A SMALL GROUP TO ADDRESS RELATIONAL AGGRESSION IN LATINA MIDDLE SCHOOL GIRLS

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by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis project to my husband, JC. You are my rock, my love, and my everything. Thank you for being there to support me throughout my entire graduate school process. You have been very supportive of my education and my development as a future educator. Your words kept me strong, in the best and worst of times. Life is bliss by your side and I appreciate everything you do for me.

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ABSTRACT

A SMALL GROUP TO ADDRESS RELATIONAL AGGRESSION IN LATINA MIDDLE SCHOOL GIRLS

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Bullying is a cause for concern across the nation. Relational aggression is a covert form of bullying for which effective methods of interventions need to be in place. This thesis project is develops a psycho-educational small group for sixth and seventh grade relationally-aggressive Latina girls created to be utilized in middle schools. This small group would be facilitated by a professional school counselor. The curriculum of the group plan has been designed for group members to understand aggression, learn about ethnic identity, and learn healthy alternative behaviors to relational aggression. Relational aggression and the reasons for the development of aggression are discussed. The scholarly literature of effective interventions and the role of the professional school counselor are reviewed.
Chapter 1

Introduction

The issue of bullying is a growing concern across the nation. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2011) in the school year of 2006-2007, over 30% of United States students ages 12 to 18 reported being victims of bullying. Of those students bullied over 70% of the reported incidents occurred in a school setting. The NCES also reported that girls had a higher incidence of being victims as compared to boys. At the middle school level almost 40% of students reported being victims of bullying (NCES, 2011a). A similar report by Robers, Zhang, and Truman (2012) indicates the number of bullying incidents for adolescents, ages 12 to 18, remained similar or the same in 2012 as in 2009. However, there were significant changes in the statistics depending on the type of bullying: 16% were victims of rumors, 9% were victims of physical aggression, and 5% were victims of social isolation (2012).

The prevalence of bullying is evident across the nation with higher incidents occurring at the middle school level in comparison to the elementary level and the high school level (NCES, 2011a). Researchers have reported that bullying occurs in greater levels during sixth, seventh, and eighth grade in comparison to ninth and tenth grade (Nansel et al., 2001). In a report compiled from various student surveys, over 8 million students between sixth through twelfth grade reported that the highest prevalence of bullying occurs in the sixth grade (NCES, 2011a). Students’ adjustment to middle school has been associated with adolescents experiencing distress and less academic success. Some studies suggest that girls experience higher amounts of psychological stress in
comparison to boys (Chung et al., 1998). Although girls are less likely to participate in physical aggression in comparison to boys, girls and boys participate in bullying equally (Van Schoiak-Edstrom et al., 2002). The most common form of bullying used by girls is relational aggression (Paquette & Underwood, 1999).

Relational aggression is a form of bullying predominately used by girls. Bullying had originally been associated more with physical or verbal acts of harm against another person; however, over time the critical nature of relational aggression has grown into a national concern. Relational aggression is defined by Crick and Grotpeter (1995) as “harming others through purposeful manipulation and damage of their peer relationships” (p. 711). Name-calling, gossiping, exclusion, and rejection are all forms of relational aggression. Covert forms of aggression have been referred to as relational aggression, social aggression, and indirect aggression.

**Statement of Need/Problem**

Although there are effective methods of interventions that have been developed for relationally-aggressive girls in general, there is a need for interventions for relationally-aggressive Latina girls. Latina adolescent girls differ in their social and personality development in comparison to Caucasian adolescent girls (Twenge & Crocker, 2002). The development of self-esteem for Latinos is dependent on their ethnic identity development (Diversi, Fine, & Umaña-Taylor, 2002). Latino students who are provided with social support from family and friends, and take pride in their cultural traditions, display higher levels of self-esteem than Latino students who do not have support or exposure to cultural traditions. (Diversi, Fine, & Umaña-Taylor, 2002). Bullies
and victims of bullying have lower self-esteem that that of students who are not victims or who have not been bullies (Pollastri, Cardemil, & O'Donnell, 2010). Due to these factors there is a need for an intervention that will address ethnic identity and cultural influences for Latina middle school girls. Latina relationally-aggressive girls need opportunities to explore their ethnicity, specifically traditions, gender roles, and values, and learn healthy alternatives to behavior problems.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this thesis project is to create a unique psycho-educational small group, specifically focused on relationally-aggressive Latina girls in the sixth and seventh grade. The small group will be designed for group members to learn about aggression, themselves, others, and non-aggressive coping strategies. The emphasis and goal of the group will be for Latina girls to learn about their culture and address the relationship between their ethnic identity and self-esteem, while acquiring behaviors that are relationally healthy and developmentally appropriate.

**Terminology**

Bullying: intentional, repeated, negative (unpleasant or hurtful) behavior by one or more persons directed against a person who has difficulty defending himself or herself (Olweus and Limber, 2010).

Indirect aggression: covert behavior in which the perpetrator makes it seem as though there has been no intent to all hurt at all (Simmons, 2003).
Relational aggression: harming others through purposeful manipulation and damage of their peer relationships (Crick and Grotpeter, 1995).

Social aggression: acts directed toward damaging another’s self-esteem, social status, or both, and may take such direct forms as verbal rejection, negative facial expressions or body movements, or more indirect forms such as slanderous rumors or social exclusion (Galen and Underwood 1997).
Chapter 2

Review of Literature

This literature review will discuss the scholarly literature regarding adolescent girls, Latino adolescents, the middle school environment, the effects of bullying, and relational aggression. It will also review literature on effective interventions and the role of the professional school counselor. It is essential to understand the development of girls during adolescence and the environment in which most relational aggression occurs because such aggression may signal psychological problems concerning self-esteem, emotional stability, and cultural identity.

Development of Adolescent Girls

Physical Development & Puberty

Adolescence marks a time of change in the physical, social, and psychological development of individuals’ lives. Pinyerd & Zipf (2005) have noted that puberty can begin as early as 8 years of age or as late as 14 years of age. As girls grow into adolescence there are many significant changes that begin to occur; notably for girls it is the start of menstruation (2005). The menstruation cycle occurs almost simultaneously with changes in physical appearance in the female body. Physical changes that occur during adolescence include faster/accelerated growth, breast growth, and pubic hair growth. During puberty girls tend to grow in height at double the rate per year in comparison to their childhood. The typical age that the growth in height happens is 12 years old. Changes in breast size can occur as early as 8½ years old but the most common
age is 13 (British Medical Journal, 1974). However, there is no specific order in which any of these physical changes occur.

**Psychological & Cognitive Development**

The changes in adolescent girls’ physical appearances occur concurrently with their psychological development. Reynolds & Juvonen (2012) conducted a longitudinal study with approximately 1,200 middle school girls in the Los Angeles area. The study examined the association between the time when changes due to puberty occur and unhealthy psychological development (i.e. social anxiety and depression) occurs. Researchers used Kovacs’ (1992) Children’s Depression Inventory to assess depressive symptoms such as recurring sadness, emotional problems, and functional problems. The students were recruited in the sixth grade and participated in the study until the end of the eighth grade. The population and sample of the study were relatively diverse with participants being Latino (50%), African American (30%), Asian (11%) and Caucasian (9%). The results indicated that girls who appeared to have advanced physically demonstrated more psychological symptoms of depression such as recurring sadness, anxiety, and/or loss of pleasure in hobbies in comparison to their peers. These psychological symptoms were present at the end of every academic year from sixth to eighth grade. Additionally, at the start of middle school, the girls who displayed physical advancements early on were associated with low self-esteem in comparison to the girls who did not display early physical developments. However, the authors noted that girls who showed relatively no physical changes by the end of the eighth grade also experienced social anxiety (Reynolds & Juvonen, 2012).
During adolescence, many individuals begin a phase of self-exploration to understand who they are and what their role in society are. Erikson (1968) proposed that an adolescent individual is faced with finding his or her true identity. When adolescents are effective in determining their values and are able to stay true to themselves, they have mastered the stage of identity. However, if adolescents fail in finding their identity, they enter a stage of role confusion that lowers their self-esteem (1968). Along with the stages of self-exploration, adolescents also begin to think more abstractly as they mature in age. Piaget (1964) asserted that in the formal operation stage, adolescents are able to use logic and create hypotheses. In this stage, adolescents form opinions and thoughts on theoretical concepts. The child is able to compute advanced mathematical problems without the use of concrete objects (Piaget, 1964). Girls place a significant degree of value on the opinions of others and create their identity based on their relationships with peers (Berger, 2002).

Social & Personality Development

There are substantial differences in social development that occur between childhood and adolescence. For both females and males, the time spent with peers begins to increase, while the time spent with parents declines. Adolescent females’ relationships with friends and family tend to display more closeness, kindness, warmth, and validation in comparison to adolescent males (Perry & Pauletti, 2011). As in their childhood, adolescent girls continue to have close relationships with other girls; however, adolescent girls may also begin to form romantic relationships with boys. Girls interact with boys more often within peer groups (Brown, 2004). Having close relationships with peers creates a healthy support system for girls. By contrast, girls with distant social
relationships show symptoms of depression and anxiety. Specifically, when adolescent girls pursue romantic relationships, they may show signs of anxiety because they do not know how to act around boys. (La Greca & Harrison, 2005).

As children begin to enter adolescence, their abilities to self-reflect and understand the perspectives of other begin to emerge. According to Selman (1976), before the age of 10, children can comprehend that people may have different opinions, but they are not able to process their own opinion simultaneously with that of another child’s. However, as they begin adolescence between the ages of approximately 10 and 12 years old, children are learning how to reflect on their own thoughts and the perspectives of others. At this point in their adolescence, children are better able to participate in role-taking activities because they can reflect not only their own feelings but on those of others as well (Selman, 1976).

Development of Latino Adolescents

Social and personality development for ethnic minorities differs in comparison to Caucasians. Researchers Twenge & Crocker (2002) compared the differences in self-esteem among various American ethnic minorities using meta-analyses. A total of 712 study samples were used for comparison between Caucasians, Latinos, African Americans, Asians, and American Indians youth. The total sample size of participants was nearly 400,000. Researchers also analyzed differences between gender, age, socio-economic status, and location within the United States. The results of the meta-analysis study indicated that Latino elementary school students have lower self-esteem in comparison to Caucasian and Asian elementary school students. Although Latino
students’ self-esteem increases over time, the self-esteem of Caucasian and Asian students in general is greater than that of Latinos in elementary school. Their lower self-esteem has been attributed to Latino children learning negative ethnic stereotypes. The self-esteem of Latino adolescents increases in early adolescence but is still significantly lower than Caucasian American students (Twenge & Crocker, 2002).

The development of self-esteem for Latinos tends to be dependent on their ethnic identity development. Diversi, Fine, & Umaña-Taylor (2002) reviewed 21 empirical studies that examined the relationship between self-esteem and ethnic identity. These studies were conducted between 1969 and 1998 and were categorized into the following areas of ethnic identity development: biculturalism, Latino identity, group membership, and the search for and commitment to ethnic identity. The review of the studies indicated that Latino students who have social support from family and friends and take pride in their cultural traditions display higher levels of self-esteem than Latino students who do not have social support or exposure to their culture’s traditions. Another factor that influences the development of positive ethnic identity in Latino students is the regional area where the student lives. Latino students who live in demographic areas where their ethnicity is the minority tend to have lower self-esteem than students who live in areas where Latinos are the majority (Diversi et al, 2002).

Ethnic and cultural identity is developed through the connection and exposure to traditions of an ethnic group. According to French, Seidman, Allen, & Aber (2006) Latino students begin to explore their ethnic identity during adolescence. French et al. conducted a longitudinal study to examine the development of ethnic group self-esteem and ethnic group exploration. A total of 420 adolescents were recruited from various
elementary and middle schools in the United States. When the study began, over 30% of the students were fifth graders and 70% were sixth graders. The participants of this study were African American (35%), Caucasian (36%), and Latino (29%). Participants were individually interviewed and asked to provide all of the ethnic labels they use to describe themselves. Participants were also required to fill out a survey that asked questions regarding their ethnic group’s esteem and individual racial exploration. Using a Likert scale students answered statements like, “I feel good about being in my racial/ethnic group”; “I want to raise my children to be aware of their own cultural or racial/ethnic background”; and “I feel comfortable among people of my own group and at least one other group” (p. 5). “Group-esteem” is how an individual feels about the particular ethnic group to which they belong. The results of the study indicated that Latino students display lower group-esteem in comparison to Caucasian students in both early and middle adolescence. Group-esteem for Latino middle school students increases as they transition into high school. However, group-esteem for Caucasian students tends to remain at the same levels as they transition from middle school into high school. In terms of ethnic exploration, researchers found that the participants engaged in very little exploration during the fifth grade. However, ethnic exploration began to increase in the middle school years (French et al., 2006).

The Latino culture has set gender roles that become more evident during adolescence. Szapocznik et al. (2009) conducted a longitudinal study to explore “family functioning” as an influencing factor of ethnic identity. For the purpose of this study, family functioning included the areas of family environment, communication between adolescent and parent, and positive parental guidance. A total of 250 adolescents in
Florida participated in the study. The adolescents attended middle and high schools with large populations of Latinos. Both genders were almost equally represented in this study with 51% being girls and 49% being boys. In terms of socio-economic status, about 70% of the participants came from families who made less than $20,000 per year. The majority of the participants were first-generation immigrants from Cuba, Mexico, Honduras, Nicaragua, Puerto Rico, and Venezuela. The students and their parent(s) were asked to fill out several surveys regarding family environment, communication, and parental relationships. The following scales were used in this study: the Family Relations Scale (Tolan et al. 1997), the Parent-Adolescent Communication Scale (Barnes & Olson, 1985), and the Parenting Practices Scale (Gorman-Smith et al. 1996). The results of the study indicated that girls are taught and expected to do chores such as preparing meals and caring for younger siblings beginning in adolescence. Adolescent girls with positive family functioning will experience less confusion in regarding their ethnic identity. It is hypothesized that because girls are exposed to cultural norms, such as the gender roles of the Latino culture in early adolescence, they are able to identify with their ethnic identity sooner than boys (Szapocznik et al., 2009).

The development of ethnic identity begins through exploration and is influenced by family values. To examine the relationship between ethnic identity and family processes, Kiang & Fulingi (2009) conducted a longitudinal study with participants from different ethnic backgrounds. Almost 700 students were recruited from three urban schools in California. The ethnic backgrounds of the participants were Latino (41%), Asian (38%), and Caucasian (21%). Students were provided with a daily checklist to fill out for 2 weeks to assess their family activities and obligations. Several scales were used
to measure ethnic identity, family respect, and parent-child relationships (Phinney 1992; Fuligni et al., 1999; & Olson et al., 1979). Using a Likert scale participants answered statements such as, “I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs”, and “Respect your older brothers and sisters” (p. 5-6). The results indicated that adolescents who actively explored their culture and had a sense of belonging to their ethnic background were more connected to their family in comparison to adolescents who reported low levels of exploration and belonging. Students from Latino background connected their ethnic development with family respect and responsibility. The Latino participants reported greater amounts of assisting their families with chores, siblings, or family errands in comparison to Caucasian participants. The discrepancies between the two ethnic groups are attributed to the Latino culture embracing collectivism and familism (Kiang & Fulingi, 2009).

The development of ethnic identity is strongly family-driven for Latino youth. Umaña-Taylor, Zeiders, & Updegraff (2013), conducted a study to examine whether ethnic identity and ethnic socialization were family driven and/or youth driven. A total of 178 seventh grade Mexican students were recruited for their longitudinal study. These participants were required to have a least one older sibling, to be living with their biological parents, and for their mothers to be from Mexican descent. The recent study focused on information gathered during students’ senior year of high school and two years after. Participants interviewed in their homes with bilingual interpretations and were asked to complete to measurement scales to assess ethnic identity and family ethnic socialization (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2004). Participants responded on items such as “I have attended events that have helped me learn more about my ethnicity” (p. 140) and
“My family teaches me about our family’s ethnic/cultural background” (p. 130). The results of the study indicated that first-generation Latino youth are strongly influenced by their families when it comes to ethnic identity development. However, for Latino youth who reported having several generations of their families in the United States, their ethnic identity development was youth driven. The researchers assert that immigrant parents understand that their children do not have a direct connection with their ancestral roots because they were born in the United States. Therefore, immigrant parents strongly emphasize passing down their culture and tradition to their children. Immigrant parents do not encourage their children’s socialization into the American culture as much as the Latino culture (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2013)

**Development of Latina Adolescents**

The Latino culture places great importance on the development of Latina adolescents into “mujercitas”. The term Mujerita is used to refer to a Latina adolescent who has become a young woman. Napoitano (1997) studied the rituals, festivities, and religious events associated with Latina adolescents. The qualitative study took place near Guadalajara, Mexico, in a town populated by approximately 30,000 residents. Napolitano collected information about “quinceneras” and interviewed four Mexican adolescents before and after their quincenera and also attended their mass and social gathering. A quincenera is a Latino ritual in which a fifteen year old girl celebrates her birthday with a religious mass and a social gathering to follow. Based on the information she gathered from the Latina adolescents and their mothers, Napolitano concluded that quinceneras influence changes in gender identity, family responsibilities, and physical appearance. A quincenera helps girls learn about gender identity and the structure of the female body.
Napolitano asserts that whether or not the participants had a quincenera, their fifteenth birthday marked the beginning of their lives as young woman. The coming of age also signified that these young ladies had permission from their fathers to have a boyfriend with the conditions of there being restrictions on their social encounters. For the purpose of training Latina girls to be good wives and mothers, the adolescents were taught and expected to do family chores at an early age by their mothers. Lastly, quinceneras promote the illusion of being a woman through appearance changes. On the day of their quincenera, the mujercitas were allowed to wear make-up, wear a very nice ball-gown dress, and often wear high heels. From that day forward the young women began to show significant differences in their style of dressing, hair styling, and cosmetic routines (Napolitano, 1997).

The identity of a Latina is strongly influenced by the gender roles of the Latino culture. Raffaelli & Ontai (2004) examined the differences in gender socialization among Latino families through by conducting two research studies. Women in the study were required to be from Spanish speaking homes, of Latino descent, and a minimum of 8 years of residence in the United States. In the first study, 22 Latina women between the ages of 20 to 45, participated in an open-ended interview regarding gender socialization. Examples of the questions that were given to the participants to answer were “How did your parents teach you about how girls and boys ‘should’ behave?” and, “Did your parents ever get angry or upset when you didn’t behave in a certain way?” (p. 289) The results of the study indicated that Latina women who grew up in homes with brothers were treated differently by their parents. The brothers were granted more freedom in comparison to the Latina girls during childhood and adolescence. Latina women reported
that their parents expected them to do family chores and assist with the responsibilities of the home where as their parents did not have the same expectations for their brothers. The second study recruited 166 Latino men (69) and woman (97) under the age of 25 from four universities. Participants were mailed a survey through their university containing questions regarding gender role socialization, differential treatment among Latino siblings, and parental influences of gender identity. The results of the second study indicated that as children both the Latino men and women were encouraged to play with toys stereotypically associated with their gender. In regards to family chores, the women were encouraged at an early age to participate in indoor chores and the men in outdoor chores. All of the women participants reported having more rules and standards that they had to follow in comparison to their male siblings. Mothers who encouraged femininity in their daughters were more likely to have traditional gender role attitudes (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004)

**The Middle School Environment**

In order to further understand the development of adolescents, it is crucial to be aware of the environment in which adolescents interact on a daily basis. Children in elementary school transition into middle school after the fifth grade when they are about 10 years old. In general, middle schools are comprised of the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades (Snyder & Dillow, 2012). Unlike elementary school children, students at the middle school level have a different teacher for every subject (Scholastic, 2012). Middle school facilities are usually much bigger in comparison to elementary schools and often have larger enrollment numbers. The transition from elementary to middle school can be difficult for some students, since fifth graders are usually older and bigger in comparison
to the younger children in elementary schools, but when the students become sixth graders, they are usually the smallest and youngest at the school.

Girls may display higher psychological distress due to their transition into middle school than do boys. In a longitudinal study by Chung, Elias, & Schneider (1998), researchers noted that changes in development during adolescence affected the transition into middle school. The study was conducted with 99 early adolescents between the ages of 10 and 12 from a central city in New Jersey. The majority of the participants were Caucasian. Approximately five students were African American or Latino. The number of participants were relatively even in terms of gender. Participants completed two assessments at the end of the fifth and sixth grade. The assessments included a variety of measurements and scales as well as a copy of their academic record. The results of the study indicated that 62% of adolescents experienced moderate to high levels of distress in their attempt to adjust to a new school environment. Girls also tended to experience greater amounts of physical symptoms of distress, such as stomachache, headaches, and sleeplessness in comparison to boys. Specifically for girls, researchers concluded that there was a correlation between high levels of distress and low levels of social support (Chung et al., 1998).

**Bullying**

As stated by Olweus and Limber (2010) bullying is defined as “intentional, repeated, negative (unpleasant or hurtful) behavior by one or more persons directed against a person who has difficulty defending himself or herself” (p. 125). Examples of bullying include but are not limited to, (1) consistently calling someone a name to cause
ridicule, (2) constantly pushing students into objects, and (3) purposely not including someone in your social group (Olweus and Limber, 2010). Similarly, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2013) reported that there are three major types of bullying, which include physical (e.g., hitting), social (e.g. excluding others from activities), and verbal (e.g., taunting).

Bullying is a serious concern especially in school settings. In a report compiled by Robers, Zhang, and Truman for the National Center for Educational Statistics, almost 30% of adolescents in the sixth to twelfth grade reported being a victim of bullying in a school. Of the students who were bullied at school, 19% experienced negative name calling and 16% were victims of gossip. For students who were specifically victims of physical bullying, about 20% reported being injured as a result of the bulling. These statistics are representative of approximately 5000 students who completed the National Crime Victimization Survey which was administered by the U.S. Census Bureau. (2012).

Student reports of bullying victimization have helped to shed light on the prevalence and characteristics of bullying today. In 2009, the National Center for Educational Statistics gathered data on over 7 million students across the nation between the ages of 12 and 18 on the topic of bullying. The most frequent forms of bullying that victims were subjected to included being teased, being called names, and being included in rumors. Boys and girls are bullied at very similar rates, and both genders report that the highest presence of bullying occurs in the hallways outside of class. The student reports showed no significant difference in bullying among most ethnicities, but Asian students did report slightly lower amounts of bullying in comparison to Caucasian, Latino, and African American students. Bullying occurs most in the sixth grade but declines as
students progress into the later years of middle school. Lastly, there were no significant differences in the presence of bullying reported based on socio-economic status (NCES, 2011b).

**Relational Aggression**

Relational aggression as described by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2013) includes the following categories: social (e.g. excluding others from activities) and verbal (e.g., taunting). Although, bullying was originally associated with physical or verbal acts of harm against another person, there is now growing awareness that relational aggression is also as harmful as physical aggression. Relational aggression is a process in which an individual harms others in order to hinder their friendship. Name-calling, gossiping, exclusion, and rejection are all forms of relational aggression.

Covert forms of aggression have been referred to as relational aggression, social aggression, and indirect aggression. For the most part, these terms are used interchangeably in research and literature; however, there is controversy among researchers about whether or not these categories of aggression are all the same or distinctly different (Underwood, Galen, & Paquette, 2001). Galen and Underwood (1997), for example defined social aggression as acts “directed toward damaging another’s self-esteem, social status, or both, and may take such direct forms as verbal rejection, negative facial expressions or body movements, or more indirect forms such as slanderous rumors or social exclusion” (p. 589), while Simmons (2003) defined indirect aggression as “covert behavior in which the perpetrator makes it seem as though there has been no intent to all hurt at all” (p.21). Relational aggression and social aggression differ
in that relational aggression emphasizes the hindering of relationships. While social aggression also encompasses the damaging of relationships, it differs in that it also places a focus on damaging another’s self-esteem. A clear distinction between the two terms would be that social aggression involves the use of non-verbal behaviors such as negative gestures (i.e. eye rolling and inappropriate hand gestures) in addition to gossiping, name-calling, and social exclusion. Indirect aggression is different than relational aggression because relational aggression is not always covert in nature. For instance, when a girl tells someone that he or she cannot be part of her social group, she is being direct and not using a covert form of aggression. Indirect aggression, on the other hand, allows the aggressor to remain anonymous because he or she is not directly engaging with the victim. There is still a great deal of discussion about whether relational aggression and social aggression are the same or if, in fact, they are two separate types of aggression (Coyne, Archer, & Eslea, 2006).

According to Simmons (2003) relational and social aggression can easily go unnoticed because of their covert nature:

There is a hidden culture of girls’ aggression in which bullying is epidemic, distinctive, and destructive…Our culture refuses girls access to open conflict, and it forces their aggression into nonphysical, indirect, and covert forms. Girls use backbiting, exclusion, rumors, name-calling, and manipulation to inflict psychological pain on targeted victims. (p.3)

Examples of relational aggression include girls being excluded from social groups or a note being passed around for the purpose of spreading rumors. In schools, teachers and
administrators typically do not catch this type of aggression as often as physical aggression. Due to the nearly covert nature of the problem, there needs to be a better understanding of relational aggression as well as of the action that should be taken in response by school administrators.

Researchers assert that boys and girls equally bully others; however, there are differences in the types of bullying used by each gender (Bjorkqvist, 1994; Crick & Werner, 1999). The highest levels of bullying occur at the middle school level. Of the three middle school grade levels, almost 40% of sixth graders reported being a victim of bullying. (NCES, 2011a). Although girls can be verbally and physically aggressive, the most common form of bullying used by females is relational aggression (Paquette & Underwood, 1999; Simmons, 2003). Girls use gossiping, name-calling, rejection, and manipulation to cause psychological harm on their victims (Simmons, 2003). Approximately 40% of girls in grades third through eighth grades reported being victims of some form of relational aggression. Nearly one out of every two girls tell lies or rumors in order for others to like them (Nishioka, Coe, Burke, Hanita, & Sprague, 2011). Girls may display aggressive behavior within the context of close interpersonal relationships (Moretti, Odgers, & Jackson, 2004).

Attachment Issues

Some developmentalists have theorized that one of the roots of aggression in children is insecure attachment. According to Bowlby’s theory of attachment, seeking safety in times of distress is biological. It is normal for children to want to explore their surroundings when they know they are safe and secure. When a child feels that they have
a secure attachment with a caregiver, they will explore their surroundings without fear. By contrast, a child whose caregiver inconsistently provides attachment and is not always responsive to their needs cannot be easily comforted and experience distress. Children with insecure attachments may display aggression towards their caregivers (Bowlby, 1969).

There is empirical support for the theorized relationship between attachment and aggression. Ali & Zubair (2011) conducted a study with 300 adolescents to investigate perceived parental attachment and parental acceptance among aggressive adolescents. Participants were asked to fill out three questionnaires distributed by the researchers to collect information on their relationship with their mothers, parental attachment, and aggression. The questionnaires completed were the Parental Attachment Questionnaire (PAQ) (Kenny, 1985), the Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ) (Rohner, Saavedra, & Granum, 1980), and the Aggression Questionnaire (Ashraf, 2004). The results indicated that low parental attachment was correlated with aggressive behavior. Adolescents who reported a positive attachment to their parents also reported that they engaged in less antisocial behavior. Almost all of the girls in the study reported using verbal aggression at some point in the school year. Insecurely attached boys reported higher levels of physical aggression in comparison to girls. However, insecurely attached girls reported higher levels of verbal aggression in comparison to boys. (Ali & Zubair, 2011).

Attachment and aggression has also been studied by Allen, Moore, Kuperminc, & Bell (1998). Allen and his colleagues gathered data from 131 at-risk adolescents in the ninth and tenth grade. Each at-risk student had been identified as having excessive
absences, low grades, and/or a school suspension. Students and parents participated in two 3-hour sessions in which the Adult Attachment Interview & Q set were completed. Students were asked to state five words that described their parental relationship. Questions were also asked regarding incidents of rejection and separation during childhood. The adolescents and peers were also asked to complete different reports on delinquency, self-worth, maternal attachments, social acceptance, and antisocial problems. The adolescents rated how often they were involved in problem behaviors such as fighting or assaults. Mothers completed a report on their perceived level of control over their adolescents’ activities, friends, and behaviors. The results showed that adolescents with insecure attachment displayed more antisocial behaviors including aggression in comparison to securely attached adolescents. The adolescents who reported concerns of attachment based on their childhood experiences also reported engagement in a significantly high amount of negative behaviors (Allen et al., 1998).

Rejection Sensitivity

Aggression in girls has also been correlated with rejection. Rejection sensitivity is “the disposition to defensively (i.e. anxiously or angrily) expect, readily perceive, or overreact to social rejection” (Downey et al., 1998, p.1074). Children may engage in relational aggression as a defensive mechanism to avoid being rejected. Moretti, Odgers, and Jackson (2004) developed the Rejection Sensitivity (RS) model in an effort to explain why some girls display relational aggression towards people they care about. Their research indicated that someone who has been consistently exposed to rejection throughout their lifetime will form hostile thoughts about they actions they should expect from others. Therefore, someone who has had repeated exposure to rejection will
constantly have their guard up and respond defensively towards others. Along with rejection leading to various forms of hostility, rejection is also associated with depression in women. The correlation between rejection and aggression has various explanations. Moretti, Odger, & Jackson (2004) proposed that women with high rejection sensitivity who feel inferior due to rejection from others, will interpret rejection as the loss of a relationship.

For the purpose of analyzing rejection sensitivity and interpersonal difficulties, Downey Lebolt, Rincon, & Freitas (1998) conducted three different studies. In the first study, 382 students ranging from fifth to seventh grade were asked to complete the Children’s Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire (CRSQ) in order to measure anxiety related to rejection, how they feel after being rejected, and whether or not the rejection was exaggerated. In the second study, 76 students from the first study were asked to find a partner to participate in an interview. After the child had chosen the partner, the child was placed in a room where they were informed that the other partner choose to not participate with him or her. This study analyzed the amount of distress displayed by a child and his or her expectations of rejection. In the third study, 218 of the original participants were asked to complete the CRSQ a year later to measure whether rejection sensitivity foretold problems between students and teachers over time. The data from the first study confirmed that the CRSQ can indeed predict hostile intentions, and the second study determined that children who expected rejection became very upset when exposed to rejection in comparison to children with lower expectations of rejection. Lastly, the results indicated that children who have high rejection sensitivity are more likely to
display disruptive, aggressive, and problematic behavior with peers and teachers (Downey et al., 1998).

In a study by Ayduk, Downey, Testa, Yen, & Shoda (1999), women were asked to fill out the Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire (RSQ) and participate in a priming experiment. The priming experiment consisted of the researcher prompting a series of words to the participant in order to elicit their natural associations and responses. The participants of this study included 121 undergraduate females from the University of Columbia. The RSQ was created by Downey and Feldman (1996) and provides situations and questions for participants to answer (i.e. Situation 1: You ask your parents or another family member for a loan to help you through a difficult financial time. How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your family would want to help you? Very Unconcerned 1,2,3,4,5,6 Very Concerned). The second session only included participants who scored High Rejection Sensitivity or Low Rejection Sensitivity. Using a priming-pronunciation paradigm, researchers investigated the association between thoughts of rejection and hostility. Participants were placed in front of a computer that displayed a word in the center and two other words in the background. The researchers measured the speed of response between the promoted words on the computer screen and the pronunciation of the word. Some of the words were associated with rejection and others were neutral. The participants with high rejection sensitivity pronounced the negative cue words faster than neutral words. The results indicated that, due to rejection, females are more likely to take revenge as an expression of their hopelessness. For females with high rejection sensitivity, rejection consistently triggers various forms of hostility. Ayduk et al. assert that “women’s aggression and hostility may be expressive and reactive in
nature...HRS women, for example, employ reactive verbal aggression tactics (e.g., blaming or saying something spiteful)” (Ayduk et al., 1999, p. 267).

**Socialization Regarding Girls’ Aggression**

Conflict interactions in children tend to be expressed in different ways in relation to gender. Relational aggression is more commonly displayed by girls because female physical aggression is discouraged by society (Owens, Shute, & Slee, 2000). Girls are expected by society to be more empathetic. The ideal is for girls to mature early on and learn how to be caregivers and mothers, so displays of physical aggression in girls are recognized and stopped early on by parents and teachers. However, boys who engage in physical aggression are often encouraged or simply ignored (Simmons, 2003).

Furthermore, children are socialized at an early age in accordance with the behavioral standards of the adults around them. Ross, Tesla, Kenyon, & Lollis’ (1990) research focused on the reactions of mothers when toddlers engage in object conflict. This study observed 32 mothers and their infant children. All infants were between the ages of 18 months and 33 months. Equal numbers of boys and girls participated in this study. Children were paired with same-sex peers for 40 minute play sessions. Mothers were asked to be responsible for the supervision of their children during the session but were informed not to direct their child’s play. The study results showed that when children engaged in object conflict, mothers intervened about 50% of the time. Mothers encouraged competition for boys but discouraged peer aggression in girls Researchers concluded that “mothers are more likely to demand proper social behavior from preschool-aged girls than from boys” (Ross, Tesla, Kenyon, & Lollis, 1990, p.1001).
In a study by Crothers, Field, & Kolbert (2005), 52 girls in the ninth and tenth grade were asked to complete the Relational Aggression Scale and the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (Bem, 1981). Each girl was interviewed individually and asked questions in regards to their responses. Of the 52 participants, 12 volunteered to participate in a follow up focus group. Participants in the focus group were asked the following questions: “How do you think girls are supposed to handle conflict?” and “How do most girls and boys your age resolve conflict? Is there a difference?” (p. 352). The results indicated that girls whose ideals follow traditional female roles were more likely to use relational aggression to solve their problems instead of using physical aggression. The participants described using relational aggression with the purpose of gaining an ally and/or reducing emotional intensity. The use of relational aggression was deemed as acceptable from the girls’ perspectives because it did not require face-to-face contact (Crothers, Field, & Kolbert, 2005).

Victims of Relational Aggression

Relational aggression can have many negative effects on the victim. After being the target of aggressors, victims may avoid social situations due to fears of more harmful experiences. Victims may deliberately choose not to be around too many people or have too many friends because they do not want to be bullied (Crozier & Skliopidou, 2002; Young, Nelson, Hottle, Warburton, & Young, 2011). Repeated exposure to relational aggression can lead to social anxiety (Storch, Brassard, & Masia-Warner, 2003). Victims of relational aggression may also experience peer rejection, distress, anxiety, loneliness, and depression (Young, Nelson, Hottle, Warburton, & Young, 2011).
Physical aggression and relational aggression, on the other hand, seem to have similar effects on the victim. A study by Dukes, Stein, and Zane (2009) examined whether the effects of physical bullying were similar to the effects experienced by relational aggression victims. Approximately 2,500 students between grades seven to twelve participated in the study. Both genders were well represented in this sample, with 51% being boys and 49% being girls. Participants completed a questionnaire of 112 items that asked questions regarding relational bullying and victimization. Victims of both types of bullying exhibit low self-esteem, and poor attitudes in schools, and they also engage in problem behaviors. Since the negative effects of relational aggression are very similar to those of physical bullying, it is critical that relational aggression not go unnoticed (Dukes et al., 2009). In a report by Roberts & Coursol (1996), the authors noted that children who have experienced various forms of bullying are more likely to have attendance issues and poor grades.

Bullying has also been associated with school-related problems for the victims. In a study by Casey-Cannon, Hayward, & Gowen (2001), researchers looked to gain knowledge about relational aggression and the association that relational aggression may have with victims’ social behavior. Twenty girls between the ages of 13 and 14 were asked to participate in an interview and to complete the Social Experience Questionnaire (Crick & Grotpeter, 1996). A little over half of the participants were Caucasian and the remaining were non-Caucasian. The results of the study indicated that girls often felt angry, sad, or hurt after being a victim of relational aggression. Moreover, some of the participants reported seeking revenge, while others chose to ignore the relational aggression. The girls who chose to retaliate acknowledged that it was not the best thing to
do but felt that their actions would change how the bully reacted in the future. Conversely, the girls who chose to ignore the relational aggression were attempting to avoid problems (Casey-Cannon et al., 2001).

Additionally, the effects of bullying have long term consequences for the victims. Research has suggested that children who were bullied at the middle school and/or high school level continue to experience different forms of bullying, such as teasing, social exclusion, and physical aggression, in college and may also feel lonely and have trouble forming friendships. Victims may feel like they have no one to talk to and that they do not know how to confront the aggressor (Adams & Lawrence, 2011).

The stories of victims are what truly illustrate the impact of relational aggression. One of the first books written recently that sheds light on relational aggression is *Odd Girl Out: The Hidden Culture of Aggression in Girls* by Simmons (2003). In the book, the author explains that relational aggression is intended to harm social status, friendships, or group inclusion through means like gossip, silent treatment, and negative body language. Much of the problem stems from the notion that physical aggression does not have the same effects of relational aggression. Additionally, girls describe their failed attempts to seek help from their teachers. One middle school girl stated, “Teachers, most of them, they’re like, ‘Don’t worry, it will be okay, just ignore them.’ But it’s hard to ignore them” (p. 47). Her classmate also stated “if [girls] are whispering, the teacher thinks it’s going to be all right because they’re not hitting people” (p. 47). Many girls who report relational aggression to school staff are being ignored or the conflict is simply not seen as a serious problem. In most of the cases discussed in the book, the girls felt that the teachers were dismissive of their concerns and of how they were being affected
by the covert aggression. One girl described her disappointment in how the teachers think: “‘oh, well, she’s not hurting you. Don’t worry about it.’ But really they are hurting you. They’re hurting your feelings” (p. 47). Although relational aggression does not always induce physical signs such as bruises, broken bones, or damaged property, under no circumstance should it be ignored because a student’s mental health should be just as important as their physical health and material belongings. Thus, students should have access to safety and protection by school staff to ensure that relational aggression is addressed immediately (Simmons, 2003).

**Professional School Counselors**

Professional school counselors are innovative individuals who assist students in many ways. They possess excellent listening, and communication skills, and are able to work well with others. Professional school counselors are required to have a master’s degree in school counseling. Within most master’s programs, students are required to complete a supervised internship. Such counseling programs train students in the academic, personal/social, and career domains. School counselors are also required to obtain a state-issued credential to practice (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). To ensure that counselors are qualified to address the needs of students, counseling students are required to take graduate courses in research, individual/group counseling, cultural proficiency, professional leadership, and program evaluation. School counselors also work with K-12 students in both individual and group settings. As a result, collaboration with administrators, teachers, and parents is vital to the professional school counselor to make certain that the needs of each student are being met (American Counseling Association, 2005).
Professional school counselors are visible across the nation in K-12 schools and in district supervisory positions. As stated by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), “through leadership, advocacy, and collaboration, professional school counselors promote equity and access to rigorous educational experiences for all students.” The school counselor has the best interest of every student in mind and strives to assist each one equally. There is a focus on creating a safe environment for students to learn; school counselors work diligently with school faculty and families to safeguard the rights of all students. Moreover, students and families are provided with culturally-competent counseling services that consider their cultural influences and background.

Accountability is key in the school counseling profession. School counselors are proactive in collecting and analyzing school data. They are also competent in program evaluation and can suggest areas of improvement based on evaluation (ASCA, 2009).

Middle school counselors are particularly aware of the developmental needs and changes in students that occur during adolescence. As professional school counselors, they have been trained to respond to the obstacles that arise among the middle school student population. School counselors are trained to provide responsive services to students in both individual and group settings (ASCA, 2012). Prevention and intervention activities like group counseling are essential to meeting the present and future needs of the students. Professional school counselors in training learn the foundation and principles of group counseling in an advanced graduate course (ASCA, 2009).
Professional Group Work

Small group work provides the opportunity for individuals to have a peer-involved environment for change. When individuals interact with others, opportunities for honest feedback emerge that can increase awareness of oneself. As defined by the Association for Specialists in Group Work (2000), there are four different types of small groups: (a) task groups, (b) psychoeducational groups, (c) counseling groups, and (d) psychotherapy groups. Task groups focus on organizational needs and accomplishing the goal of the group; examples of task groups include committees, study groups, and other groups commonly used in business and educational settings. Psychoeducational groups emphasize cognitive and behavioral growth for fully functioning individuals, with a focus is on skill building through a series of group meetings and exercises. Counseling groups are designed to help individuals solve difficulties with their thoughts and behavior and the goals of counseling groups for individuals include, but are not limited to developing interpersonal skills, behavioral change, and positive attitudes. Finally, psychotherapy groups are intended to assist individuals with intellectual or emotional disorders; individuals experiencing depression, anxiety, or eating disorders may benefit from a psychotherapy group (M. Corey, G. Corey, & C. Corey, 2007).

Individuals with aggression in particular may benefit from learning problem-solving skills and working with others experiencing similar difficulties. Thus, psychoeducational groups are commonly used in school, community, and university settings. The goal of the groups is to provide members with the knowledge and skills needed to address the problem(s) they are experiencing at that moment. Weekly group sessions tend to be anywhere between 30 minutes to 2 hours, depending on the attention
span of the individuals and may last as long as 15 weeks. With children it may be advisable to have shorter sessions to ensure that they are fully present mentally throughout the entire session. Psychoeducational groups can be successful with middle school students because the group approaches are similar to those in school settings. In classrooms, students are taught new material on a daily basis and are expected to collaborate with others to increase their knowledge. Key components of psychoeducational groups include teaching and improving individuals the skills required to develop positive changes (M. Corey et al., 2007).

**Effective Interventions for Relationally-Aggressive Youth**

The Social Aggression Prevention Program (SAPP), created by Cappella (2000) is intended to decrease the use of social aggression and increase problem solving skills, empathy, and socially-acceptable behaviors. Specifically, this program places an emphasis on the subtle confrontational behaviors that are the key differentiating components of social aggression. Examples of these subtle behaviors include making rude faces or turning ones’ back to someone else. The target population of the program is girls in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades. The Social Aggression Prevention Program is conducted in a small group format with approximately five to six girls. The group facilitators meet with the students for a total of 10 weekly sessions. The facilitators of the Social Aggression Prevention Program are qualified individuals with knowledge in counseling girls. Cappella & Weinstein (2006) conducted a study in six different elementary schools, where fifth grade girls participated in the Social Aggression Prevention Program instead of in a reading club. All participants completed self-reports and peer reports, and teachers completed student reports about participants about a month
before the intervention. An average of 22 girls participated from each school and a total of 13 teachers provided student reports. Each small group met with facilitators of the Social Aggression Prevention Program, which included graduate students and women with counseling experience. The participants and facilitators met for a total of ten 40-minute sessions outside of the classroom. Facilitators used discussion and role-playing to increase understanding of social aggression, increase positive communication, and create models for teaching social skills. The study results showed that the Social Aggression Prevention Program increased the knowledge and use of problem solving skills, and promoted pro-social behavior of the participants. Pre and post-evaluations of participants indicated that there were positive changes in the students’ behavior after the program was completed. Students who participated in the Social Aggression Prevention Program were better able to describe many effective ways to solve problems after completing the program in comparison to participants in the reading club, and teachers reported slight changes in the students who were previously identified as being socially-aggressive. The Social Aggression Prevention Program participants with a history of aggression were more likely to display empathy than the reading club participants (Cappella & Weinstein, 2006).

A second effective program for school-related behaviors is Second Step, designed for use in the classroom in order to reduce aggression and increase social skills. The target populations for this program are students between kindergarten and the eighth grade. The program has sets of lessons that require at least a 13-week implementation by school personnel. At higher grade levels, more lessons can be added which can extend the program to about 28 weeks. Lessons are typically facilitated by teachers during regular
within classroom instruction time. The main concepts covered in the lessons are empathy, problem-solving, and emotion management. Schoiack-Edstrom, Frey, & Beland (2002) conducted a longitudinal study of the Second Step program with over 700 ethnically-diverse middle school students in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. Data was collected from five schools within the United States and Canada. Fifteen trained teachers participated in the study and facilitated weekly presentations and lessons with the participants. Both a control group and an intervention group completed before and after surveys regarding aggression and social competence. Students in the intervention group showed positive changes in attitude regarding relational and physical aggression. Furthermore, students who had been in the program for 2 years were less likely to validate the use of aggression compared to students who did not participate in the program at all. The second year students in the program used physical and social aggression significantly less and reported feeling more comfortable using problem solving skills in comparison to the control group (Schoiack-Edstrom et al., 2002).

Another effective intervention for bullying is participating in a psychoeducational group. Cummings, Hoffman, & Alan (2010) conducted and evaluated an eight session psychoeducational group for aggressive adolescent girls who had at one point witnessed aggression or violence in their home. The goal of the group was to educate girls about gender socialization, the many forms of aggression, and the impact of aggression. The girls were taught nonaggressive problem-solving strategies. The facilitators of the group were two counseling interns with experience in counseling groups. Sessions took place for one hour twice a week in a residential facility. The members consisted of eight girls between the ages of 12 and 16 years old. All members of the group were referred to the
program from residential staff due to their childhood experiences with aggression and their history of aggression within the facility. Each session explored discussion topics such as changes in adolescence, bullying, and decision making with an emphasis on personal growth. Members were required to complete the Beliefs and Attitudes Scale (Butler & Leschied, 1997) to measure their views on defiant behavior. Results of the psychoeducational group indicated that girls reported less antisocial views after completing the eight group sessions. Participants were also asked to complete an evaluation form that addressed the following questions: “(a) What did you like about these group sessions? (b) What did you dislike about the group sessions? (c) What did you learn about yourself? (d) What did you learn about being a female in today’s world? (e) What do you think causes girls to be aggressive? (f) The next time you feel like fighting, what will you do?” (p. 296). Members reported feeling safe enough to express their feelings and share stories. Some members also reported feeling like they had a community of people who shared the same experiences. Because of the sessions, girls reported that they would use nonaggressive coping skills such as walking away or talking things through to solve the problem instead of fighting (Cummings et al., 2010).

A fourth program that has shown to be effective with various populations is the Solving Problems Together (SPT) program. Solving Problems Together was created by Hall (2006) to educate K-12 students on bullying and to improve their problem-solving skills. Solving Problems Together promotes problem-solving skills within the group counseling sessions to enable students to solve their own existing problems. Each session is facilitated by a professional school counselor and students work collaboratively in each session to discuss a problem-based vignette. Questions are prompted by the counselor,
and students work together to identify the best way to solve the problem. The counselor concludes each session with activities for skill building to ensure that participants have the skills to confront problems. Solving Problems Together psychoeducational groups have been used with different populations including victims of bullying and aggressive middle school students (Hall, 2006; Hall, Rushing, & Owens, 2009). Hall (2006) conducted a study with five middle school girls who had been identified as being victims of bullying. The professional school counselor facilitated a total of eight group sessions at the middle school. The results of the study identified that participants increased their knowledge of bullying and learned new skills to prevent future bullying. The psychoeducational groups of Solving Problems Together have also been used with angry males at the middle school level (2006) Hall, Rushings, & Owens (2009) conducted a study with a total of five African American middle school males who had a history of aggressive behavior. The professional school counselor facilitated the eight sessions with the students. Participants were taught non-aggressive strategies to solve problem, and, as a result of the psychoeducational group, the students were better able to identify a great number of situations that triggered their aggression in comparison to when the group began. Students also identified positive ways to deal with their symptoms of aggression (Hall et al., 2009).

A fifth program that has shown to be effective in decreasing aggression is Sisters of Nia. The Sisters of Nia (SON) program was developed by Plybon, Allison, Davis, Butler, & Reed (2004) to serve African American girls between the ages of 10 and 14. The program focuses on building positive relationships and on mentorship. A key component of the program is exposing the members to their own cultural history. This
cultural program is designed to address the many forms of aggression including verbal, physical, and relational. The Sisters of Nia’s curriculum includes fifteen 1.5-hour group counseling sessions with two volunteer mentors in each group. Sessions are conducted afterschool in school facilities. Plybon, Allison, Davis, Butler, & Reed (2004) conducted a study with almost 60 African American adolescents between the ages of 11 and 13 at two different middle schools. Half of the participants were placed in the intervention group, which received the SON sessions and tutoring, and the other participants were part of the comparison group, which received only tutoring. As a result of the Sisters of Nia program, the intervention group participants reported engaging in less relational aggression in comparison to the control group. Participants in the intervention program also reported increased knowledge of their ethnicity and claimed to hold their ethnic history to a higher value in comparison to when the program first began (Plybon et al., 2004).

Despite the many interventions being made available, there have been no effective interventions specifically created for relationally-aggressive Latina girls that could be found via this literature review. The Second Step program is a classroom curriculum for creating a school-wide reduction in relational aggression for both boys and girls (Schoiak-Edstrom, Frey, & Beland, 2002). In terms of small group work interventions, the Social Aggression Prevention program, the Solving Problems Together program, and the psychoeducational group for aggressive girls, were developed for girls from all ethnic background (Cappella & Weinstein, 2006; Hall, 2006; Cummings, Hoffman, & Alan, 2010). The literature review found the development of only one, small group intervention
specifically designed for an ethnic group, which is the Sisters of Nia program developed to decrease relational aggression in African American girls (Plybon, et. al., 2004).

The effective interventions cited in the literature review point towards a need to develop a psychoeducational group that is specifically intended for relationally-aggressive Latina girls. As noted in the literature review of adolescent development, Latina girls typically begin to explore their ethnic identity as they transition into adolescence and the development of self-esteem for Latina girls is thought to be dependent on their ethnic identity development. Due to these factors there is a need for a small group intervention that will address ethnic identity and cultural influences in Latinas. Latina relationally-aggressive girls in particular need opportunities to explore their ethnicity and culture, specifically in regards to traditions, gender roles, and values.
Chapter 3

Project Audience and Implementation Factors

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the development of the project, the target audience, and the qualifications required by the facilitator. The environment and equipment required as well as the project outline, will also be presented.

Development of the Project

In my experience interning as a school counseling graduate student at an urban middle school in the Los Angeles area, there were several incidents I noted of relational aggression among middle school Latina girls. There was a lot of gossiping about girl interactions with boys, and girls were sent to the office for discipline for calling others names such as “bitch,” “retard,” and “slut.” The bullying incidents at the school where I was interning were addressed with discipline for the aggressor; however there were very minimal attempts to provide personal/socio-emotional counseling for the aggressors.

To begin creating my small group thesis project, I referred to the work of DeLucia-Waack (2006). As an editor of the Journal of Specialists for Group Work, DeLucia-Waack has written and edited several guides for small groups. I used her ideas for formatting and outlining group sessions to ensure that the group instructions for the facilitator would be easy to read and follow. The beginning sessions of my project were developed based on the importance of establishing rapport and creating structure for the group. DeLucia-Waack stresses the importance of confidentiality and group rules in the
beginning of the sessions. Thus, I designed the group so that the rules and information of privacy will be covered in the initial first three sessions.

In order to measure any potential changes in aggression and what the participants learn, I researched relevant surveys and questionnaires. Dellasega & Nixon (2003) created the Relational Aggression Quotient survey, which I found in their book, *Girl Wars: 12 Strategies That Will End Female Bullying*. Due to the length of the survey, I modified it to use only 10 of the items instead of all 50 items. I selected the 10 items which were most relevant based on the literature review on relational aggression and early adolescence. I decided to create a pre- and post-test based on knowledge that the participants will learn about relational aggression. The Girl Scouts of America (2013) have created a curriculum for addressing relational aggression that includes a pre – and post-test. I modeled my pre-and post-test from the Girl Scouts of America sample and utilized questions in the curriculum that would be appropriate for the group I designed.

In order to include the cultural components of the proposed group for Latina middle school girls, I referred to the curriculum of the Sisters of Nia program developed by Plybon, Allison, Davis, Butler, & Reed (2004). That curriculum was designed for African American girls between the ages of 10 and 14. The Sisters of Nia program focuses on building positive relationships through mentorships. The mentors are African American woman who actively participate in the group sessions. These women are called “mzees” which means respected elders in the Kiswahili language. For my small group, I also incorporated the use of mentors, and refer to them as “Latinas Triunfadoras”, which means Triumphant Latinas. These mentors will serve the purpose of being role models for the young Latina adolescents in the small group.
Intended Audience

The intended audience for this small group project is Latina middle school girls in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade who have been referred to professional school counselors for using relational aggression. It would be ideal to reach out to the female sixth grade students first since research has indicated that incidents of relational aggression are the highest during the sixth grade (NCES, 2011b).

Personal Qualifications

The professional who implements the project should ideally be a credentialed professional school counselor. The professional school counselor will have completed a master’s level program in counseling or a related field. Knowledge of how to run groups and client confidentiality, in addition to the ability to work with students from diverse backgrounds, especially Latinas, may increase the effectiveness of the small group. Important skills needed are oral communication, active listening, leadership, and cultural sensitivity. Essential qualities needed are empathy, sensibility, and authenticity. The professional school counselor should possess the aforementioned qualities and skills to enhance students respecting his or her role as the facilitator because students need an environment where they will comfortable discussing their experiences and reflections.

Environment & Equipment

The psychoeducational group should be conducted in a private space such as a classroom or a conference room within the middle school. It is essential to ensure that all the information discussed during the sessions cannot be overheard by non-participants. The location should have adequate lighting and comfortable seating. If the location has
windows, the facilitator should attempt to cover them to ensure that non-participants do not distract the participants during the sessions. The pre and post tests should be conducted in a quiet, private space, such as a classroom or conference room. It is essential that each student have enough personal space to fill out their questionnaires, to ensure privacy.

Necessary equipment includes a white board or easel pad to write down information during group sessions, a laptop with audio capabilities, and a projector to play an online video clip.

**Project Outline**

The materials needed for the school counselor to enact this the small group curriculum are presented in the *Appendix* of this project. The group facilitator should refer to the facilitator’s guide for detailed information on how to use this project. Prior to beginning any of the sessions the facilitator will need the teacher referral form, parental informed consent form, group contract, confidentiality agreement, and the relational aggression test. Each group session is outlined for the group facilitator. The small group intervention is presented in nine sessions. The group facilitator should refer to the Table of Contents for specific items in each session.
Chapter 4
Conclusion

Summary

In this thesis project, the topic of school bullying was introduced and the need for an intervention for relationally aggressive Latina girls was discussed in chapter 1. The literature review in chapter 2 discussed the scholarly literature regarding adolescent girls, Latino adolescents, the middle school environment, the effects of bullying, and relational aggression. It also reviewed literature on effective interventions and the role of the professional school counselor. Chapter 3 provided an overview of the development of the project, the target audience, and the qualifications required by the facilitator. A unique psycho-educational small group was created for sixth and seventh grade, relationally-aggressive Latina girls, to be facilitated by a professional middle school counselor. The group plan is designed for group members to understand aggression, to learn about themselves as a person and a friend, to strengthen their ethnic identity and to learn non-aggressive coping strategies.

Evaluative Summary

In order to evaluate the project, two middle school counselors and one high school counselor from diverse schools were selected to provide professional feedback to me on the project. One of the middle school counselors works in Lennox, CA, who will be referred to as X school counselor. The second middle school counselor works in North Hollywood, CA who will be referred to as Y school counselor. The third school counselor is currently finishing up his first academic year employed at a High School and was formally a middle school counselor in Lake Balboa, CA who will be referred to as Z.
school counselor. Each school counselor was provided with a copy of the project, a cover letter, and an evaluation form developed specifically for this project. The middle school counselors were given a cover letter that stated:

“The purpose of this thesis project is to create a unique psycho-educational group plan for sixth and seventh grade, relationally-aggressive Latina girls, to be facilitated by a professional middle school counselor...As a professional school counselor; I would like your feedback on the thesis project I have created. The information you provide will be used to help me improve the thesis project.”

Along with the cover letter, the evaluators also received survey questions, developed specifically to evaluate the thesis project.

**Discussion**

The following statements were written in the survey given to each school counselor evaluator. The evaluation survey stated: (1) this program is helpful for adolescent girls; (2) this program is developmentally appropriate for middle school girls; (3) the length of the program is feasible in a school setting; (4) the length of the sessions is feasible in a school setting; (5) The sessions are well outlined and easy to follow; (6) the materials needed to conduct all the sessions are accessible to all counselors; (7) I would feel comfortable facilitating this group; (8) I would use this group in my school; and (9) I would recommend this group to other counselors. Each evaluator was asked to rate each statement according the following scale: (4) Strongly Agree, (3) Agree, (2) Disagree, and (1) Strongly Disagree. The evaluation survey also asked the school
counselors to provide feedback on recommended improvements as well as any general comments regarding the thesis project.

The survey responses provided by the school counselor evaluators were very positive and full of insight. Based on the survey questions, all three school counselors answered “strongly agree” to the following statements: (1) this program is helpful for adolescent girls, (3) the length of the program is feasible in a school setting, (6) the materials needed to conduct all the sessions are accessible to all counselors, (7) I would feel comfortable facilitating this group, (8) I would use this group in my school, and (9) I would recommend this group to other counselors. The Y school counselor also answered “strongly agree” to the follow statement: (2) this program is developmentally appropriate for middle school girls; however, the X and Y school counselors responded “agree”, for the same statement. In response to statement (4) “the length of the sessions is feasible in a school setting”, the X and Y school counselors answered “strongly agree”, while the Z school counselor responded “agreed.” Lastly, in response to statement (5), “the sessions are well outlined and easy to follow”, the Y school counselor responded “strongly agree,” while X and Z school counselor responded “agree.”

Based on the school counselors’ feedback, several changes were made to the project. The Z school counselor suggested, “I think you should allow the students to create their own rules. If you do this you can hold them accountable to rules that they have created from themselves. Rather than rules that someone has created from them. They are used to adults telling them what to do.” Based on his suggestion I modified the first session of the small group curriculum to give the students the opportunity to create their own group rules as opposed to having group rules created for them by the facilitator.
and the group facilitator would guide them in formatting their rules. Having the students create their own rules will allow group members to hold one another accountable to the guidelines they set for themselves.

In addition, the X and Y school counselors suggested that members should begin practicing “I messages” before session seven. The Y school counselor stated:

“My only recommendation would be to move the lesson about “I Statements” closer to the beginning of group sessions. The reason for this is to give the girls an opportunity to practice using the I statements throughout the remainder of the sessions. It helps them to get in the habit of using them so that once the group is over, they are already confident and comfortable in their use of them.”

The Y school counselor also commented on the “I messages” activity by noting, “I messages can be taught earlier on to help structure their language and give them more communication skills. The girls who exhibit these problems may have limited communication skills”. Therefore, I decided to place the activity that teaches I messages in session four so that the girls will have sufficient time to practice their communication skills and to give the girls the opportunity to practice using the “I statements” throughout the remainder of the sessions.

The last recommendation that I decided to implement was to make a note in the facilitator’s guide to recommend translating documents as needed. The X school commented that I should, “Consider noting that the forms may be translated into other languages to meet the needs of the community.” The local schools in the area where I did my internship have high populations of Spanish-speaking parents for example, so the
recommendation to translate parental forms would be helpful so parents understand the permission forms they will sign.

**Future Work/Research**

A recommendation for future work regarding this group proposal is to translate documents that need to be signed by parents to the appropriate language as needed. Working in diverse urban communities, school counselors often collaborate with parents who cannot read in English or do not understand the English language. To ensure that school counselors are meeting the needs of the community, school counselors should partner with school administrators to allow for proper translation of the documents.

Finally, it would be great to implement this group and collect data using the pre and post tests that I created. The data collected would be used to indicate the effectiveness of the small group in reducing the occurrence of relational aggression among middle-school Latina females.
References


doi:10.1207/s15374424jccp3401_5


http://kidshealth.org/classroom/9to12/personal/growing/empathy.pdf

doi:10.1207/S1532706XID0401_2


Appendix I: A SMALL GROUP TO ADDRESS RELATIONAL AGGRESSION IN
LATINA MIDDLE SCHOOL GIRLS

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Appendix II – Evaluative Summary 103
Dear Professional School Counselor,

As an expert in the field of counseling, you are well aware of the challenges that adolescent girls experience during their middle school years. The time in which girls are transitioning into middle school often coincides with the time they are transitioning into adolescence. A current concern, particularly for adolescent girls, across the nation is bullying. Adolescent girls are engaging in relational aggression, a specific form of bullying, in greater amounts in middle school compared to elementary school and high school. After reviewing the research on effective interventions for relational aggression, a psychoeducational group for relationally aggressive Latina girls has been created for your consideration and use.

This small group has a total of nine sessions that can be personalized as you wish for your groups’ specific needs. You will find sessions 1-9 follow the same layout, which consists of an approximation of time needed for each session, approximated times needed for each activity, materials needed, and a suggested opening, i.e., an ice breaker. After the opening, each session has a working activity and a processing discussion. To conclude each session, a suggested closing is offered which includes a reminder for the next meeting time and date.

Upon your decision to implement this small group in your school, you will find it important to work with your school administration to gain consent to conduct the group. Collaborate with your school principal and/or assistant principal to discuss the need for the group, the purpose of the group, and how the group will be facilitated. Thoroughly review with your administration the forms included here that require parental and/or
student signatures to ensure that the language aligns with the requirements of the school administration and/or school district. You may choose to modify the forms to fit the needs of your school boards’ policies and regulations.

As group facilitator, you have the flexibility to modify the amount of time that you spend on each session depending on your group size and how long it takes you do complete the activities. In the layout of each session, an approximation of 50 minutes is allocated for each session, however you may choose to shorten or lengthen sessions. You may consider conducting the sessions during different times of the day to ensure that the participants are not missing the same class each time. The group may also be facilitated after school with proper parental and school administrative consent. This group is intended for eight actively participating members. However, if you find yourself with fewer members, or members who are not participating as often, you may find yourself completing the session in less than the approximated times. You may also choose to modify activities and/or not use all the activities laid out in each session.

It is optimal for the group to consist of six to eight girls in the sixth and seventh grades, because the group is designed to work most effectively with individuals in the early stage of adolescence. The referral of members should come from teachers or school staff who have witnessed girls exhibiting some form of relational aggression. Please refer to the Staff Referral Form for more information. As you start to get referrals, consider meeting with each potential member to explain the purpose of the group and to ask if each student would be interested in joining the group. During the pre-meeting, you may ask have each potential group member fill out the Relational Aggression pre-test so that you will have a baseline understanding of each person’s knowledge of relational
aggression. As a facilitator, you should explain that the purpose of taking the pre-test is for you to know what information they know at the onset about relational aggression. Inform group potential members that it is okay if they do not know the answers because they will be taught the information in the group sessions. During the screening of potential members provide each student with the Parent-Informed Consent form. Each member must take one home and have it signed by a parent or guardian. Instruct each potential member to return it to you when it has been completed. In order to fit the needs of your community, the parental forms may need to be translated into a different language.

Once a student has turned in the parental consent form, it is ideal to conduct an individual follow up meeting with each potential member. During the meeting remind the student of the purpose of the group; discuss confidentiality, and commitment to the group. After your discussion with the potential member, instruct them to fill out the group contract and the confidentiality agreement. You may also want to contact the member’s parent(s) or guardian to inform them that their student was selected to be in the group and of the first meeting date and time.

One of the unique features of this small group is the incorporation of Latina mentors. These Latina mentors should be professional and successful woman with similar upbringings to that of the members of the group. A suggestion for finding mentors would be to collaborate with educators at your school to find out if they can suggest someone who is available to volunteer a couple of hours per month. You may also contact local resource agencies in your area to find out if they know of guest speakers who may volunteer for career related events. The mentors can be professionals from various fields
such as but not limited to education, health, engineering, art, and business. These mentors will be referred to in the small group sessions as the “Latina Triunfadoras”, and you may invite them to attend the third and eighth sessions. When selecting the Latina Triunfadoras, be sure that they understand that attending the two sessions is required. The school administration should be notified in advanced on the days that the Latina mentors will be coming to the school.

For the purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of your group, three measurements have been created for your use. The group is designed so that all members complete the Relational Aggression pre/posttest. You may administer the pre-test is to be conducted during the screening process, and the post-test during session 9, the last session. The Relational Aggression test should be used to measure their knowledge and understanding of what they learned about relational aggression. You could ask the staff that referred the members to complete the Student Behavior survey prior to beginning the first session. The Student Behavior survey should also be completed by the referral staff after the ninth session. The Student Behavior survey can be used to measure any differences in behaviors as observed by staff. Lastly, each member will fill out the Social Behavior survey in the 2nd session and the 9th session. The Social Behavior survey can be used to compare any differences in social perspectives as perceived by each member.
XYZ MIDDLE SCHOOL: STAFF REFERRAL FORM

To: STAFF

From: NAME OF SCHOOL COUNSELOR

Date:

Hello Staff,

In an attempt to address the bullying issues that are prevalent on our school campus, I will be facilitating a psychoeducational group for relationally aggressive Latina girls. This group will be held on ________ at ________. Relational aggression is a form of bullying that is characterized by name-calling, social exclusion, and gossiping. The emphasis and goal of the group will be for Latina girls to learn about their culture, their ethnic identity, aggression, themselves, and non-aggressive coping skills.

Please refer to me Latina students who you have noticed engage in one or more of the following:

✓ Name Calling
✓ Social exclusion
✓ Gossiping
✓ Rejection of others
✓ Use of manipulation
✓ Negative facial expressions or body gestures

Thank you for your time and assistance. This referral form and all information on it including your name will be kept confidential.

If you have any further questions or concerns please contact me.

-COUNSELOR NAME

Staff Name:_______________________________________________

Student Name | Comments/Concerns | Grade
---|---|---

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO ME BY (DATE).
Dear ____ (Staff Member)____,

Thank you for referring (Student’s Name) to the small group that I will be facilitating. In order to gain a further understanding of the behaviors of each student, it would be helpful if you would fill out this survey. This survey and all information on it including your name will be kept confidential.

When thinking about (Student’s Name) have you observed the student doing any of the following in the past month? If so check off the one(s) that apply.

1. ____ Written a note or graffiti about someone else that wasn’t nice.

2. ____ Repeated a rumor she heard about a friend.

3. ____ Made fun of another girl’s clothes, hair or appearance.

4. ____ Excluded someone to make them feel bad.

5. ____ Deliberately done something she knew would hurt someone.

6. ____ Took something that belonged to someone else just to bother someone.

7. ____ Tried to convince others to be mean to someone or to ignore someone.

8. ____ Done something to embarrass a girl she does not like.

9. ____ Threatened not to be friends with someone if she didn’t do what she wanted her to do.

10. ____ Called a girl an unkind name when she knew the girl could hear her.

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO ME BY (DATE).
Dear Parent/Guardian,

Your child is invited to participate in a small psychoeducational group facilitated by the middle school counselor. The goal of the group is for members to understand aggression, learn about themselves as a person, strengthen their ethnic identity, and learn non-aggressive coping strategies.

The group will consist of girls from the sixth and/or seventh grades. As a member of the group, your child is expected to attend all 9 sessions. The group will meet once a week at (TIME) for 50 minutes. The group facilitator will be NAME OF COUNSELOR, professional school counselor.

As a member of the group your child will be required to:
- Complete Confidentiality Agreement
- Complete Group Contract
- Complete Pre/Post Survey
- Complete Pre/Post Test
- Respect the Group Rules

A copy of all the above paperwork is available in the counseling office. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact NAME OF COUNSELOR at PHONE NUMBER or EMAIL ADDRESS.

Thank you in advance,
NAME OF COUNSELOR, Middle School Counselor

I hereby give consent and allow my child to participate in the psychoeducational group at XYZ Middle School. I understand that participation is voluntary. I acknowledge that all personal information discussed during group sessions is confidential unless it concerns abuse and/or intent to harm oneself or another individual.

Student Name:___________________________________
Date:_____________
Parent Name:___________________________________
Parent Signature:_________________________________
XYZ MIDDLE SCHOOL: GROUP CONTRACT

I, _____________________________________________, commit myself to the purpose of the psychoeducational small group at XYZ Middle School. In this group I will understand aggression, increase my ethnic identity, and learn non-aggressive coping strategies.

I will follow the school rules, school practices, and the direction of NAME OF COUNSELOR, professional middle school counselor.

I will meet with this group once a week during the school day during the [Spring or Fall] semester. Meeting times will rotate weekly to avoid missing the same class every week. If I am unable to attend a meeting due to medical illness, family emergency, or class conflict, I will notify NAME OF COUNSELOR.

I agree to maintain personal information discussed by members of the group confidential.

Student Name:______________________________________________________

Student Signature: __________________________________________

Date: ________________________________________________________________

Facilitator Signature: __________________________________________________________________

NAME OF COUNSELOR

Professional School Counselor

XYZ Middle School

Date: ____________________________________________________________________
XYZ MIDDLE SCHOOL: CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

As a member of this group, I acknowledge that experiences, feelings, and reflections may be discussed during sessions. Any information given by a member of the group is confidential. This means that as a member, I will not share any of the information that someone shares and tell others.

The counselor, COUNSELOR NAME will keep all information confidential. However, under the following conditions the counselor must break confidentiality:

* If you are planning to hurt yourself
* If someone is hurting you (Physically, sexually, and/or emotionally)
* If you are planning to hurt someone else

Under these circumstances, the counselor will speak to the appropriate adults in regards to the circumstances. The purpose of breaking confidentiality under these conditions is to ensure that you are being protected and provided with support.

The purpose of having a confidentiality agreement is to ensure that all members feel safe and comfortable to share. I acknowledge that personal information which is discussed during group sessions cannot be shared. If I share any information in an inappropriate manner, I may be terminated from the group.

I, ____________________________________________, acknowledge and agree to the confidentiality agreement as stated above.

Student Signature:____________________________________
Date:____________________

School Counselor Signature:____________________________
Date:_______________
RELATIONAL AGRESSION PRE-TEST

1. Which of these is NOT an example of relational aggression?

   a) Every time you try to talk to one of your friends, she ignores you and immediately starts talking to someone else.
   
   b) A friend asks you in front of your other friends if your mother picked out your clothes, and they all laugh at her joke.
   
   c) Some girls tell the boy you like that you pretend to kiss a picture of him every night before bed.
   
   d) A girl comes up to you in the hallway and shoves you into your locker.

2. Which age group of girls/women use relational aggression toward one another?

   a) Moms
   
   b) Girls in kindergarten
   
   c) Middle school girls
   
   d) All of the above

3. Which of these is NOT a good way to help someone who is being bullied with relational aggression?

   a) Tell a parent or trusted adult.
   
   b) Don’t participate in spreading rumors or sharing other people’s secrets.
   
   c) Continue spreading the rumor, hoping the girl gets used to it.
   
   d) Defend girls who aren’t there to defend themselves when you hear gossip about them.

4. How do you know if you’ve been a victim of relational aggression?

   a) You feel alone even when you are in a crowded place because no one is talking to you.
   
   b) A friend says something mean but then says, “just kidding,” but it still hurt your feelings.
   
   c) You hear that a friend said something mean about you to another girl.
   
   d) All of the above.

5. Which of these is a consequence of being bullied with relational aggression?

   a) Low grades.
   
   b) Depression.
   
   c) Risky Behavior.
   
   d) All of the above.

Answers: 1d 2d 3c 4d 5d

Source: Girl Scouts of America (2013)
SESSION 1: INTRODUCTION

Time Needed: Approx. 50 minutes

Goals of the Session

1. Establish rapport between members and facilitator.
2. Members understand the group rules and confidentiality
3. Members and facilitator go over group rules and modify if needed.

Materials Need

1. Poster board or white board to write down suggestions for rules

Opening (Approx. 10 minutes)

1. Welcome:
   - Welcome the students to the group
   - Discuss the topic of the group and introduce the leader of the group.
   Example: Hello Everyone. Thank you for being here today. My name is Mrs. Shoemaker, and I am the school counselor here at Sea Middle School. Students come to see me to talk or ask for advice about school or friends. I will be the facilitator for our group. In this group we will learn about bullying, relational aggression, the Latino culture, and how to solve problems.

2. Icebreaker Activity:
   - Each member of the group will state their name, what country their family is from, and what they like about that country.
   Example: My name is Genesis and my family is from Mexico. What I really like about Mexico is the food. When I have gone to visit my grandma she makes the best homemade meals.

Working Activities (Approx. 25 minutes)

1. Group Rules/Confidentiality:
   - Discuss the importance of group rules
   Example: Now we will create group rules. Having rules is important, so that we all respect each other. Everyone will have the opportunity to share their ideas for the rules. I will write down everyone’s suggested rules and then we will choose as a group between 5 and 8 of those rules to create our Group Rules poster.
   - Post the final group rules on a poster board
   - Discuss Confidentiality
   Example: I want to thank each of you for helping create the group rules because they tie into the importance of confidentiality. Confidentiality is keeping all the information that someone shares to yourself. When we
SESSION 1 (CONTINUED)

have confidentiality in a group, it makes others feel safe and comfortable to talk about their lives. Anything discussed in our group is confidential and we cannot discuss it with other people. As a counselor, however, I will have to break confidentiality if anyone talks about hurting themselves, hurting someone else, or being hurt by someone. I want to make sure that you all will trust each other in this group. What else would help you feel that you can trust everyone in this group?

2. Goals of the Group
   - Give an overview of the goals of the group
   Example: In this group we will learn about relational aggression which is a form of bullying that some boys and girls use in middle school. We will also talk about the Latino culture and discuss your experiences as Latinas. Lastly, you will learn non-aggressive coping strategies. In this psychoeducational group, you will learn about yourselves and how to relate to others. This group will allow members to learn effective communication, interpersonal skills, and problem-solving skills that will enable you to better handle life situations while sharing feelings and thoughts with other members. Do you have any questions? What are your thoughts on this?

Processing Questions (Approx. 10 minutes)
1. What did you learn about working in this group today?
2. What helped you feel more comfortable in group today?
3. What questions or concerns do you have we did not discuss?

Closing (Approx. 5 minutes)
1. Confidentiality Reminder
   Example: Before we end today’s group meeting, I want to remind everyone that this is a safe space for discussion because everything we talk about is confidential. The stories we shared today are not to be discussed with people that are not in this group. I want to make sure that everyone feels comfortable sharing in this group, and we can ensure that this happens by not sharing what other people have discussed.
2. Next Session Date & Time

Source: Adapted from DeLucia-Waack (2006)
SESSION 2: LATINAS
TRIUNFADORAS
(TRIUMPHANT LATINAS)

Time Needed: Approx. 50 minutes

Goals of the Session:
1. Learn about bullying and relational aggression

Materials Need
1. A copy of Relational Aggression Overview handout (For Facilitator)
2. Easel Board or White Board with Expo Markers (Optional)
3. Copies of the Social Behavior Pre-Survey

Opening (Approx. 10 minutes)
1. Welcome:
   • Remind members about group rules and confidentiality
2. Icebreaker:
   • Everyone forms a circle standing up.
   • Everyone will state their name and something that describes them as a young Latina woman.
   • Example: My name is Issela and something that describes me as a Latina young woman is that I am a good friend and very kind to others.
   • Each member must go around.

Working Activities (Approx. 10 minutes)
1. Social Behavior Survey:
   • The leader will explain the following:
     o Example: Now, each of you will be filling out a survey about your social behaviors. This survey is confidential and will not be seen by anyone else in the room expect for me. I will use this survey as an additional way to learn more about you. When filling out the survey, think about your behavior in the last month. You will put a check on all the statements that apply to you. Please find a place in the room where you can fill out your survey in private. Your survey will not be discussed with anyone else in the room. When you are done please raise your hand and I will collect it from you.
   • Provide students with a copy of the survey and a pencil.
   • Collect the survey after 10 minutes.
SESSION 2 (CONTINUED)

Processing Activity (Approx. 25 minutes):

1. Overview of Relational Aggression
   - Leader will discuss what relational aggression is, what it looks like, and why girls unfortunately engage in aggression behaviors.
   - Leader will refer to *Relational Aggression Overview*.
   - Use an easel pad and easel if blank board is not available, to write down the information.

Closing (Approx. 5 minutes)

1. Thank members for their time and participation.
2. Remind members of keeping confidentiality about everything that was shared.
3. Provide members with the next session date and time.
RELATIONAL AGGRESSION OVERVIEW

**Leaders have the choice of verbalizing this activity or writing it down on a white board. Feel free to reword the language to make it age appropriate. Modify this activity as needed for the group**

If you choose to write: create an outline as illustrated below. Write down each bolded bullet point only and thoroughly discuss each.

1) **What is Relational Aggression**
   a. Behavior used to harm others emotionally
      Expand: *Relational aggression involves behaviors that are used to harm other people emotionally and to hurt friendships. It is a type of bullying in which a person can hurt someone with words or negative gestures.*
   b. Examples of Relational Aggression: (1) name-calling, (2) spreading rumors, (3) excluding others, and (4) rejection
      Expand: *Examples of relational aggression are name-calling, gossiping, excluding others and rejection. Name-calling refers to when someone calls another person a negative name such as “idiot,” “fatty,” and “loser.” Spreading rumors is when someone makes up something about a person and tells other people about it. An example of spreading rumors can be when someone tells you, “Did you hear that Maria likes Jose? Well Josh says that Sarah is such a loser.” Not inviting someone to your movie night or not letting someone hang out with you during lunch are examples of exclusion. Lastly, an example of rejection would be when someone asks if they can join you for lunch and you say no. Does anyone have any examples? Have you seen this at school?*

2) **Can relational aggression affect someone?**
   a. Boys and girls sometimes express their feelings differently
      Expand: *Some boys may use more physical aggression such as hitting or shoving when they are feeling angry or hurt. Some girls may use name-calling, exclusion, gossiping, or rejection when feeling hurt or angry.*
b. Latino boys and girls may express their feelings differently than other ethnic backgrounds

Expand: *Latino boys and girls are taught early in their childhood how to behave by their parents. Latina girls are discouraged from being aggressive and playing rough. However, Latino boys are allowed to be aggressive and play rough with other boys. Think about your relationship with your siblings when you were growing up. Can you think of any examples?*

c. Negative Effects: Low grades, sadness, and feelings of loneness

Expand: *People who are victims of any form of relational aggression may experience a decrease in their grades. They may also feel very sad and alone because they are being rejected or being called names. Being a victim of relational aggression can be very hard for someone. It is important to understand that our words and actions affect the people around us. Does anyone have any questions about what we have discussed?*

Adapted from the Colorado Springs School District 11 (2011)
SOCIAL BEHAVIOR PRE SURVEY

Think about your behavior in the last week. Check off each time you have done the following.

1. ____ Written a note or graffiti about someone else that wasn’t nice?

2. ____ Repeated a rumor you heard about your friend?

3. ____ Made fun of another girl’s clothes, hair or appearance?

4. ____ Excluded someone to make her feel bad?

5. ____ Deliberately done something you knew would hurt someone?

6. ____ Took something that belonged to someone else just to bother her?

7. ____ Tried to convince others to be mean to someone or to ignore her?

8. ____ Done something to embarrass a girl you don’t like?

9. ____ Threatened not to be friends with someone if she didn’t do what you wanted her to do?

10. ____ Called a girl you don’t like an unkind name when she could hear you?

Adapted from Dellasega & Nixon (2003)
SESSION 3: ¡SOY MUJERCITA! ¡SOY LATINA! (I’M A YOUNG WOMAN! I’M LATINA!)

Time Needed: Approx. 50 minutes

Goals of the Session:
1. Members build rapport with facilitator and Latina Truinfadoras
2. Members use their emerging self-reflecting abilities to get to know themselves
3. Members learn about and embrace their Latino culture

Materials Need:
1. Copy of the Latino Traditions information sheet (Review prior to session 3)

Opening (Approx. 10 minutes)
1. Welcome:
   - Welcome/Introduce Latina Truinfadoras
   - Explain the importance of knowing who you are, what you like, and what you look for in a good friendship.

2. Ice Breaker:
   a. Everyone should sit in a circle
   b. Have each member and the Latina Truinfadoras say their name and one thing that they look for in a good friend
   c. Facilitator will begin
   d. Example: My name is Natalia and I think a good friend should be honest. It makes me feel good when people tell me their true thoughts because I feel like I can trust them.

Working Activities (Approx. 15 minutes)
1. Facilitator will invite the Latina Triunfadoras (Triumphant Latinas), to join the group, who will serve as mentors for the members
2. Facilitator will introduce the mentors
   - Example: Today, I have invited professional Latina women who are here to mentor each one of you. All the women here come from diverse Latino backgrounds and are interested in getting to know you all. These women have professional careers and want to share their experiences with you. In the group we will refer to these women as Latina Triunfadoras because they have been triumphant in their life experiences and professional careers. I am going to have each one of them state their name, the middle school that they attended, where they went to college, and what their career is.
SESSION 3 (CONTINUED)

- After all the women have introduced themselves, have each Latina Triunfadora pair up with a student by facing their chairs to each other.
- In a pair, have both the Latina Triunfadora and the student ask each other the following questions
  - Tell me about your family: siblings, parents, pets, etc.
  - Tell me about your goals and dreams
  - Tell me about what you like about school: subjects, friends, teachers
  - Tell me about your culture and your family traditions

Processing (Approx. 20 minutes):
1. Group Discussion about Latino traditions with the Latina Triunfadoras
2. Have everyone put the chairs back into a large circle
3. Refer to the Latino Traditions information sheet
   - Encourage all students to participate if they do not volunteer
   - For each question choose at least three different students to answers

Example: As we continue through our session, I have asked the Latina Triunfadoras to also join us for the second part of our session. It is important to recognize that you students are becoming “mujercitas,” which is a term that is used to describe young ladies in Spanish. As soon-to-be mujercitas, it is important that we begin discussing your Latino culture and what you know and have learned about it. I would like all the students in the room to share their thoughts and feelings about the Latino culture. The first questions are:
  - What Latino traditions do you practice in your family?
  - What is your favorite tradition?
  - What do you know about quinceañeras?

Closing (Approx. 5 minutes)
1. Thank group members for their time and participation.
2. Ask each member to state one thing that they learned in today’s session.
3. Provide members with the next session date and time.
LATINO TRADITIONS

Hispanic Celebration Traditions - Las Piñatas

A piñata is a brightly-colored party ornament made from either a clay container or cardboard (usually embellished with papier-mâché). If made of cardboard, the piñata can be of any shape, including geometric forms, superheroes, flowers, and animals – among many others. It is common to have a piñata at birthday parties and holidays.

Where does it come from?: Many experts believe that the piñata originated in Mexico. Archeological evidence shows that the Aztecs, Mayans and other native people had their own versions of the piñata.

Modern tradition: Nowadays, the piñata is not broken. Instead, it is gently opened by pulling the strings attached to it. This is way safer than the older tradition.

In Latino countries, piñatas were used mainly to celebrate birthdays. But they were also broken during First Communions, Baptisms and other celebrations. The piñata remains a very popular and festive Hispanic tradition.

Hispanic Traditions - Quince Años

The Quince Años celebration - also known as Fiesta Quinceañera, Quinces or Fiesta Rosa – is a very popular tradition in most Latin American countries.

The Fiesta Quinceañera marks the right of passage from girlhood to young womanhood. Each country and/or community has a slight variation of the celebration, but it generally consists of a big party with the Quinceañera as the focus of the event.

For this special day, the girl wears a very elaborate dress, usually in a pastel color. Most parties also include a waltz, which the girl dances with her father, older brother, or other male relative. Nowadays, many girls do opt for a less formal party and some even take a trip with family and/or friends as an alternative to the traditional "quince."

Hispanic Traditions - Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead)

El Día de los Muertos (also known as Día de los Difuntos or Día de Finados) is widely celebrated in most Latin American countries.
This tradition is observed on November 2nd (All Souls’ Day according to the Catholic calendar). In Mexico and other countries November 1st is dedicated to honoring and remembering babies and children who have passed on. The date coincides with All Saints’ Day, which is celebrated by Catholics around the world.

During the Day of the Dead, people remember family members and friends who have passed away. In Mexico, people erect "altares" (altars) in honor of the departed. These altars can be decorated with flowers, pictures of the deceased, fruits, and other foodstuffs. Indeed, some of these altars can be quite elaborate (see picture above).

On this day, people also go to the cemetery to "enflorar" (place flowers on the graves of family members and friends) and many spend the day there. Even though this day revolves around death, it is a very festive tradition which focuses on celebrating the life of those who have crossed to the other side.

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**Hispanic Christmas Traditions**

Christmas is one of the most popular Hispanic traditions. And there are many wonderful customs and practices associated with it. Some of the most popular traditions are:

- **Las posadas and las pastorelas** – Posadas are re-enactments of the time when Mary and Joseph were looking for a place to stay before Jesus was born. Las pastorelas are plays that retell the story of Christmas. These two Hispanic traditions are particularly popular in Mexico.
- **La cena de nochebuena (Christmas Eve’s family dinner)** – A very special night celebrated with family and close friends. Food plays an important role during this celebration and each country has its own special dish.
- **La misa de gallo (Midnight Mass)** – This special mass is celebrated at the stroke of midnight and it commemorates the birth of Jesus Christ.
- **Los farolitos y luminarias (festive lanterns)** – Many communities celebrate the Day of the Immaculate Conception by lighting candles and lanterns. In some countries this special celebration takes place on December 7th. It is also known as El Dia de las Luces (Day of the Lights).
- **El nacimiento (The Nativity Scene)** – The nativity scene plays a prominent role during Christmas. It is usually placed below the Christmas tree and it can get quite elaborate.
- **Los reyes magos (The Three Kings)** – Even though the day of the Three Kings falls in January, they are important players during Christmas celebrations.

Adapted from Explore Hispanic Culture (2013)
SESSION 4: EL PODER DE LA MUJER (THE POWER OF A WOMAN)

Time Needed: Approx. 50 minutes

Goals of the Session:
1. Members self-reflect on their actions and behaviors in the past year.
2. Members learn examples of relational aggression

Materials Need:
1. Colored paper (One for each member)
2. Magazines (At least one for each member, suggested magazines Home & Garden, Girls’ Life, Self, National Geographic)
3. Scissors
4. Glue sticks
5. Copies of I messages handout

Opening (Approx. 10 minutes)
1. Welcome:
   - Reflect on the importance of friendships and family traditions
     Example: Hello girls. Thank you for being here for our fourth session, “El poder de la mujer,” which means “the power of a woman.” Each of you girls will be a woman one day, and as future woman it is important for you to be powerful and strong. By powerful and strong we mean being responsible and proud of who you are. A powerful and strong woman is aware of her actions and how they affect others. For this reason, we will review our past session on Relational Aggression and learn new things about relational aggression.

   t, we talked about the things that you look for in a good friend, and you also discussed your family traditions with the Latina Triunfadoras. It is important for you to be familiar with your culture and to appreciate the traditions that are unique to your ethnic background. Your culture may make you different from others around you. It does make you a special and unique person.

2. Icebreaker:
   - Place all the materials on a large table or have members combine desks.
   - Instruct members to cut out and glue pictures that express who they are as a Latina.
SESSION 4 (CONTINUED)

- Example: For our ice breaker today, I would like for you to cut out pictures of things that represent you as a Latina girl. For example, I would cut out a picture of a family because as a Latina I really value my family. I would also cut out a picture of the number 15 because when I turned fifteen, I celebrated my quinceañera.

- Have each member share one thing that represents them as a Latina.
  Example: At this time I would like each of us to go around and share one picture on your paper that represents you as a Latina. Who would like to start?

Working Activities (Approx. 10 minutes)
1. Reviewing information about Relational Aggression:
   - All the members should be sitting in a circle.
   - Leader will ask everyone as a group what they have learned
     - Example: For the next part of our session, I want to talk about what you learned about relational aggression in our last session. Please say one thing that you learned about relational aggression last week. Who would like to start?
   - Review the four types of relational aggression
     - Example: Next I want to focus on examples of relational aggression. During our second session we talked about the four types of relational aggression: the first was name-calling, second was gossiping, third was exclusion, and last was rejection.

Processing (Approx. 25 minutes)
1. Reflection discussion about relational aggression and empowerment:
   - Leader asks group members to talk about their experiences with forms relational aggression
     - Example: Thank you for helping us review relational aggression and providing us with great examples of what relational aggression looks like. Next, I would like to talk about whether any of you have witnessed relational aggression. (The facilitator is encouraged to start because some members may not be very comfortable). When I was in middle school, I remember there was a new girl at school who spoke a little bit of English and no one would sit with her during nutrition or lunch. It made me feel very bad for her but I did not talk to her. If I could go back, I would have invited her to
SESSION 4 (CONTINUED)
sit with me. Has anyone else witnessed or participated in relational aggression? What did you see and how did it make you feel? Would you do something different now?

2. “I messages” Activity
   • Provide a copy of the “I messages” handout for each member.
   • The leader should talk about the importance of using I messages to problem solve.
     ○ Example: *I want to thank each of you for being honest and sharing your experiences. It is important that we know how to solve our problems effectively. I am giving each of you a hand-out about “I messages.” An I message is used to communicate how you are feeling to someone else. For example, if your friends do not want the new girl to join your group, you might say, “I feel very bad that no one wants the new girl to be part of our group, because I would not want to be alone if I were her. I want everyone to get along and be a good friend.”*
   • As a group, practice using I statements with the scenarios that were discussed during the group discussion.

Closing (2 minutes)
1. Thank members for their time and participation.
2. Remind members of keep confidentiality about everything that was shared.
3. Provide members with the next session date and time.

Source: Adapted from Cummings, Hoffman, & Leschied (2004)
“I” MESSAGES

“I messages” are cool because you say exactly how YOU feel! Nobody can tell you how you should feel. Now, let’s practice using them.

You must ALWAYS begin with saying “I”; not you, me, she, he, etc. REMEMBER, by saying “I” – YOU avoid BLAMING.

After the “I,” state your feeling (you can use your feeling worksheet if you need help with a word).

“I feel ________________________________.”

*Next, tell the person what made you feel that way
“I feel ________________________________, because ________________________________.”
OR
“I feel ________________________________, when ________________________________.”

* NOW – tell the person why you feel that way.
“I feel ________________________________, when you ________________________________,
BECAUSE ________________________________.”

* FINALLY, after the “I message” tell the person what you want.
“I feel ________________________________, when you ________________________________,
BECAUSE ________________________________,”
AND “I want you to ________________________________.”
OR “I need you to ________________________________.”

Source: Taylor (2005)
SESSION 5: AMIGAS PARA SIEMPRE (FRIENDS FOREVER)

Time Needed: 50 minutes

Goals of the Session:
1. Members learn about empathy and kindness.
2. Members learn how to be empathic and kind to other.

Materials Need
1. Pencils
2. Leaf Cut Outs
3. Papers (Size of post-its)
4. Bowl or a bag

Opening (Approx. 10 minutes)
1. Welcome:
   - Remind students about the previous session
   - Members will learn about empathy and continue using “I messages”
   - Example: Hello everyone, I would like to thank each of you for being here. In our previous session you learned example of relational aggression and practiced using “I messages.” Today is our fifth session which is called “amigas para siempre,” meaning “friends forever.” For today’s session, I want you to learn about empathy and kindness.

2. Icebreaker:
   - Members sit at a large table or in desk seats.
   - Give all participants a cut-out of a leaf.
   - Example: I would like to begin today’s session with an activity that is called “Turning over a New Leaf”. On your desk chair each of you has a paper leaf and a pencil. On one side you will write down something that you want to change or improve about yourself. For example you may want to write, “I spend a lot of time on my computer and I don’t really do anything with my siblings”. After, you will turn the leaf over and write what would be a better thing to do, something more positive. You may write, “I will play a game with my brother and sister after I finish my homework”. These leaves are only for your eyes and they are to help you think about ways that you can be a better person.
   - Members put away their leaf once they are finished.
Session 5 (continued)

Working Activities (20 minutes)

1. Empathy Introduction & Sculpt a Feeling Activity
   - Example: Now, we are going to learn about Empathy. Raise your hand if you know what empathy is. What do you know about empathy? (Pause.) Empathy is being able to understand how someone else is feeling. Being empathetic is a very valuable skill that can help you build strong relationships. Being able to know how someone is feeling can sometimes be noticed by a person’s body language or their reactions. In our next activity we are going to play a sculpting game. The purpose of this game is to be able to recognize what emotions look like by seeing peoples’ faces and body structure.

   - Example of activity: In a moment each of you will be writing down on a slip of paper an emotion. Let’s pretend I have just grabbed a paper from the bowl and the emotion written on it says “mad”. I am going to choose a partner who will be known as “the statue”, and I will be the sculptor. My partner and I will stand in the front of the room and not say the emotion out loud. I will then whisper to “the statue”, the emotion. I will whisper to her that I will be crossing her arms, helping her frown her face with my hands, and wrinkle her forehead. After I am done sculpting her, the rest of you will be asked to guess what emotion I have sculpted. Does everyone understand the game?

   - Members write down an emotion on a post-it & place it in a bowl or bag
   - Each of you will get a piece of paper and on it you will write down an emotion. Examples of emotions are happy, scared, and embarrassed. Now that you have written down an emotion, who would like to be our first statue? Our statue will stand in the front of the room to be sculpted by another member.

   - Choose a “sculptor” from the remaining members. The sculptor will draw an emotion from the bucket and “sculpt” the “statue” to display that emotion. The other members will then try to guess what emotion the statue displays. The statue then becomes the sculptor and the game continues.

   - I am going to have Name be our sculptor. Grab an emotion from the (bowl, cup, bucket, etc.). Go over to your statue and sculpt it to look like the emotion on your paper. Everyone else is going to guess the emotion.

Processing (15 minutes):

   - Group discussion about empathy
     Example: Thank you all for participating in our activity, I hope that each of you learned about the hints that other people give us to display their emotions. When
Session 5 (continued)

at someone else is feeling, that is the first step of being empathetic. For the next fifteen minutes, I would like for us to have a group discussion about empathy and kindness. Let’s start with the first question: what are some examples of kindness? (Wait for the members to answer.) Next, how is kindness related to empathy? (Wait.) How do you show someone you are being empathetic? (Wait.) Lastly, how has someone been kind to you?

Closing (5 minutes)

1. Thank members for their time and participation.
2. Inform members that we are half way done with our sessions.
3. Provide members with the next session date and time.
SESSION 6: HERMANDAS UNIDAS
(UNITED SISTERS)
Time Needed: (Approx. 50 minutes)
Goals of the Session:
1. Members practice being kind to each other
2. Members learn about empathy and the Latino community.

Materials Need:
1. Pieces of papers (One for each person)
2. Copies of the Walk a Mile in Another Person’s Shoes activity
3. Copies of Things You Can Do to be Kind handout

Opening (Approx. 5 minutes):
1. Welcome:
   • Leader recaps the last session and explains the goal of this session.
   • Example: Good (morning/afternoon) amigas. Today, we are going to continue practicing kindness, learning about empathy, and exploring our Latino culture. We will focus strongly on unity to be “hermanas unidas,” which means “united sisters.”
2. Kindness Icebreaker:
   • Have members form a circle seated in their chairs.
   • Randomly give a folded piece of paper to each member
   • Each paper will have a members name including the name of the leader.
   • Example: To begin our session, we are going to say things that we like about each other. Telling someone something that you like about them is a kind gesture. Kind gestures can make others feel good about themselves. I will begin. The name on my paper is Sheila. What I like about Sheila is that she always comes in with a smile on her face. Now, Sheila, can you state the name of the person on your paper and what you like about them?
   • Continue to go around the group until everyone has participated

Working Activities (Approx. 25 minutes)
1. Walk a Mile in Another Person’s Shoes activity
   • Give each member a copy of the Walk a Mile in Another Person’s Shoes
   • Members and leaders form a circle.
   • Example: Thank you for all saying such kind things to each other. I hope that saying kind things and doing kind things for others is something you will continue to show in our group and outside of our group. Our next
Session 6 (continued)

activity is called “Walk a Mile in Another Person’s Shoes.” I am passing out a copy of this activity to each of you. The scenarios on the sheet are about friendships, family, the Latino culture, and Latino countries. Who would like to read the first scenario?

Thank you (NAME) for volunteering. After the scenario has been read, you will prompt the group with two questions. Be sure to thank each student for volunteering and sharing in the group.

- How do you think the persons in this scenario are feeling?
- How would you be empathetic or kind in this scenario?

Processing (15 minutes)

1. Empathy & Kindness Group Discussion
   - Example: We will continue our session with talking about our feelings and sharing our experiences with empathy. Some of you may know someone who has experienced one or more of the scenarios. Some of you may have experienced one or more of the scenarios yourselves. I would like for you to share your feelings and experiences as hermanas unidas. We are here together to be strong Latina mujercitas. My first question is, how many of you were able to relate to the scenarios? Why or Why not? (Pause.) How did the scenarios make you feel? (Pause.) Has anyone ever been empathetic to you?

2. Next, the leader will talk about kindness
   - Example: In our group discussion, I would also like to talk about kindness. Being kind to someone shows that you are friendly and considerate. Examples of kindness can be telling someone something you like about them, like we did in our ice breaker. Other examples are holding the door for someone, volunteering your time, and giving someone food. There are so many things that you can do to be kind, and it doesn’t have to require a lot of effort. Take a minute to think about one kind thing someone has done for you this week. (Pause.) Who would like to share first? (Have every member share one thing.) Thank you all for sharing, I am giving you each a piece of paper that has examples of kind things that you can do (“Things That you Can Do to be Kind” handout.) I want to challenge each of you to be kind to someone every day until the next time we meet. You can choose things from the list I have given you or you can create your own. Be sure to write down what you do each day. We will share during our next session.

Closing (5 minutes)

1. Thank members for their time and participation.
2. Provide members with the next session date and time.
Let’s learn about empathy

WALK IN ANOTHER PERSON’S SHOES

1. A group of students are hanging out in the hall. You see your friend teasing Nicole, a younger student about not making the cheerleading team. Nicole begins to cry and runs away.

2. You are excited to go out with your friends on Friday evening, but your mom wants you to go out to a Quinceañera with the family. You refuse, your mother grounds you, and you storm to your room.

3. Natalie is telling Anabel how worried she is about her parents not having a job and possibly being deported to Guatemala, but Anabel isn’t really paying attention and keeps changing the subject. Natalie eventually yells at Anabel for not listening to her.

4. The bell is about to ring, and everyone is rushing to their next class. In the rush, you accidentally knock books out of Daniel’s hands. Everyone laughs and keeps moving on while Daniel turns red and rushes to pick up his books.

5. You and your three brothers are playing video games in the living room and your dad calls you to clean up the kitchen. Your dad says, “Maria go help your mom wash the dishes.” You say, “But, dad, why can’t any of my brothers help mom?” Your dad says, “Because they are boys and you are a girl!”

6. You go to visit your family in Mexico and you see some children who are poor. The children are asking people for money for food. You also notice that they have old shoes and clothes.

Modified from The Nemours Foundation/KidsHealth (2006)
THINGS YOU CAN DO TO BE KIND

1. Smile
2. Talk to someone you don’t know well
3. Help someone with something (i.e. carry something heavy, open a door)
4. Give a hug to a friend
5. Apologize to someone you have hurt in the past
6. Say “thank you” to someone who has helped you
7. Eat or hang out with someone that you don’t usually hang out with
8. Invite someone to join your friends for nutrition or lunch
9. Compliment someone (“I really like your shirt; it’s very pretty.”)
10. Tell one of your teachers something you like about them
SESSION 7: AYUDAME AMIGA
(HELP ME FRIEND)

Time Needed: Approx. 50 minutes

Goals of the Session:
1. Members share and reflect on their experiences of being kind
2. Members learn non-aggressive problem-solving skills.

Materials Need:
1. A copy of the Six Steps to Problem Solving handout (Read prior to session)
2. An easel pad or white board (optional)
3. Markers (optional)
4. A computer with internet access & a projector

Opening (Approx. 10 minutes)
1. Welcome:
   - Briefly introduce today’s session
   - Example: Good (morning/afternoon) amigas. Today’s session will focus on kindness and problem-solving. I hope you all enjoyed your week of showing others acts of kindness.
2. Icebreaker:
   - The group will form a circle with their chairs
   - Members share their experiences with practicing acts of kindness.
   - Example: We will begin today’s session by sharing the experiences you had with kindness this week. Each one of you was given a list of acts of kindness that you could do or you could create your own. Who would like to begin by sharing one act of kindness that they did and what it made you feel? (Have everyone take a turn.) I would also like each of you to share what happened when you performed the acts of kindness and if were there any surprises. (Have everyone take a turn.) Thank you all for sharing your experiences. I am very proud to see how much each of you is growing as a mujercita. I hope that you will each continue to be empathetic and show kindness to others.

Working Activities (Approx. 15 minutes)
1. Teach Problem-Solving Skills
   a. Group should be facing the leader and/or the easel pad/white board
   - Refer to the SIX STEPS OF PROBLEM-SOLVING handout for detailed activity instructions
• After you have reviewed the handout, you will play the online video clip *Problem-Solving* on the computer (Use the projector to display the image)
• Video Link (Approx. 3 minutes):

**Processing (Approx. 20 minutes)**

1. **Group discussion about problem solving**
   - Sit in a group circle
   - Example: *The video we just watched gives great examples of how we can use the six steps to solve a problem that we are having. What have you learned about problem solving today?* (Pause.) *Do you feel that you can use the six steps to problem solving? Why or Why not?* (Pause.) *Does anyone have any questions?* (Pause.)
   - Working example: *Now, we are going to practice using the six steps of problem solving by solving a problem scenario. For example, Mayra’s best friend Susie is going to the mall after school with friends and she did not invite you. You are very hurt and upset about not being invited. How can you use the six steps of problem solving to solve this problem scenario?*

**Closing (5 minutes)**

1. Thank members for their time and participation.
2. Provide members with the next session date and time.
3. Briefly inform members about the final sessions.
SIX STEPS TO SOLVING PROBLEMS

Facilitator Instructions

- You may choose to verbalize this activity or write it on the board
- Make modifications as needed
- For the written version write on an easel pad or white board the six steps to solving problems. Leave a bit of space between each to write down notes
- Example: 1. Identify the problem
  - 2. Why is it a problem?
  - 3. Brainstorm possible solutions
  - 4. Evaluate the solutions
  - 5. Put the solution into action
  - 6. Evaluate the outcome

1. **Identify the problem**
Facilitators’ Notes: The first step is to determine what the problem is. Then put it into words that make it solvable. Examples: “You’ve been using other people’s things a lot without asking first.” “I noticed that the last two Saturdays when you went out, you didn’t invite me.” Focus on the issue, not on the emotion or the person. The person may feel attacked and get defensive, or feel frustrated because he/she doesn’t know how to fix the problem.

2. **Why is it a problem?**
Facilitators’ Notes: Describe what’s causing the problem and where it’s coming from. It might help to consider the answers to questions like these:
   - Why is this so important to you?
   - What do you think might happen?
   - What’s upsetting you?

3. **Brainstorm possible solutions**
Facilitators’ Notes: Make a list of all the possible ways the problem could be solved. Try to avoid judging or debating these. Try to come up with at least eight possible solutions together. Write down all the possibilities.
4. Evaluate the solutions
Facilitators’ Notes: Look at the solutions in together, talking about the positives and negatives of each one. Consider the pros before the cons – this way, no one will feel that their suggestions are being criticized. After making a list of the pros and cons, cross off the options for which the negatives clearly outweigh the positives. Now rate each solution from 0 (not good) to 10 (very good). This will help you sort out the most promising solutions. The solution you choose should be one that can be put into practice and will solve the problem. You might find it helpful to talk to other people, such as other family members, to get a fresh range of ideas.

5. Put the solution into action
Facilitators’ Notes: Once you’ve agreed on a solution, plan out exactly how it will work. It can help to do this in writing and to include the following points:
- Who will do what?
- When will they do it?
- What’s needed to put the solution into action?
You could also talk about when you’ll meet again to look at how the solution is working.

6. Evaluate the outcome
Facilitators’ Notes: Once you have put the plan into action, you need to check how it went.

There might be hiccups or obstacles along the way, so you’ll need to give the solution time to work. Also note that not all solutions will work. **Sometimes you’ll need to try more than one solution.** Part of effective problem-solving is being able to adapt when things don’t go as well as expected.

Ask the following questions:
- What has worked well?
- What hasn’t worked so well?
- What could you/we do differently to make the solution work more smoothly?

If the solution hasn’t worked, go back to step 1 of this problem-solving strategy and start again. Perhaps the problem wasn’t what you thought it was, or the solutions weren’t quite right.

Adapted from: Raising Children Network: *The Australian Parenting Website* (2013)
SESSION 8: ¡SI SE PUEDE!
(YES WE CAN!)

Time Needed: Approx. 50 minutes

Goals of the Session:
1. Members learn and practice using non-aggressive coping strategies
2. Members reflect on their learning experiences

Materials:
1. Poster of the Six Steps to Problem Solving

Opening (Approx. 10 minutes)
1. Welcome:
   - Recap the last session and explain the goals of this session
   - Example: Welcome, hermanas (sisters). The last time we met we discussed and learned about kindness and problem-solving skills. Today, we will continue to practice using problem-solving skills and discuss what we have learned over the last seven meetings with the Latina Trunfadoras. This is our eighth session and, as you know, we only have one left after this. Our session today is called “¡SI SE PUEDE!” which means “YES WE CAN!” As hermanas unidas we can do anything we set our minds to.

2. Icebreaker:
   - Everyone in the group will sit in a circle
   - Members describe something that they admired about one of the Latina Trunfadoras
   - Example: I would like to begin this session by talking about our experiences that we have had with the Latina Trunfadoras. Tell me what is that you admire about one of the Latina Trunfadoras and why you admire her. How would like to begin? (Wait.) Name, thank you for volunteering.

Working Activities (Approx. 15 minutes)
1. Problem Solving Group discussion:
   - Display a poster with the Six Steps to Problem Solving for reference
   - Facilitator shares an example problem
   - Members collaboratively strategize the best ways solve the problem
   - Reinforce the use of the six steps to problem solving.
Example: Next, we will review the six steps to problem solving that we discussed in our last session. I have a couple of example problems that I would like for the group members to work together to solve using the six steps to problem solving. The first problem is between two sisters. One of the sisters says “I want to borrow my sister’s belongings but she does not let me. When it comes to borrowing my things I always let her.” How can we help these sisters solve the problem? Work through the six steps and provide assistance to the members as needed. The second example is between a teacher and a student. The student says “Ms. Uribe is so mean. She says that I always talk in her class. But I don’t think I talk that much”. How can we help the student and the teacher using the six steps to problem solving?

Processing (Approx. 20 minutes)

1. Group Discussion to Begin Termination
   
   - Example: As you all know this is our second to last session and I would like for us to share our experience in this group. In this group, each of you had the opportunity to get to know the Latina Triunfadoras, to discuss the Latino culture, learn about relational aggression, and practice using problem-solving skills. What has been the best part of being part of this group and why? (Pause, allow members to answer.) What have you learned from this group? (Pause.) What have you learned from each other? (Pause.) How has this group helped you? Why?

Closing (Approx. 5 minutes)

1. Thank members for their time and participation.
2. Provide members with the next session date and time.
3. Leaders should discuss the process of ending the group.
SESSION 9: ONCE AN HERMANA, ALWAYS AN HERMANA

(ONCE A SISTER, ALWAYS A SISTER)

Time Needed: 50 minutes

Goals of the Session

1. Members reflect on areas of improvement
2. Members discuss how they will use what they learned in the group.

Materials Need:

1. Copies of the *Relational Aggression Post-Test*
2. Copies of the *Social Behavior Post-Test*
3. Pencils

Opening (5 minutes)

1. Welcome
   - Thank members for attending the last sessions and discuss the last session.
   - Example: *Hello Hermanas, I would like to thank all the members for being here today. It has been a very long and rewarding journey. I hope that having the Latina Triunfadoras at two of your sessions has inspired you to be successful Latinas too. The bond that you have created with the Latina Triunfadoras does not end here; each of them has committed to staying in touch with each of you and to coming to visit you at school for follow up meetings. The goal of today’s session is for each of you to reflect on what things you want to improve in your life and how you will use what you have learned from our group.*

Working Activities (15 minutes)

1. Post Social Behavior Survey & Relational Aggression Test
   - Inform members that they will be taking a post-survey and -test.
   - Example: *To begin our session I would like each of you to take the next fifteen minutes to fill out a post-survey and post-test regarding what you learned about relational aggression and your social behaviors. Please do not share your answers with anyone in the room. I encourage each of you to be honest when filling both out. I will use the post survey and post test to learn about what you gained from being part of this group.*
SESSION 9 (CONTINUED)

Processing (25 minutes)

1. Termination Group Discussion
   a. Form a group circle with chairs
   b. Example: *I would like to continue our session by having a final group discussion about everything that we have learned over the past nine sessions together. What have you learned from being part of this group? (Pause.) What changes have you seen in yourself? (Pause.) What do you still need to work on? (Pause.) What did enjoy most about being in this group? (Pause).*

Closing (5 minutes)

1. Thank all the members for their time and participation.
2. Remind them that you are available to meet with them throughout the year.
3. Your office is always open for them. Make a statement about confidentiality
   a. Example: *I am very thankful to have been your group facilitator. I hope this group has helped you grow as a mujercita. Always remember that we are hermanas unidas and that my office is open to each and every one of you. I am proud to see how much each of you has grown, and I hope to continue to see you grow here at _____ middle school. Remember that everything personal that we discussed in our group sessions must stay confidential even though our group has ended. Keeping the respect of confidentiality will help us remain hermanas unidas.*
RELATIONAL AGGRESSION POST-TEST

1. Which of these is NOT an example of relational aggression?
   e) Every time you try to talk to one of your friends, she ignores you and immediately starts talking to someone else
   f) A friend asks you in front of your other friends if your mother picked out your clothes, and they all laugh at her joke
   g) Some girls tell the boy you like that you pretend to kiss a picture of him every night before bed
   h) A girl comes up to you in the hallway and shoves you into your locker

2. Which age group of girls/women use relational aggression toward one another?
   e) Moms
   f) Girls in kindergarten
   g) Middle school girls
   h) All of the above

3. Which of these is NOT a good way to help someone who is being bullied with relational aggression?
   e) Tell a parent or trusted adult
   f) Don’t participate in spreading rumors or sharing other people’s secrets
   g) Continue spreading the rumor, hoping the girl gets used to it
   h) Defend girls who aren’t there to defend themselves when you hear gossip about them

4. How do you know if you’ve been a victim of relational aggression?
   e) You feel alone even when you are in a crowded place because no one is talking to you
   f) A friend says something mean but then says, “just kidding,” but it still hurt your feelings
   g) You hear that a friend said something mean about you to another girl
   h) All of the above

5. Which of these is a consequence of being bullied with relational aggression?
   e) Low grades
   f) Depression
   g) Risky Behavior
   h) All of the above

Answers: 1)d  2)d  3)c  4)d  5)d                     Source: Girl Scouts of America (2013)
SOCIAL BEHAVIOR POST-SURVEY

Think about your behavior in the last week. Check off each time you have done the following.

1. ____ Written a note or graffiti about someone else that wasn’t nice?

2. ____ Repeated a rumor you heard about your friend?

3. ____ Made fun of another girl’s clothes, hair or appearance?

4. ____ Excluded someone to make her feel bad?

5. ____ Deliberately done something you knew would hurt someone?

6. ____ Took something that belonged to someone else just to bother her?

7. ____ Tried to convince others to be mean to someone or to ignore her?

8. ____ Done something to embarrass a girl you don’t like?

9. ____ Threatened not to be friends with someone if she didn’t do what you wanted her to do?

10. ____ Called a girl you don’t like an unkind name when she could hear you?

APPENDIX II: EVALUATIVE SUMMARY

Thesis Project Evaluation

Please provide feedback on the thesis project that has been provided for you. This information is voluntary and will be kept confidential. I appreciate your honesty and ask that you do not put your name on the sheet so that your responses will remain anonymous. Your feedback will help me improve the thesis project.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

1. This program is helpful for adolescent girls.  
2. This program is developmentally appropriate for middle school girls.  
3. The length of the program is feasible in a school setting.  
4. The length of the sessions is feasible in a school setting.  
5. The sessions are well outlined and easy to follow.  
6. The materials needed to conduct all the sessions are accessible to all counselors.  
7. I would feel comfortable facilitating this group.  
8. I would use this group in my school.  
9. I would recommend this group to other counselors.

Please provide feedback on the following:

Any recommended improvements:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Any comments:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________