatment participants related to the novel, *The Misfits*. Data was analyzed sequentially, to compare participants' mean scores on the DARAS from pretest to posttest. Analysis of the data assessed the effectiveness of the literary intervention on participants' level of acceptance of relational aggression. In conjunction with analysis of the pretest and posttest DARAS, interviews were conducted in order to contribute to a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the effects of the intervention.

Summary of the Study

This study used an explanatory sequential mixed methods design to explore and describe adolescents' acceptance of relational aggression. This was a two-phased study where quantitative data collection is sequentially followed by qualitative data collection (Creswell, Plano Clark, 2013). The study was conducted with sixth and eighth grade language arts students in a charter school in South Florida. A total of eight classes participated in the study. Four classes were assigned to treatment groups and four were assigned to control groups. Teacher A had one treatment class and three control classes. Teacher B had three treatment classes and one control class. In phase one of the study, participants were pretested and posttested on their level of acceptance of relational aggression using the *DARAS*. Between pretest and posttest, participants in the treatment group read *The Misfits*, a novel whose main characters are a group of four adolescents

who are victims of relational aggression (RA). Participants in the control group read the novel, *Weasel*, a novel that does not involve any form of bullying. The SPSS v. 25 statistical program was used to analyze the quantitative data. The results of pretest and posttests results were used to select participants from the larger study who might provide valuable information during individual interviews and small group discussions. During the second phase, qualitative data, in the form of interviews, were collected and analyzed to further explain the quantitative results attained in the first phase.

Treatment group participants participated in a 10 week long instructional unit (see Chapter III and Appendix E for further information). Reading was done in class and chapters were also assigned for homework. Small group and whole classroom discussions occurred as themes emerged and important aspects of the characters were introduced, in addition to taking place at the end of every three chapters. Emerging themes were relatability, fake friends, aggressive humor, and school climate. As previously discussed, assignments included reader response strategies: reciprocal teaching, literature circles, character map, choice boards, and reader's theater activities. Participants in the control group participated in an instructional unit of *Weasel*, by Cynthia DeFelice (1990).

The results derived from the survey revealed that studying Young Adult Literature (YAL) with bullying themes may lower adolescents' acceptance of RA. Young Adult Literature includes texts that are specifically written for the adolescent reader (Bushman, 1997; Cart, 2008; Roberts, 2013). Such texts delve into themes that touch on realistic circumstances that adolescents can relate to (Bachelder et al., 1980; Blakemore, 2015; Cart, 2016; Nilsen et al., 2013) and are meant for adolescents to see

themselves within the complex fictitious characters. Results of the interviews were aligned with other research and revealed that the participants believed that it is important that the plot of the novel be meaningful and pertinent to them (Connell, 2008; Harvey & Goudvis, 2000; Keene & Zimmerman, 1997; Tovani, 2000). Findings further the understanding of results of the survey. The survey showed that a literary based intervention works for most of the students who are able to relate to the novel. For resistant students, the results of the qualitative inquiry enhanced the study by providing a window into the resilient students' perceptions of why they were unable connect with the novel. These perceptions provide implications for practice and further research necessary to combat RA. Reading theories argue that for the text to make an impression on the reader, the reader must find the text to be engaging.

Rosenblatt (1994) expresses, while it is possible for an intense relationship between the reader and a text to exist, the interaction does not occur automatically. To explain, it is not be enough for an adolescent to walk into a library, self-select a novel, and begin reading for pleasure for an *aesthetic* interaction to occur. Similarly, a teacher will not be able to select a class novel and reach all of her students. During the reading process, the reader must find the characters and story relatable to engage in *aesthetic* reading. Bibliotherapy shares this same consideration. Bibliotherapists select texts that involve similar issues that their clients (students or patients) are going through to attempt to alleviate psychological distress (Brown, 1975). The results of the present study aligns with reader-response and bibliotherapy as the participants who could not relate to the novel were resilient to the intervention. Therefore, when using literature to attempt to make social change, the reader must relate to the text. Where bibliotherapists select texts

for individuals based on their specific needs, literature used for classroom instruction should not be selected arbitrarily. Additionally, as each student is a unique individual, it is not likely that one novel will speak to all students in a class in the same way, if at all. When using a novel study to spring-board social change, it is possible that placing students in homogenous groups and selecting specific novels for each group may be more a more effective strategy.

Taken together, RA can take on many forms. Such maladaptive behaviors may be either direct or indirect in nature and include: name-calling, gossiping and social isolation or threats of withdrawal of friendship, enlisting friends to mistreat the victim, public embarrassment and sending harassing messages through electronic devices and social media (Archer & Coyne, 2005; Horton, 2010; 2014; Wong, 2009). The current study adds to the literature that social norms such as *fake friendships* and *roasting*, along with the *school climate* contribute to adolescents' level of acceptance of RA and must be further investigated.

Phase I: Discussion

The present study utilized an ANCOVA to examine mean differences between adolescents' level of acceptance of relational aggression.

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 stated that treatment group participants who participated in a reader response based instructional unit on the novel *The Misfits* would move in the desired direction with significantly lower levels of posttest acceptance of RA than participants who did not read the novel. The hypothesis was supported by the results as there was a significant difference in control and treatment groups posttests scores as measured by the

Diverse Adolescent Relational Aggression Scale. The ANCOVA used to test Hypothesis 1 used group mean pretest scores as a covariate.

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 concerned the intervention's capacity to lower the extent of acceptance of RA in participants who had HIGH levels of pretest acceptance of RA. In analysis of Phase I data, participants were divided into a HIGH acceptance of relational aggression group and LOW acceptance of relational aggression group. Specifically, Hypothesis 2 predicted that the mean score of HIGH acceptance of RA treatment group participants would be significantly lower score on acceptance of RA posttest when compared to the mean posttest score of HIGH acceptance of RA control group participants.

Diverse Adolescent Relational Aggression Scale: Validity and Reliability

The *Diverse Adolescent Relational Aggression Scale* was demonstrated to be a valid measure of acceptance of RA in adolescents by the significant correlation coefficients achieved between it and the *Diverse Adolescent Relational Aggression Scale* (Horton, 2010). The DARAS has been shown by numerous researchers to be a valid and reliable measure of acceptance of RA (Ashton, 1982; Malamuth, 1989; Marshall & Hambley, 1996; Sawyer et al., 2002; Worling, 1995). There were no reports of confusion or questions from participants regarding the DARAS. The combination of satisfactory statistical analyses and anecdotal reports support the use of the DARAS as a valid and reliable measure of adolescents' acceptance of RA.

Why this extra space?

Main Effects for Teacher, Sex, Grade and Interaction Hypothesis

To investigate whether in addition to the effect of treatment (group), there were any main effects for teacher or sex, and if there were any interactions between group and sex, group and teacher, and group and grade level, the use of a 2 x 2 x 2 ANCOVA was implemented. The main effects of teacher, and interactions between group and sex, and group and grade level were not significant and thus support the validity of the treatment. The lack of a significant difference of interaction between group and sex is supported by previous research (Björkqvist, 2018; Juliano, Werner, & Cassidy, 2006; Seals & Young, 2003; Swearer, 2008; Wang et al., 2012). There was a significant difference between the interaction of group and teacher. This could be because of a difference in the teaching styles of the two teachers.

Phase II: Discussion

To answer research questions RQ3 and concerning the intervention the intervention group, interview participants were divided into a HIGH acceptance of relational aggression group and Low acceptance of relational aggression group using the same scores as in Phase I. A major difference between the LOW posttest participants and the HIGH posttest participants was their social status within the school. The researchers' notes on statements made during class discussions and other conversations between them provided information on the social standing of the interview participants. Those in the HIGH posttest group were considered popular amongst their peers. Those in the LOW posttest group were not considered to have such a social standing amongst their peers. This aligns with previous literature that has shown an underlying function of relationally aggressive behavior is to achieve and maintain popularity (Mayeux, 2013). During the

reading and reexamination of the transcripts four themes emerged: relatability, fake friends, aggressive humor and school climate.

Research Question 3

The goal of RQ3 was to examine the perceptions of post-treatment middle school students who show HIGH acceptance of aggressive behaviors on the DARAS (Horton, 2010) have regarding relational aggression? Data analysis showed that these post-treatment participants who reported a HIGH level of relational aggression did not perceive that they were able to make a connection with the novel. Previous studies support that literature-based interventions are less effective with those who show high levels of antisocial behavior (Castaneda, 2013) or moral disengagement (Kokkinos, Voulgaridou, & Markos, 2016). HIGH posttest interview participants stated that *The Misfits* was not meaningful to them. They explained that the novel lacked the depth necessary for them to make any personal connections. The intent of YAL is specifically to explore uncomfortable topics that are pertinent to adolescents (Cart, 2008). What young adults find uncomfortable, is unique to each individual and is a result of all previous experiences that they bring with them. The conceptualization that our previous experiences, knowledge, and emotions effecting what and how we learn is supported by scheme theory (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000) and *dialogism* (Bakhtin, 1994). Bakhtin explained this through *dialogism*, the theory of text being written within a distinct time-period and holding specific meaning to a reader (Bakhtin, 1994). *Dialogism* does not imply relationships developed between the text and the reader happen by default. Rosenblatt (1994) explains, while a back and forth relationship between the reader and a text is possible, it is not inherent. A reader must first take on an *aesthetic* stance and be

in search of a gateway to enter the text. Without such an entry into the text, *aesthetic* readings, as described through the theoretical frameworks of reader-response and bibliotherapy, do not happen. It is necessary to note here the importance of the teacher as a facilitator.

Literary transactions may be augmented and even ignited through probing questions posed by the classroom teacher. These questions implore learners to think critically and shifting their focus, altering their stance, and clearing a path for *aesthetic* engagement. Important to answering RQ3, interview participants who scored HIGH in both pre- and posttest imparted what was missing from the novel was contextual relevance to the real-world. These participants felt that the novel was beneath their maturity level. Participants Eugene, Adam, and Shang were in agreement that with the absence of more serious circumstances, that the novel was simply not relatable for them. Interview participants Eugene and Merida agreed that with the lack of a suicidal or homicidal character, they could not take the novel seriously. Their perceptions coincide with the rationale of the addition of such terms as *bullycide* (Marr & Field, 2001) into the vernacular. The media, saturated with real-life tragedies of *bullycide* (Archer, 2010; High, 2012; Kuczynski, 2012; Scott, 2015) and school shootings (Jenson et al., 2010; Vossekul et al., 2002), has an effect on the country's social climate. *Fake friends* and a type of aggressive humor termed *roasting* were also mentioned by the interview participants as factors shaping the way adolescents engage with their friends.

These two terms, *fake friends*, and *roasting*, were grouped together by the researcher as they both relate to how adolescents behave within their friendships. Fake friendships, according to the interview participants, includes talking to someone and

being nice to them when they are present, and then saying negative things about that same person when they are not around. An example given in Shang's statement was a situation when a group gossips about someone during class or in the hall, and then sits with that person during lunch as if that conversation never happened. In contrast, *roasting*, is type of aggressive humor where snarky remarks are focused directly at an individual in a seemingly tactful way so as to be presented as a joke (Seabaugh, 2016). These behaviors have equally received little attention in the literature.

It is important to note that the HIGH posttest interview participants spoke about the school's climate. Interview participants in this group were in agreement that the school's climate was positive. Each participant spoke about a different staff or faculty member who served as a mentor and added to the positive culture of the school. Two of the participants indicated that they would have been more aggressive towards others if was not for these positive influences. This supports the literature that there is a correlation between the involvement of the faculty and staff and the climate of the school (Klein, Cornell, & Konold, 2012; Mehta, 2011; Wang et al., 2013).

Research Question 4

The goal of RQ4 was to examine the perceptions regarding RA of treatment middle school students showed a decrease of at least 10 points from pretest to posttest and whose posttest score was LOW ($n = 4$) on the *Diverse Adolescent Relational Aggression Scale* (Horton, 2010) have regarding relational aggression? LOW posttest interview participants perceived the novel to be meaningful to them. The LOW posttest interview participants expressed differing assessments of their experience with the novel than the HIGH posttest treatment group who stated they did not perceive the novel to be

real enough. Conversely, participants in the LOW posttest group stated that they could relate to the characters in the novel because they had been victims of RA. These participants also expressed that they learned something from the novel and believed they would be less likely to behave relationally aggressively in the future. LOW posttest participants' statements regarding their perception reading this novel led them to consider their behavior is supported by research (Casteneda, 2013; Heath et al., 2005; Rosenblatt, 1938; 1994).

Correlations between *aesthetic* reading and subsequent behavior are supported by the literature (Casteneda, 2013; Heath et al., 2005; Rosenblatt, 1938; 1994). Florian, Belle, Tiana, and Flynn all stated that in school they had experiences being called names or had a close friend who had been called names and all understood that this was hurtful. In this group, the interview participants explained that the novel, *The Misfits*, helped them to realize that being victimized was not unique to them and that others had also been through these situations. Belle stated that the novel led her to understand the importance of standing up for yourself and others. In addition to talking about name-calling, like their HIGH posttest scoring peers, these participants brought up the relationally aggressive behaviors of *fake friends* and *roasting*. These aggressive behaviors are becoming more prevalent amongst adolescents.

Interpretations and Implications for Practice

In an attempt to bridge the gap in the literature regarding the use of a literature-based thematic unit of instruction to deter RA, this study diverges from previous research. Foremost, as previously stated, this study implemented a mixed methods explanatory sequential research design that examined the effect of literary-based intervention on

adolescents' acceptance of RA. As novel units and reader-response strategies may be a part of the general curriculum in English language arts (ELA) courses, it made sense to select these courses to implement the study through. Previous studies have explored the effectiveness of bystander intervention (Beale, 2001; Espelange et al., 2012; Joronen et al., 2012; Rigby & Johnson, 2006); dramatic instruction (Baer & Glasgow, 2008; Hertzberg, 2003; and Macy, 2005); virtual reality computer programs (Sapouna et al., 2010; Rubin-Vaughan et al., 2011); and problem based learning to teach victims how to defend themselves (Biggam & Power, 1999; Gini, 2005; Menesini et al., 2003). This intervention was also distinctive as instead of using outside facilitators, teachers employed full-time by the school-site were the teacher and researcher.

ELA instructors are in a unique circumstance where they are encouraged to facilitate conversations where adolescents' make connections between themselves and the literature. Engaging with novels requires a commitment that entails an intimate and long-term interaction. The instructional unit, of *The Misfits*, lasted for 10 weeks. Open dialogue regarding bullying, specifically RA, potentially creates a positive alteration in the classroom climate and possibly thereby the school climate as reported in this study. Lower posttest scores for whom showed significant decrease in acceptance of RA on the DARAS could be attributed to the time spent engaging in these conversations during the duration of the intervention.

The results of testing Hypothesis 1 are important because they demonstrate it is possible to reduce acceptance of RA in middle school students as measured by the *DARAS*. The results of testing Hypothesis 1 indicate that young adult literature focusing on topics closely related to adolescent concerns, can be effective in reducing adolescents'

level of acceptance of RA. These findings collaborate with the postulations of the theoretical frameworks of the study: reader-response (Rosenblatt, 1978) and bibliotherapy (Lehr, 1980). Through meaningful and personal connections with literature, readers may alter their thoughts and feelings about the world. It is important to note that as each individual reader brings their past knowledge to the forefront when engaging with text (Bahktin, 1994). This means that readers will have different experiences when reading the same book (Rosenblatt, 1978). Therefore, it is imperative, specifically for those students who are resistant to relational aggression interventions, that the novel selected for reading is one that they actually find relatable. In previous years, Teacher B had read other novels with her students where the whole class expressed, through their reader-response journals, they were able to connect to the novel. Several studies on bullying including RA have focused on girls' affinity for social relational aggressive behaviors (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Naylor et al., 2006; Owens et al., 2000; Russel, Kraus, & Ceccherini, 2010).

The interviews also corroborated with the results of the DARAS suggesting that reducing RA needs to involve the combined efforts of the administrators, teachers, and support staff. Shang stated that:

Joel [a support facilitator in the school] tries to stop it [any problems between students].... If anyone has a problem they go and tell Joel and he solves it. Or they tell their friend and the friend tells Joel... So everything goes back to Joel.

A majority of research on reducing acceptance of RA has been conducted as a whole-school approach (Ortega & Lera, 2000; Salmivalli, Kaukianen, & Voeten, 2005;

Smith, Ananiadou & Cowie, 2003; Smith, Schneider, Smith, & Ananiadou, 2004; Stevens, De Bourdeaudhuij, & Van Oost, 2000) and differences between girls and boys level of acceptance of RA (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Naylor et al., 2006; Owens et al., 2000; Russel et al., 2010). As research on bullying has expanded, the question of the relationship between acceptance of relationally aggressive behaviors and sex has become uncertain (Björkqvist, 2018; Seals & Young, 2003; Wang et al., 2012). As such this investigation treated girls and boys as equals in the context of this study.

Limited quantitative studies have been implemented at the classroom level. Some students entered the conversation by making a connection between themselves and the text through media reports and popular culture such as the television show, *The Thirteen Reasons Why*. This ability to make such strong connections enabled them to engage in *affective* reading. ~~This made it so that~~ Class discussions were filled with students' descriptions of their experiences with RA; ~~and~~ participants could experience RA through the characters in the novel. Experts in mixed methods conclude that participants' voices contribute to the narrative of a study and augments the quantitative results (Creswell, 2007; Ivonka & Kawamura, 2010; Tashakkori & Teddlie 1998). As part of the thematic intervention, participants contributed during whole group and large group discussions; eight students provided additional insight during interviews.

Results of the study support previous research that has shown promising results in reducing relationally aggressive behaviors (Dailey, Frey, & Walker, 2015; Douglas & Hassett-Walker, 2008; Kärnä et al., 2011) and that a literature-based study may assist students in altering their beliefs (Malo-Juvera, 2012). Using literature in this way could be viewed in the same light as morality education. As evidenced through a multitude of

studies across an array of disciplines, morality education works (Solomon et al., 2001). When moral behaviors are modeled for and students are given opportunities to practice prosocial behaviors, they develop a moral self. While the raising concern regarding bullying in schools is not explicitly mentioned, it is not difficult to find a connection; a gaining number of violent acts in schools equating to increased interest in moral/prosocial development. While clearly there is a theoretical relationship between bullying (in all forms including relational aggression) and morality, (Killen & Nucci, 1995), most studies evaluating bullying fail to make this connection.

The correlation between relational aggression and morality education can be observed through participant interview responses in this study. Interview participants in the HIGH posttest group perceived both *fake friends and roasting* behaviors as acceptable social interactions. In this way, the interview participants' concept of relational aggression is not dissimilar from the previously held perception of bullying being perceived as a normal part of growing up (Limber & Small, 2003; Mishna et al., 2005) that took several years of research to dispel. According to the literature many of these socially accepted constructs fall under the purview of the climate of the school (National School Climate Center, 2012; Wang, Berry, & Swearer, 2013). Response from the HIGH posttest interview participants illustrate a severe rift from what the current anti-bullying movements are pushing for. As a result of the Valentine's Day Rampage in Parkland, the Florida Department of Education (2019) passed SB 7026:

In the wake of the tragic shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School that took the lives of 17 Florida students and educators, the Florida Legislature passed and Governor Rick Scott signed SB 7026, the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High

School Public Safety Act. This legislation outlines significant reforms to make Florida schools safer, while keeping firearms out of the hands of mentally ill and dangerous individuals.

Provisions of the law include:

- Creation of the Office of Safe Schools and a description of the office's responsibilities
- Allowing sheriffs to establish a Coach Aaron Feis Guardian Program
- The FortifyFL mobile suspicious activity reporting tool
- Establishment of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission
- New requirements for mental health services and training
- Requirements for a safe-school officer at each public school
- School safety assessments for each public school
- Appropriations of funding to address identified school safety needs

In congruence, students from Stoneman Douglas High School have been extremely vocal and active in their call for increased gun control. Their "17 for Change," (in honor of the 17 people killed, and 17 injured during the attack) followed the Stoneman Douglass students' March for Our Lives protest in Washington, D.C. (Man, 2018). There is however no attention given to the aggressors of bullying.

As presented through the HIGH posttest interviews, it is clear that an integral group being overlooked includes the perpetrators of bullying. The HIGH posttest interview participants bring to light a reality that there is a large percentage of adolescents that perceive relational aggression as acceptable behaviors for themselves

and others. This has been exposed through the number of adolescents that self-report themselves as having engaged in bullying behaviors at the time that they complete bullying scales (Modecki et al., 2014). Therefore, the inference that relational aggression is generally perceived as less egregious than physical bullying must be altered. Children as young as ten years of age are dying by suicide as a result of being perpetually bullied and betrayed through relational aggression by their closest friends. This is the real-life story of a death by suicide, in a string of eight adolescents' death by suicide cases in Kentucky (at the time of the writing of the present paper), of the young Seven Bridges (Dalbey, 2019). This is a testament to the reality that bullying is a thriving force feeding off of the collective consciousness of adolescents that believe that it is acceptable to treat others as if they are not equals. Studies show that teachers need to recognize that are indeed the powerhouse of the cognitive developmental changes that occur in students (Owens et al., 2000; Mishna et al., 2005). They also should acknowledge that they are seen not just as a mere disseminator of information (Smith & Sharp, 1994; Owens et al., 2000; Mishna et al., 2005). Rather, they are considered to be persons of great authority and confidants (Smith & Sharp, 1994; Mishna et al., 2005). Educators cannot be under the illusion that students will learn proper social behaviors elsewhere. While they are in the classroom students look to their teachers for guidance on how to think, feel, believe, and act (Rigby, Smith, & Pepler, 2004). They test boundaries and assess limitations based on what their teachers tell them and what their expectations are for them (Rigby et al., 2004). When teachers ignore, or cannot identify bullying behaviors, the victimization of the student continues and heightens in intensity (Mishna et al., 2005). It also becomes

increasingly psychologically damaging to the student (Smith & Sharp, 1994). Therefore, the present study lends itself to offer implications for further research.

Implications for Further Research

The current present study highlights the importance of continued research on bullying. Where previous studies have shown victims' suffering from loss of self-esteem and self-efficacy, trouble formulating new relationships, and a higher propensity to become depressed (Kushner et al., 2018; Owens, Slee, & Shute, 2000), this study also suggests that relational aggression is a part of adolescent culture. Future research may improve upon this study by using a larger sample size with a more diverse group of students. Using a larger sample size with a more diverse group of students may allow for the findings to be more generalizable to adolescents around the country. Studies have provided evidence that victims of RA are at increased risk for depression and suicide related behaviors (Klomek, Marrocco, Kleinman, Schonfeld, Gould, 2007; Klomek, Sourander, & Gould, 2010; Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996; Olweus, 1978; Owens et al., 2000). Therefore, further investigations on bullying should include an in depth look into current trends in adolescent culture including aggressive joking. Through interviews and discussions with participants in the study, the current study exposed a gap in the literature on adolescents' engagement in *fake friendships* and use of aggressive humor, termed *roasting*. Further research from these additional perspectives should be conducted in to further our understanding of RA to assist in reducing adolescents' acceptance of these aggressive behaviors. Additionally, as the perpetual search for effective anti-bullying programs continues, there should be a great consideration pressed upon relational aggression.

It is thus highly recommended that research into relational aggression continue with the perspective of altering the social climate and creating a new narrative. This new narrative should engage adolescents in changing their perception of what they perceive to be acceptable behavior and alter what is considered to be a sign of high social standing.

Limitations of Study

There are several limitations to this study. This study was conducted with a population of participants who were sixth and eighth grade students in a South Florida charter middle school. The sample was comprised of predominantly Hispanic/Latina/o and African American students. Hispanic/Latino/a and African American are two of the largest ethnic populations of this major metropolitan school district. The largest population in this district is White Non-Hispanic and thus, generalizing results of this study should be done cautiously. Both of the teachers who conducted the intervention in this study were experienced instructors with over 20 and 14 years of teaching experience. Both were experienced in teaching the novels, and both were comfortable discussing the topic of bullying and RA with students in a classroom setting. These factors could have had an impact on the success of the intervention and should be considered when generalizing the results.

Conclusion

Results from the current research make a poignant and powerful statement towards the responsibility that we have to children. The study adds to the understanding of adolescents' acceptance of relational aggression. Relational aggression is an insidious form of bullying that employs methodical manipulations of friendships and purposefully tears at the heartstrings to achieve and maintain social dominance. This mixed methods

study was undertaken to examine the effects of a literature-based intervention on adolescents' acceptance of relational aggression. The aim of this study was to add to the current body of research in this area. The use of mixed methods allowed for the interviews to inform the quantitative results of the study.

These findings indicate that all stakeholders in education, in children, need to continue to strive to work towards reducing all types of bullying including RA in schools. Relational aggression is often overlooked by physical forms of bullying which makes it particularly egregious. The negative consequences of RA include emotional and physiological distress. Victims of such bullying may also suffer from suicide ideation and in extreme circumstances death by suicide or turn to bringing a weapon to school with the intent to harm others. Previous studies have indicated that reducing aggressive bullying behaviors has positive effects on students. A primary outcome of reducing aggressive behavior in schools is the overall safety of students' physical and psychological health and well-being (Limber & Small, 2003).

The current study indicated that *affective* readings of literature may be an effective approach to reducing RA. Ultimately, the results of the study found evidence that a literary unit may provide students with an opportunity to expand their cognitive and affective understanding of others involved in RA, to make them less likely to find this behavior acceptable. Adolescents engaging in discussions about their personal experiences and perceptions related to this aggressive behavior enables them to gain insight into others' point-of-view. This activity may instill a sense of empathy for those around them and make them consider their actions before engaging in aggressive behaviors. Interview participants shared that it was important to connect to the literature

that they are reading to be able to make changes in their perceptions on RA. Thus, the study advises that it is our obligation to continue to explore the potential use of literature to reduce relational aggression. If through a literary unit of instruction even one life can be saved, all the efforts necessary to put the program into action would be worth it and more.

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APPENDIX A

Howard Gardner's Eight Intelligences

Howard Gardner's Eight Intelligences	
Intelligence type	This type of learner often...
Visual-spatial (picture smart)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learns best with visual icons • Is artistic • Is able to read maps, blueprints, and graphs, with ease
Verbal-linguistic (word smart)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has strong reading skills • Is able to write well • Can process academic lectures effectively
Musical-rhythm (music smart)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taps a beat with a pencil or foot or hums softly during silent work time • Processes information by associating it with beats and rhythms that allow them to make sense of data and store it in the brain • Learns and studies best with headphones on
Logical-mathematical (number smart)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is good with math and numbers • Is a linear thinker • Needs order and systematic directions or steps in order to process the content
Bodily kinesthetic (body smart)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is a good athlete • Has excellent fine motor skills • Benefits from concrete, hands-on learning activities
Interpersonal (people smart)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoys socializing with others • Needs to interact with others in order to process information • Benefits from group brainstorming
Intrapersonal (self-smart)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processes information best by working alone in quiet solitude • Finds working with groups to be distracting
Naturalistic (environment smart)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gravitates toward natural patterns • Gains brain stimulation when in a natural, outdoor environment • Improves engagement with tasks when exposed to the sights, sounds, and smells of the outdoors

Adapted from "Strategic Co-Teaching in Your School"

APPENDIX B

Parental Consent Form

PARENTAL CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Adolescents' Understanding and Acceptance of Bullying using Reader Response

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

You are being asked to give your permission for your child to be in a research study. The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between reading novels with bullying themes and adolescents' understanding of bullying.

NUMBER OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS

If you agree to allow your child to participate in this study, he/she will be one of 150 people in this research study.

DURATION OF THE STUDY

Your child's participation will require normal class attendance for a period of seven weeks.

PROCEDURES

If your child participates in this study, we will ask your child to do the following things:

1. Fill out two surveys before and after reading a novel in class.
2. Read novels with bullying themes and complete normal academic assignments in reading and language arts.

RISKS AND/OR DISCOMFORTS

The following risks may be associated with your child's participation in this study: Your child will be asked to consider his/her attitudes towards bullying.

BENEFITS

The following benefits may be associated with your child's participation in this study. Your child will learn about literary elements that will assist him/her in ELA courses and on the FSA. This study may assist educators in designing and implementing educational techniques intended to reduce bullying.

ALTERNATIVES

There are no known alternatives available to your child other than not taking part in this study. However, any significant new findings developed during the course of the research which may relate to your child's willingness to continue participation will be provided to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The records of this study will be kept private and will be protected to the fullest extent provided by law. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify your child as a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher team will have access to the records. All survey information will be destroyed as soon as the data is analyzed and it will be impossible for anyone, including the research team, to link your child to the data after that time.

COMPENSATION & COSTS

Your child will receive class credit for completing the surveys and participating in class discussions. Your child will not be responsible for any costs to participate in this study.

RIGHT TO DECLINE OR WITHDRAW

Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. Your child is free to participate in the study or withdraw his/her consent at any time during the study. Your child's withdrawal or lack of participation will not affect any benefits to which he/she is otherwise entitled. The investigator reserves the right to remove your child from the study without your consent at such time that they feel it is in the best interest.

RESEARCHER CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions about the purpose, procedures, or any other issues relating to this research study you may contact Ilisa J. Lieberman at Pembroke Pines Charter Middle, 954-322-3300, ilieberman@pinescharter.net

IRB CONTACT INFORMATION

If you would like to talk with someone about your child's rights of being a subject in this research study or about ethical issues with this research study, you may contact the FIU Office of Research Integrity by phone at 305-348-2494 or by email at ori@fiu.edu.

PARTICIPANT AGREEMENT

I have read the information in this consent form and agree to allow my child to participate in this study. I have had a chance to ask any questions I have about this study, and they have been answered for me. I understand that I am entitled to a copy of this form after it has been read and signed.

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Date

Printed Name of Parent/ Guardian

Printed Name of Child Participant

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date

PARTICIPANT REFUSAL

I have read the information in this consent form and do NOT want my child to participate in this study. I have had the chance to ask any questions that I have about the study, and they have been answered. I understand that I am entitled to a copy of this form after it has been read and signed.

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Date

Printed Name of Parent/ Guardian

Printed Name of Child Participant

APPENDIX C

Student Assent Form

CHILD ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Adolescents' Understanding and Acceptance of Bullying using Reader Response

WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS STUDY?

We would like for you to be in a research study we are doing. A research study is a way to learn information about something. We would like to find out more about how reading novels may or may not influence the way pre-teens and teens feel about bullying.

HOW MANY OTHERS WILL BE IN THIS STUDY?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be one of 150 children in this research study.

HOW LONG WILL THE STUDY LAST?

Your participation will require you to fill out two inventories before and after reading a novel with a bullying theme and engage in class discussions about the novel. The novel will be read in class over a three-week period of class time.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN THIS STUDY?

If you participate in this study, we will ask you to do the following things:

Fill out two surveys about your understanding of bullying and to participate in class discussions.

CAN ANYTHING BAD HAPPEN TO ME?

There are no known risks to completing surveys or participating in class discussions.

CAN ANYTHING GOOD HAPPEN TO ME?

The following benefits may be associated with your participation in this study: In addition to increasing your literary knowledge by reading a novel, you may increase your self-awareness about your attitudes towards bullying.

DO I HAVE OTHER CHOICES?

There are no known alternatives available to you other than not taking part in this study.

WILL ANYONE KNOW I AM IN THE STUDY?

The records of this study will be kept private and will be protected by the researchers. All surveys will be destroyed after the data has been analyzed.

WILL I BE GIVEN ANYTHING FOR PARTICIPATING?

You will receive a payment of one extra-credit “A” grade for participating in this study. You will not need to pay for anything to participate in this study.

WHAT IF I DO NOT WANT TO DO THIS?

You do not have to be in this study if you don’t want to and you can quit the study at any time. If you don’t like a question, you don’t have to answer it and, if you ask, your answers will not be used in the study. No one will get mad at you if you decide you don’t want to participate.

WHO CAN I TALK TO ABOUT THE STUDY?

If you have any questions about the research study you may contact Ilisa J. Lieberman at Pembroke Pines Charter Middle, 954-322-3300, ilieberman@pinescharter.net. If you would like to talk with someone about your rights of being a participant in this research study, you may contact the FIU Office of Research Integrity by phone at 305-348-2494 or by email at ori@fiu.edu.

PARTICIPANT AGREEMENT

This research study has been explained to me and I agree to be in this study.

Signature of Child Participant

Date

Printed Name of Child Participant

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date

APPENDIX D

Diverse Adolescent Relational Aggression Scale

Think about your interactions and relationships with your peers, family and community.
In your interactions with your peers, family and community, do you agree with the following:

1. It is okay to talk about someone you don't like.
A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly Disagree
2. I have told a "mean joke" about someone in front of a group.
A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly Disagree
3. It is okay to repeat a rumor that you've heard.
A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly Disagree
4. When someone is talked about badly, their popularity might decrease.
A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly Disagree
5. When someone is talked about badly, it is okay for them to "get back" at that person who was talking about them.
A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly Disagree
6. When you hear that a peer/friend has been talking negatively about you, you should confront them.
A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly Disagree
7. When you hear that a peer/friend has been talking negatively about you, it is okay to respond by talking negatively about them.
A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly Disagree
8. It is okay to talk (say negative things) about a friend if you are just joking.
A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly Disagree
9. It is okay to avoid your friend if you're mad at them.
A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly Disagree
10. It is okay to post on your website something negative about a peer that made you mad.
A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly Disagree
11. Girls spread rumors more than boys.
A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly Disagree
12. Girls will ignore a friend more than boys.
A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly Disagree
13. Boys talk about their friends.
A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly Disagree

14. When people are whispering and looking in your direction they are probably talking about you.
 A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly Disagree
15. I have talked with a friend of someone I did not like in order to make the person I did not like mad.
 A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly Disagree
16. It is okay to stare at (mean-mug) someone you do not like.
 A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly Disagree
17. It is okay to talk about someone behind their back.
 A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly Disagree
18. If someone stares at you for a while...they probably do not like you.
 A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly Disagree
19. I have talked negatively about someone when they were not around.
 A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly Disagree
20. I have heard an adult talking negatively about their friend when they were not around.
 A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly Disagree
21. I have heard my parent talking negatively about their friend when they were not around.
 A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly Disagree
22. I have heard my sibling talking negatively about their friend when they were not around.
 A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly Disagree
23. I have heard a friend talk negatively about another friend when they were not around.
 A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly Disagree
24. I have heard people in my neighborhood talk about someone behind their back.
 A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly Disagree
25. My parent has encouraged me to talk about a friend.
 A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly Disagree
26. My friend has treated me badly without telling me what I did.
 A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly Disagree
27. Just for fun, my friend and I have talked about someone when they walked by.
 A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly Disagree
28. When someone is dressed poorly, it is okay to talk about them.
 A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly Disagree

APPENDIX E

Novel Study Lesson Plans

Language Arts Curriculum Map

Novel Study

Language Arts Florida Standards

LAFS.6-8.L.2.3 →	Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening
LAFS.6-8.L.3.6 →	Acquire and use accurately grade appropriate general academic and domain specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.
LAFS.6-8.RL.1.1 →	Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
LAFS.6-8.RL.1.2 →	Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.
LAFS.6-8.RL.1.3 →	Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.
LAFS.6-8.SL.1.1 →	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
LAFS.6-8.W.2.4 →	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
LAFS.6-8.W.3.7 →	Conduct short research projects to answer a question.

Materials		Formative Assessments		
notebook computer w- internet access pencil/pen novel study worksheets		☒ Oral Questioning/ Discussion ☒ Graphic Organizers	☒ Peer Assessment ☒ Visual Representations	☒ Response Journals ☒ Authentic Assessments/Projects
Homework → Students are responsible for reading 40 minutes/night Note: RR = Reader's Response				
Week	Reading Assignment	Literacy Focus	Essential Question	Differentiated Instruction
1	- Pretest Survey - Chapters 1-4	-RR Journal ★ Pre-reading strategies ★ Research – Author	How does knowledge about an author's personal experiences impact the reading and interpretation of their work?	Interactive Notebook - Graphic Organizer
2	- Chapters 5-8	-RR Journal <u>Reading Strategies</u> Questioning Clarifying Visualizing Predicting Reacting/ Connecting	How do the interactions between characters help you understand plot?	<u>Reciprocal Teaching:</u> * summarizing * questioning * predicting * clarifying
3	- Chapter 9	-RR Journal ★ Introduction and training on Literature Circles	How do the interactions between characters help you understand the challenges of being an adolescent?	Literature Circles

Week	Reading Assignment	Literacy Focus	Essential Question	Differentiated Instruction
4	-Chapters 10-13	-RR Journal ★ Character	How does determining the central idea and details help you understand the text?	Interactive Notebook - Graphic Organizer
5	-Chapters 14-17	-RR Journal ★ Citing Textual Evidence	How does an author's point of view impact a piece of literature?	<u>Reciprocal Teaching:</u> * summarizing * questioning * predicting * clarifying
6	-Chapters 18-21	-RR Journal ★ Short Response	How does the use of vivid language and imagery help readers picture a scene?	<u>Authentic Assessment:</u> Choice Board A
7	-Chapter 22	-RR Journal ★ Foreshadowing ★ Predictions	How does the use of foreshadowing create mystery in a drama?	Reader's Theater
8	- Chapters 23-26	-RR Journal ★ Informative Essay	How do descriptive details help establish a setting?	<u>Reciprocal Teaching:</u> * summarizing * questioning * predicting * clarifying
9	-Chapters 27-30	-RR Journal ★ Literature Circles	How does responding to what you read impact your understanding of a piece of literature?	Literature Circles
10	-Posttest	★ Theme	What is the importance of understanding vocabulary to gain meaning from a text?	Authentic Assessment: Choice Board B

Reciprocal Teaching

In your group, select one of the reading strategies below that you will present to the class. As you read this week's chapters, choose two chapters and take notes on your chosen strategy to prepare for your presentation.

Literature Circles

Task Cards 1

<h3>Director</h3> <p>Assign tasks and begin conversation with group. What are some questions that you have about the novel?</p>	<h3>Vocabulary</h3> <p>Select 10 words that you found difficult in the reading and complete a chart with:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Word</th> <th>What you know.</th> <th>Dictionary Definition</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Word	What you know.	Dictionary Definition																														
Word	What you know.	Dictionary Definition																																
<h3>Quotes</h3> <p>Select 5 quotes from this week's reading- note page number. Write the quote and explain why you chose it, why is it important?</p>	<h3>Connections</h3> <p>1- Make a connection between something else that you have read and this novel – explain the connection.</p> <p>2- Each member of the group will make a connection between the text and themselves – How do you relate to the novel individually and as a group?</p>																																	
<h3>Summary</h3> <p>2-3 sentence summary of what you have read so far. Who, What, When, Where, Why, How?</p>	<h3>Photographer</h3> <p>Find pictures in magazines, take photos, or draw a memorable scene from the reading assignment. Explain why it is so important to the text.</p>																																	

Character Map

Choose a character from this week's readings and complete the worksheet. Cut around the object and on dotted lines. Glue under the left side and paste to notebook page so that you can fold the flaps up on the right and write answers underneath.

What the character says:	
What the character does:	
How the character acts:	
What the character looks like:	
What other's think of the character:	

Novel Study Choice Board

Choose 2 Products of your Choice

Use the internet to research more information about the literary elements to assist you with samples and examples of each product to complete your project

<p><i>Linguistic</i></p> <p>Research more information about the novel: author, setting, themes Write a persuasive speech to be read to your fellow classmates about why everyone should read this play. Use specific details from the play to support your opinion.</p>	<p><i>Musical/Rhythmic</i></p> <p>Write a lyric poem or song from the point of view of the main character of the novel.</p> <p>Sonnet Villanelle Hymn Ode Elegy</p>	<p><i>Visual</i></p> <p>Use your artistic ability to create a collage illustrating the main character or characters in the novel. You may use words, symbols, real pictures, clip art, magazines, or drawings. Then write a couple of sentences (3-5) explaining why you choose those pictures to represent the character.</p>
<p><i>Logical/Mathematical</i></p> <p>Create a detailed map tracing the setting of the novel and main characters movement throughout the story. Then write a short paragraph to accompany your map that details how the setting of the story may have influenced the main character.</p>	<p><i>Student Created Activity</i></p> <p>You may come up with one original activity – it must be approved by your teacher!</p>	<p><i>Bodily/Kinesthetic</i></p> <p>Design a board game for other students to play who have read the novel. Be sure to include specific details from the story and main characters in your game.</p>
<p><i>Naturalist</i></p> <p>Pretend you could change any part of the novel. Select the page number that you would choose to alter the plot of the story. Then write the next 3 pages of the story detailing how you would change the plot development.</p>	<p><i>Interpersonal</i></p> <p>Create a dramatic play that projects a characters' point of view from the novel. Please be sure to include a detailed script, prompt, materials, etc. for your dramatic play.</p>	<p><i>Intrapersonal</i></p> <p>Write 3 of your own diary entries from the perspective of any character in the novel. Be sure to use specific details from the novel to support your diary entries.</p>

Reader's Theater

Foreshadowing: A literary device in which a writer gives an advance hint of what is to come later in the story. Foreshadowing may appear at the beginning of a story, or a chapter, and it assists the reader in developing expectations and making predictions about upcoming events.

Think about what you have read in this week's readings that you and your group members may have a question about. With your group create a script for a scene that you would add that foreshadows something that will happen later in the chapter to help readers better understand the text.

Interview Questions

1. How would you describe your connection to the novel, *The Misfits*, that we read in class?
 - a. What is your perception of whether or not the novel changed your thoughts about relational aggression?
 - b. What is your perception of whether or not the novel changed your behavior (relational aggression) towards others?
 - c. Describe your experiences and possible connections to relational aggression through other mediums (text or media).
2. Describe your experiences with relational aggression at your school?
 - a. How do you perceive the guidance counselor at the school has effected the climate of the school?
 - b. How do you perceive that the climate of the school has effected the amount of relational aggression in your school?
3. How would you describe yourself as a friend?

VITA

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PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Labadie, A. L. R., Lieberman, I. J., Vargo, K., & Flamion, O. (2012). The use of literature to combat bullying. In Plakhotnik, M. S., Nielsen, S. N., & Pane, D. M. (Eds.) *Proceedings of the Florida International University: The 11th Annual College of Education and Graduate Student Network Research Conference* (p. 91-98). Miami, FL.

Lieberman, I. J. & Flamion, O. (2012). Using reader response strategies in language arts classes to deter bullying. Paper presented at the *Secondary Reading Council of Florida*. Boca Raton, Florida.

Lieberman-Leibovich, I. J. (2016). Transitioning from narrative to expository in the middle school: A look at boys' preferred writing techniques. *Proceedings of the Florida International University: The 15th Annual South Florida Educational Research Conference*. Miami, FL.