



HS LESSON 6: Media, Bullying, and Relational Aggression

LESSON DESCRIPTION: In this lesson, students will read articles on relational aggression and media. They will watch five minutes of two videos meant for young children and collect data on how much relational aggression including verbal and physical aggression are shown in the videos. They will create graphs of the data and draw conclusions about the effects of cartoons and videos on children’s physical, social, and emotional well-being.

Teacher’s Note: Select two videos for young children: one video with high levels of violence, e.g., *Power Puff Girls* and one video with low levels of aggression, e.g., *Winnie the Pooh*.

FOCUS QUESTIONS: What is social or relational aggression and is it present in television and movies? Is there a connection between relational aggression and bullying? Is there relational aggression in cartoons marketed to young children?

OBJECTIVES: Students will:

- Conduct a short research project to answer a question including an analysis of media.
- Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Core State Standards

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.9-12.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.9-12.9 Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis reflection, and research.

LENGTH OF LESSON: This lesson will take two periods.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Two videos meant for young children
- Research articles regarding social aggression, screen use and young children
- HANDOUT 1: Taking Notes Based on the Cornell Method
- HANDOUT 2: The Notecard Form
- HANDOUT 3: The Cartoon and Behavior Observation Chart (1 per student)
- Class Video Observation Form for Relational Aggression
- HANDOUT 4: Cartoon and Aggression Observation Bar Chart (or display on screen)

PROCEDURE:

Activity 6.1: Students will listen to the teacher read an article on “Bullying and Indirect or Social Aggression”, violent media and young children, take notes, exchange them and then summarize the article.

1. Students will listen to the teacher read the article, “Bullying and Indirect or (Social Aggression)” and take notes using either the **HANDOUT 1: Cornell Note Taking Form** or **HANDOUT 2: The Notecard Form**.
2. Periodically stop reading and discuss the findings as a class.
3. Have students exchange notes and silently read them. (Optional: Repeat this procedure several times so students get a chance to look at notes from a number of other students).

Activity 6.2: Students read two other articles on social bullying, take notes and discuss what they have learned.

1. Have students read the two other articles on social bullying and take notes.
2. Have a class discussion about what they learned from the articles and any problems they identified. Have students find information in the text that supports their position.

Activity 6.3: Students will collect data on how much Verbal Aggression and Social or Relational Bullying they see in two cartoons.

1. Give students **HANDOUT 3: Cartoon and Behavior Observation Chart**. Explain what the category of Social/Relational, and Verbal Aggression includes. Ask students if they think it is much of a problem and why.
2. **TELL STUDENTS:** You will be watching two cartoons to identify how much verbal or social/relational aggression is in the cartoons. Put a tally every time you see a character in the video show verbal aggression or social/relational aggression. It may be difficult to count all the behaviors especially for any of the cartoons with high levels of aggression. It is also more difficult to identify social/relational aggression. Each student may have different results but we will average the students’ observations for a class average.
3. Students will view the video, “Powder Puff Girls” for 5 minutes. Students will tally Social/Relational and Verbal aggression.
4. Students will view the video, “Winnie the Pooh” for 5 minutes. Students will tally Social/Relational and Verbal aggression.
5. Have a class discussion regarding what they found and what impact the videos could have on young children.

Activity 6.4: Students will create graphs of the data they collected on social aggression and physical aggression in cartoons.

1. Enter the students' totals on the **Class Video Observation Form for Relational Aggression** and have the students calculate the class average.
2. Distribute **HANDOUT 4: Cartoons and Aggression Class Average Bar Graph** to each student and have them create a graph on the amount of social/relational aggression observed in the videos as well as physical aggression. Students will need the data they collected from the previous lesson on physical aggression. (You can also show this form on a projection screen and do this as a whole class activity or give students the task of creating a graph without specifying that it should be a bar graph.)

Activity 6.5: Class Discussion & Identify Main Problems

1. Have a class discussion regarding conclusions and any social problems they identified from the articles. Have students find information in the text to show supporting evidence for their conclusions.
2. Ask students what they noticed from the articles or data they collected that they can relate to their own experiences with screens (i.e. video games and movies). Ask students what impact they think social or verbal aggression in videos can have on children?

Bullying and Indirect or (Social Aggression) by Kristine Paulsen, 2014

When most people think of bullying they think of physical aggression. However, in addition to physical bullying there is also verbal and relational bullying. The Federal website www.StopBullyingNow.gov describes three kinds of bullying:

Physical bullying involves hurting a person's body or possessions. It includes: hitting/kicking/punching, spitting, tripping/pushing, taking or breaking someone's things.

Verbal bullying is saying or writing mean things and includes: name-calling, teasing, inappropriate sexual comments, taunting, and threatening to cause harm.

Social bullying, sometimes referred to as relational or indirect bullying, involves hurting someone's reputation or relationships. Social bullying includes: leaving someone out on purpose, telling other children not to be friends with someone, spreading rumors about someone, or embarrassing someone in public. Social bullying is also referred to as indirect bullying and is more typical of girls than boys. Although many people think of physical bullying as being the most traumatic, indirect bullying can cause depression, insecurity, anxiety, and in some cases has led to suicide.

Studies have identified high levels of physical aggression and violence on television and movies over the last fifty years, however, TV also includes verbal and relational aggression. This includes plotting and scheming to hurt someone and can include gossiping, spreading rumors, and excluding someone from a group. Dr. Cayne has researched how much indirect aggression (social aggression) is on TV and how it is depicted. Her 2004 study involved an analysis of over 200 hours of television popular with British teenagers. Although a different country, three of the four television programs were made and still play in the United States including: *Friends*, *Simpsons*, and *Star Trek*. Each aggressive act (indirect, physical, or verbal) was coded for reward/punishment, justification and realism of the aggression, how attractive the character was, and the relationship between the aggressor and the victim.

Overall, indirect (social or relational) aggression was portrayed in 92% of the programs, almost twice the physical aggression which was in 55% of the programs and verbal aggression was 86%. Indirect aggressors were more likely to be female, attractive, rewarded, justified, and realistic. A follow-up study of 347 adolescents showed that girls who watched more television with indirect (social) aggression had high levels of social aggression as determined through peer-nominations. These surveys ask students to identify who in their class spreads rumors, or gossips, etc.

IU research study finds social bullying prevalent in children's television **News Release, Friday, September 28, 2012,**

A new research study led by an Indiana University professor has found that social bullying is just as prevalent in children's television as depictions of physical aggression.

The study, "Mean on the Screen: Social Aggression in Programs Popular With Children," in the *Journal of Communication*, found that 92 % of the top 50 programs for children between the ages of 2 and 11 showed characters involved in social aggression. On average, there were 14 different incidents of social aggression per hour, or once every four minutes. While physical aggression in television for children has been extensively documented, this is believed to be among the first studies to analyze children's exposure to behaviors such as cruel gossiping and manipulation of friendship.

"Social aggression was more likely to be enacted by an attractive perpetrator and to be featured in a humorous context," wrote Nicole Martins, assistant professor in the IU College of Arts and Sciences. "In these ways, social aggression on TV poses more of a risk for imitation and learning than do portrayals of physical aggression."

Nicole Martins and Barbara Wilson, professor of communication at the University of Illinois, conducted a content analysis of the 50 most popular children's shows according to Nielsen Media Research from December 2006 to March 2007. In all, 150 TV shows were viewed and analyzed. Careful attention was given to what was portrayed in the cases of social aggression, whether the behavior was rewarded or punished, justified or committed by an attractive perpetrator. The findings suggest that some of the ways in which social aggression is shown make these depictions particularly problematic for young viewers.

"These findings should help parents and educators recognize that there are socially aggressive behaviors on programs children watch," Martins said. "Parents should not assume that a program is OK for their child to watch simply because it does not contain physical violence. Parents should be more aware of portrayals that may not be explicitly violent in a physical sense but are nonetheless anti-social in nature,"

The majority of socially aggressive incidents – 78% -- were verbal: words to hurt the self-esteem or social standing of another character. The most common types were insults (52%) or name-calling (25%). Other negative behavior were teasing (10%) and sarcasm (9%). Only about 20% of all socially aggressive incidents were non-verbal in nature and typically employed a mean face (36%) or laughter meant to lower the self-esteem of another character (31%). Rolling eyes, finger pointing and simply ignoring the other person also were common.

"We also coded whether social aggression was directly perpetrated at the target -- such as making a mean face -- or indirectly behind the target's back -- such as spreading a rumor," the authors wrote. "The majority of socially aggressive incidents (86%) were enacted directly at the target. Rarely were socially aggressive incidents perpetrated behind the target's back."

While previous research has demonstrated that gossip is one of the most common forms of social aggression in real life, it was rarely seen in children's television shows analyzed for the study. Martins and Wilson concluded that gossip, due to its indirect nature, may have been seen by program producers as being too subtle for advancing a story's plot.

Mean screens prime the brain for aggression, Iowa State University, 3-1-2012, News

Research over the past few decades has shown that viewing physical violence in the media can increase aggression in adults and children. But a new study, co-authored by an Iowa State University psychology professor, has also found that onscreen relational aggression -- including social exclusion, gossip and emotional bullying -- may prime the brain for aggression.

Douglas Gentile, an associate professor of psychology at Iowa State, was one of four authors of the study "'Frenemies, Fraitors, and Mean-em-aitors': Priming effects of viewing physical and relational aggression in the media on women," which was recently published by the journal *Aggressive Behavior*. The study of 250 college women showed that mean screens may also activate the neural networks that guide behavior.

"What this study shows is that relational aggression actually can cause a change in the way you think," said Gentile, who runs the Media Research Lab at Iowa State. "And that matters because of course, how you think can change your behavior." Sarah Coyne and David Nelson, researchers in Brigham Young University and Jennifer Ruh Linder, a professor at Linfield College (Ore.), were the study's other authors. In the study, the researchers evaluated the cognitive patterns of the college women after they viewed one of three fictional video clips. One clip depicted physical aggression, including a gun and knife fight that ended in murder. A second clip portrayed relational aggression, where girls steal boyfriends, spread malicious gossip and kick someone out of their social circle. The third clip was simply a scary scene, one that would raise the heartbeat.

Researchers assessed physiological arousal, finding that all three films produced similar levels of excitement. They then measured reaction times when aggressive or neutral words flashed on a screen. Participants who had watched either aggressive film clip ascribed more meaning to words connected with aggression.

"Past research has shown that viewing physical violence on TV activates aggressive scripts in the brain, but our findings suggest that watching both onscreen physical or relational aggression activates those cognitive scripts," Linder said. "Viewers don't simply choose to imitate TV characters or make a conscious decision to engage in aggressive behavior. Aggressive reactions are more automatic and less conscious than most people assume."

"This matters because relational aggression tends to be considered more socially acceptable -- it's often portrayed on television as funny and how friends treat each other," he said. "Yet, several studies are starting to show that relational aggression can cause long-term harm."

Cyberbullying is relational aggression - And some of the most highly publicized effects have been a result of the rising incidence of cyberbullying, which Gentile says is a classic case of relational aggression.

"We're treating cyberbullying as if it's something totally different and totally new. It's actually relational aggression and it does all the things that relational aggression does," Gentile said. "You can spread rumors, you can ignore people, I can unlike you on Facebook, I can tell your secrets, and I can lie and make up stuff. So this study relates to cyberbullying."

The researchers say more research is needed to determine whether their results are gender-specific, and whether this script activation indeed changes behavior.

HANDOUT 2: Note Card Form

TITLE & REFERENCE	
INFORMATION If a direct quote use Quotation Marks	
INFORMATION If a direct quote use Quotation Marks	
INFORMATION Interesting or compelling	
DATA	
SUMMARY (In your own words)	

HANDOUT 3: Cartoon and Behavior Observation Chart

Use tally marks to keep track of behavior:

Video # 2: Power Puff Girls		
SOCIAL/RELATIONAL, BULLYING & VERBAL AGGRESSION		TOTAL
Hurting someone's reputation or relationships, leaving someone out on purpose, telling other kids not to be friends with someone, spreading rumors about someone, or embarrassing someone in public. It can include name calling, yelling, teasing, obscenities, threatening, or talking mean		

Video # 2: Winnie the Pooh		
SOCIAL/RELATIONAL BULLYING & VERBAL AGGRESSION		TOTAL
Hurting someone's reputation or relationships, leaving someone out on purpose, telling other kids not to be friends with someone, spreading rumors about someone, or embarrassing someone in public. It can include name calling, yelling, teasing, obscenities, threatening, or talking mean.		

Which video would you recommend and why?

CLASS VIDEO OBSERVATION FORM FOR RELATIONAL AGGRESSION

Enter each student's total for each behavior. Have the students figure out the class average.

Video # 1: Winnie the Pooh																		
STUDENTS																		
Social & Relational Bullying & Verbal Aggression	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
STUDENTS																		
Social & Relational Bullyin & Verbal Aggression	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	TOTAL	# of Students	Average			

Video # 2: Power Puff Girls																		
STUDENTS																		
Social & Relational Bullyin & Verbal Aggression	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
STUDENTS																		
Social & Relational Bullyin & Verbal Aggression	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	TOTAL	# of Students	Average			

Cartoons and Aggression Class Average Bar Graph (Include Physical & Social Aggression)

40						
38						
36						
34						
32						
30						
28						
26						
24						
22						
20						
18						
16						
14						
12						
10						
8						
6						
4						
2						
0						
	Physical Aggression	Verbal & Social Agg.		Physical Aggression	Verbal & Social Agg.	
	Winnie the Pooh			Power Puff Girls		