

THE INSIDIOUS SITCOM: FEATURES OF TWEEN TV THAT
INCREASE TOLERANCE OF VERBAL INSULTS

By

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii
LIST OF FIGURES	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	vi
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Importance of Bystanders	2
Effects of Viewing Televised Physical Aggression.....	3
Televised Verbal Aggression.....	4
Tween Sitcom Era.....	5
Gender Differences in Verbal Aggression.....	7
Effects of Viewing Verbal Aggression.....	7
Theoretical Accounts of Television’s Effect on Behavior.....	8
Insidious Sitcoms: Contexts of Verbal Aggression in Television	11
Current Research.....	13
II. EXPERIMENT ONE	15
Introduction.....	15
Method	16
Participants.....	16
Stimuli.....	16
Procedure	17
Results.....	18
Discussion.....	21
III. EXPERIMENT TWO.....	22
Introduction.....	22
Method	22
Participants.....	22
Stimuli.....	22
Procedure	23
Results.....	23
Discussion.....	25

IV. EXPERIMENT THREE	26
Introduction.....	26
Method	26
Participants.....	26
Stimuli.....	26
Procedure	27
Results.....	27
Discussion.....	28
V. EXPERIMENT FOUR.....	29
Introduction.....	30
Method	30
Participants.....	30
Stimuli.....	30
Procedure	30
Results.....	31
Discussion.....	34
VI. EXPERIMENT FIVE	36
Introduction.....	36
Method	36
Participants.....	36
Stimuli.....	36
Procedure	37
Results.....	38
Discussion.....	41
VII. GENERAL DISCUSSION.....	43
APPENDIX.....	49
REFERENCES	67

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Perceptions of Insults from Experiment 1	19
2. Subsequent Tolerance from Experiment 1	19
3. Perceptions of Insults from Experiment 4	33
4. Subsequent Tolerance from Experiment 4.....	33
5. Perceptions of Insults from Experiment 5	40
6. Subsequent Tolerance from Experiment 5.....	40

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Means and Standard Deviations from Experiment 1	20
2. Means and Standard Deviations from Experiment 2	24
3. Means and Standard Deviations from Experiment 3	28
4. Means and Standard Deviations from Experiment 4	34
5. Means and Standard Deviations from Experiment 5	41

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” Catchy, but unfortunately not correct. Words do hurt. Research has demonstrated that name-calling and verbal insults can cause young people serious psychological harm (Paquette & Underwood, 1999). Verbal aggression occurs frequently at school (Rivers & Smith, 1994), and now with insults so easily communicated online, it has become nearly impossible for victims to escape the torment.

Verbal insults and name-calling can have grave consequences; studies have revealed a clear link between bullying and suicidal ideation (Kim & Leventhal, 2008). Indeed, news reports of children and teenagers committing suicide after being bullied or cyber-bullied have become a common, tragic aspect of modern life. The family of a 13-year-old girl who took her life in October 2014 after being picked on at school is now rallying for anti-bullying legislation in her state (Borlik, 2014). The issue is widespread: 37% of 6th graders in 2011 reported being bullied (defined as repeated, unwanted aggression with a power imbalance—NCES, 2013). In response, some states have passed anti-bullying laws, and many anti-bullying interventions have been created and implemented in schools.

Importance of Bystanders

Discovering ways to decrease bullying behaviors is of utmost importance. Recently, two large anti-bullying campaigns supported by extensive research have focused their attention on changing bystander behavior (U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services [UDHHS], n.d.; Cartoon Network, 2014). Bullying extends beyond the bully-victim dyad— bystanders witness between 83% and 97% of incidents (Raynor & Wylie, 2012; Rigby & Johnson, 2006). Bystanders to bullying can assume any of four main stances: the “assistant” who joins in with the bully, the “reinforcer” who encourages the bully, the “outsider” who does nothing to stop the bully, or the “defender” who helps the victim (Salmivalli, 1999). Unfortunately, students rarely take on this defender role, even though when they do so, it usually is effective (Hawkins, Pepler & Craig, 2001). The effectiveness of intervening as a defender was shown in school-based research: in classrooms where students observed more of their peers taking the defender role, students self-reported engaging in less bullying; in classrooms where students observed more of their peers acting as reinforcers to bullying, students reported increased engagement in bullying (Salmivalli, Voeten & Poskiparta, 2011). In hypothetical scenarios, when a bystander intervened, students were less likely to endorse the bully and more likely to support the victim (Gini, Pozzoli, Borghi & Franzoni, 2008), showing the efficacy of a bystander taking the defender role.

Targeting bystander behavior is a wise choice for interventions, as the bully and victim roles are more likely to persist over time (Sourander, Helstela, Helenius & Piha, 2000). Therefore, the U.S. government campaign encouraging kids and teens to “Be more than a bystander” holds promise, along with Cartoon Network’s message for bystanders

to “Speak Up” to stop bullying when they see it. Similarly, a program on college campuses that encourages students to intervene in situations of power-based personal violence has been shown to be effective (Coker, Cook-Craig, Williams, Fisher, Clear, Garcia & Hegge, 2011).

Research identifying everyday factors in children’s lives that decrease tolerance of bullying could make bystander interventions more effective. The research reported here investigates television content as one possible factor, specifically “tween” TV, i.e. programs targeted to 9- to 14-year-olds (Levin, 2007). Specifically, the effect of viewing *verbal insults* from popular tween situation comedies (sitcoms) featured on “family-friendly” TV channels on participants’ subsequent tolerance of verbal aggression was examined.

Effects of Viewing Televised Physical Aggression

Bandura’s (1963) “Bobo doll” experiments and numerous subsequent studies (summarized in Paik and Comstock’s 1994 meta-analytic review) have documented the negative effects of viewing televised physical aggression on subsequent behavior. The effects of televised physical aggression appear to be stronger for children ($r^2=.21$, $d=1.02$) than adults ($r^2=.03$, $d=0.37$). Long-term effects have been documented: the amount of aggressive television viewed in childhood predicts aggression in adulthood (Huesmann, Lagerspetz & Eron, 1984; Johnson, Cohen, Smailes, Kasen & Brooke, 2002; Huesmann, Moise, Podolski, & Eron, 2003). Thus, the idea that televised antisocial messages may influence real-life behavior is plausible.

Televised Verbal Aggression

More recently, researchers have stressed the importance of investigating *non-physical* forms of aggression in television, including verbal aggression (Infante & Wigley, 1986; Coyne, Stockdale, & Nelson, 2012). Definitions of verbal aggression often include: insults, name-calling, threats, mocking, sarcasm and loud yelling and arguing (Greenberg, Edison, Korzenny, Fernandez-Collado & Atkin, 1980; Infante & Wigley, 1986; Coyne & Archer, 2004). Notably, insults are the most common type of televised verbal aggression in programming aimed specifically at children (Glascock, 2013) as well as in primetime shows (Glascock, 2008), sitcoms in particular (Chory, 2000; Glascock, 2008). Verbal aggression on television occurs frequently: in 86% of the programs popular with British adolescents (Coyne & Archer, 2004) and 95% of primetime shows in the U.S. (Glascock, 2008). Additionally, 92% of popular American children's programming in 2005 contained social aggression, wherein the most common forms of verbal social aggression were insults and name calling (Martins & Wilson, 2012a).

Numerous content analyses report that verbal aggression occurs more frequently than physical aggression in various types of programming, including "tween" shows (Walsh, 2014), primetime shows (Glascock, 2001; Glascock 2008), and primetime sitcoms (Greenberg, Edison, Korzenny, Fernandez-Collado & Atkin, 1980; Potter & Vaughan, 1997). Furthermore, verbal aggression on TV has increased over time; in an historical comparison of sitcoms from 1994 to Greenberg et al.'s older (1980) analysis of sitcoms from 1975-1978, Potter and Vaughan (1997) discovered that the amount of physical aggression had remained constant, but the amount of *verbal* aggression had increased. Similarly, a historical content analysis reported *twice as much* verbal

aggression (verbal insults, name-calling, mocking and threats) in the shows nominated for the Kids' Choice Awards in 2008 to 2011 compared to the shows nominated throughout the 1990s—an increase from 20 to 40 occurrences per hour. (Russo, Troseth, Dye, Ashmead & Dow, in preparation). All of the shows included in Russo et al.'s analysis, nominated by children as their favorites, were sitcoms, the genre that contains the highest rate of verbal aggression (Greenberg et. al, 1980; Potter & Vaughan, 1997; Potter & Warren, 1998; Glascock, 2008). Given the possibility that verbal aggression could be harmful to viewers, it is significant that the current age-based television rating system does not reflect the amount of verbal aggression in programs (Linder & Gentile, 2009).

Tween Sitcom Era

Over the past two decades, children's television has experienced a shift towards "tween"-focused programming (Martins, Mares, Malacane & Peebles, 2014). Children used to watch either cartoons or family sitcoms. The idea of situation comedies *starring and targeted at* children and teenagers was a gamble that paid off. Since the program *Saved By The Bell* ushered in the genre in 1989, entire television channels (namely, Disney and Nickelodeon) have been devoted to programming targeted at children and teens, much of it consisting of tween sitcoms (Martins et al., 2014). The annual Nickelodeon Kids' Choice Awards (which surveys children's and teenagers' favorite shows) also demonstrates this shift. For example, in the 1990's, the nominees consisted of a variety of these new tween sitcoms (e.g. *Sister Sister*, *Kenan & Kel*) along with typical family-centered sitcoms (e.g. *Cosby Show*, *Home Improvement*). Between 2008

and 2013, however, every show nominated for “favorite show” was a tween sitcom from either Disney or Nickelodeon. A recent popular press article cites 2005, when the blockbuster show *Suite Life on Deck* first aired, as the year that tween sitcoms, or “kidcoms”, really started to take off on Disney and Nickelodeon, often drawing as many as 4 million viewers per new episode (Observation Deck, 2014).

Dan Schneider, the creator of the blockbuster hit *iCarly* and many other popular Nickelodeon sitcoms, revealed in an interview that network executives gave him the mandate: “Kids win.” Schneider interpreted this rule as: “[having] the kids come out on top. They’re the smartest ones in the room. They’re the ones in charge” (Dee, 2007). The resulting unrealistic portrayal of tween life may be confusing to young viewers, and problematic when child characters assert dominance by being rude to adults. Notably, increased verbal disrespect from children to adults was found in Russo et. al’s content analysis of these tween sitcoms. This perspective may contribute to television shows on “family friendly” channels specific to children (e.g. Disney and Nickelodeon) containing the most verbal aggression (Glascok, 2013).

The questionable landscape of “tween TV” is fueled with further importance as children are spending more time than ever watching television. American children average 3 to 5 hours of TV watching per day (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). Television has also become more accessible to them via recording devices (e.g. DVR), on-demand services (e.g. Roku, Netflix, Hulu), and video streaming on laptops, tablets, and mobile devices. Thus, children have more opportunities to watch their favorite programs, replete with empowered, rude children.

Gender Differences in Verbal Aggression

Exposure to televised verbal aggression may be especially toxic for girls. Among 12- to 18-year old children, verbal insults and name-calling occur more often for females than for males (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2013). Similarly, among 6- to 11-year-old children, verbal aggression is more frequent between girls, whereas physical aggression is common among boys (Archer, Pearson & Westeman, 1988; Crick, Bigbee & Howes, 1996). Girls (11- to 15-years-old) also perceive verbal aggression as more harmful than do boys (Coyne, Archer & Elsea, 2006).

Television (including child and tween programming) reflects the same pattern: females on TV exhibit more verbal aggression and males exhibit more physical aggression (Glascock, 2001; Feshbach, 2005; Linder & Gentile, 2009; Linder & Lyle, 2011; Martins & Wilson, 2012a). Moreover, females' exposure to socially aggressive content on television (including verbal insults) was related to their use of social aggression in real life, whereas this relation was not significant for boys (Martins & Wilson, 2012b). In a study with 5th grade girls, exposure to verbal aggression on television was positively correlated with teachers' reports of children's verbal aggression (Linder & Gentile, 2009). Finally, girls (but not boys) who viewed tween sitcoms habitually were more likely to endorse social exclusion (Mares & Braun, 2013).

Effects of Viewing Verbal Aggression

The documented frequency of verbal aggression on TV, along with the increasing amount of time children are watching TV, calls for an investigation of its effects on young viewers. Indeed, many studies have discovered associations between children's

and adolescents' media consumption and their verbally aggressive behavior (Banerjee, Greene, Krcmar & Bagdasarov, 2009; Linder & Gentile, 2009; Gentile, Coyne & Walsh, 2011). One study revealed that children in eight different countries who watched more than two hours of television a day were more likely to engage in verbal bullying (Kuntsche, Pickett, Overpeck, Craig, Boyce & Gaspar de Matos, 2006).

To date, few experimental studies exist on the effects of viewing verbal aggression. Coyne, Archer and Eslea (2004) discovered that participants who watched a video of two female friends that featured indirect aggression (social embarrassment and exclusion) or direct aggression (a combination of verbal and physical aggression) led to participants acting less hospitable towards a stranger compared to a control group that watched a video with no aggression. Those who watched the aggression videos subsequently gave a more negative evaluation of, and awarded less money to, an unfamiliar individual with whom they interacted. Chory-Assad (2004) found that undergraduates who watched verbal aggression on sitcoms subsequently produced aggressive cognitive responses, particularly character and competence attacks (measured via a thought-listing task, reflecting on everything they were thinking while viewing the sitcom). Similarly, watching a 15-minute video clip (from the popular movie *Mean Girls*) that featured relational (including verbal) aggression primed relationally aggressive cognitions in female undergraduates (Coyne, Linder, Nelson & Gentile, 2012).

Theoretical Accounts of Television's Effect on Behavior

Viewing televised verbal insults can influence behavior in multiple ways, from inciting imitation to reducing bystander intervention to stop verbal insults. Several

theories have been proposed to explain the influence of viewing televised aggression on real-world behavior.

Social cognitive theory, originally known as social learning theory (Bandura, 1986) is rooted in children's learning through imitation (Bandura, Ross & Ross, 1961). For example, children learn behaviors from observing models in their environment, including behavior they view on television (Bandura, Ross & Ross, 1963, Bandura, 1971). The consequences of the observed model's behavior influence how likely a child is to imitate the behavior; for instance, behaviors that are rewarded are more likely to be imitated than are those that are punished (Bandura, 1965). Therefore, verbal insults followed by a laugh track (signaling social acceptance of the insult) are more likely to be imitated than are insults that result in punishment. Aggression with fewer consequences to the victim also is more likely to be imitated (Wilson, Smith, Potter, Kunkel, Linz, Colvin & Donnerstein, 2002), which might suggest that verbal aggression will be imitated more readily than physical aggression. Attractiveness of the perpetrator is yet another factor that increases the likelihood of imitation (Bandura, 1986)—one that applies to children's television shows portraying characters in glamorous lifestyles. Acts of televised physical aggression with attractive contextual features such as these are more dangerous for young viewers, according to Wilson et al. (2002). Finally, children are more influenced by models of the same gender (Hoffner & Cantor, 1991).

Theories of desensitization and disinhibition posit that with repeated viewing (in person or vicariously), the emotional arousal and anxiety one might initially experience when viewing an act of aggression decreases over time (David, Nias & Phil, 1979; Sparks, Sparks, & Sparks, 2009). In other words, viewing certain behaviors repeatedly

will decrease sensitivity to similar behaviors and consequently increase viewers' tolerance of such behaviors (Berkowitz, 1964, 1965). Experimental studies have demonstrated that exposure to violent video results in significantly greater tolerance for subsequent real life physical aggression, likely caused by desensitization of the viewer and normalization of the violence (Drabman & Thomas, 1974; Thomas, Horton, Lippincott & Drabman, 1977). Watching violent media teaches children that aggression is acceptable, normal and frequently an effective behavior that leads to rewards (Bushman & Huesmann, 2001; 2006; Huesmann & Kirwil, 2007). Applying this principle to verbal aggression, the more children view verbal insults on television, the more they may start viewing this behavior as normal and acceptable. In turn, this can then cause them to become tolerant of subsequent insults—they may become less likely to step in to stop witnessed verbal insults (i.e., the “outsider” bystander role), more likely to encourage the insults by laughing along (i.e., the “reinforcer” bystander role), and more likely actually deliver insults themselves (Anderson & Huesmann, 2003).

According to the information processing theory of vicarious learning, people store schemas (mental frameworks to organize ideas) and scripts (mental routines for familiar events) in their memory to help them navigate situations with greater ease (Huesmann, 2007). Scripts are encoded into memory while viewing another's behavior either in real life or on television (Huesmann, 1986). The likelihood of encoding a script for aggression is influenced by several factors, including the salience of cues (e.g. a known actress), the attractiveness of the perpetrator, and how acceptable the aggression is portrayed as being (e.g rewarded or accompanied by a laugh track—Huesmann, 1986; Potter, 1999). Subsequently, viewing televised aggression activates those stored aggression scripts

(Berkowitz, 1984; Huesmann, 1988). The more a script is rehearsed, either by viewing similar situations or utilizing the script, the more accessible it becomes in memory. In an experimental setting, viewing verbal aggression activated both specific and general aggression scripts (demonstrated by how viewers responded to various vignettes) and caused a measurable and significant increase in viewers' subsequent aggression (Coyne, Archer & Eslea, 2004).

Schemas and scripts develop over time, and once established, they become more resistant to change and can persist into adulthood (Huesmann, 1988). Because children (compared to adults) are still creating their mental representations of acceptable ways to act and guides to behavior, children's schemas are more susceptible to being influenced by viewing antisocial acts than adults' schemas are (Paik & Comstock, 1994).

Insidious Sitcoms: Contexts of Verbal Aggression in Television

Research investigating the effects of televised verbal aggression may have lagged behind that of physical aggression due, at least in part, to the portrayal of the former as funny and apparently harmless. For example, insults and name calling often occur in humorous contexts, are portrayed as justified, and occur between friends (Potter, 1999; Bushman & Huesmann, 2001). According to social learning research, however, an appealing context increases the likelihood that children will become desensitized to and imitate such behaviors (Wilson, 2002).

Verbal aggression is more likely to occur between acquaintances or friends than between a clear-cut "hero" and "villain" on television shows popular with adolescents (Coyne & Archer, 2004) and children (Glascock, 2013). These characters on tween

sitcoms typically are attractive and popular celebrities (Dee, 2007), increasing the probability that the viewer will like the perpetrator of the verbal insults. When children like the perpetrator, they report finding the aggression funnier and more acceptable, and being more likely to imitate it (Martins et al., 2014). Portraying frequent verbal aggression between friends also risks conveying the message that this behavior is a typical and acceptable part of child and teen life.

Content analyses report that verbal aggression, social aggression (including verbal insults), and verbal bullying on teen television are portrayed as having few consequences (Coyne & Archer, 2004; Martin & Wilson, 2012a; Walsh, 2014). Children's programming contains higher levels of "justified" verbal aggression than programming aimed at a general audience (Linder & Gentile, 2009), putting young viewers at risk of being desensitized to and imitating this way of interacting with others (Potter, 1999). Additionally, bystanders on tween sitcoms are rarely portrayed as "defenders" stepping in to stop instances of verbal bullying (Walsh, 2014), the very behavior that several high-profile interventions attempt to encourage (UDHHS, n.d.; Cartoon Network, 2014).

Besides being offered by attractive perpetrators and evincing few consequences, televised verbal insults typically are embedded in a humorous context. In children's television shows, positive rewards outnumber negative consequences, with the most common reward for verbal aggression being a canned laugh track (Glascock, 2013). *Insults* and *put downs* were the most common form of verbal aggression to be followed by a laugh track, especially in sitcoms (Glascock, 2013). Compared to physical aggression, social aggression (including verbal insults) on children's television is more likely to be followed by a laugh track (Martins & Wilson, 2012a). Verbal bullying on

tween television frequently occurs in a humorous context, more often than other types of bullying (Walsh, 2014). These humorous contexts camouflage and trivialize the aggression, increasing the chance for desensitization and imitation (Potter & Warren, 1998; Potter, 1999).

In light of the frequency of bullying behaviors portrayed on tween television and the contexts in which they are embedded, Walsh (2014) states:

Viewers who watch teen television are frequently exposed to some concerning messages about bullying: it is sometimes funny, it is fairly harmless, and it is not something in which a third party should intervene. In light of the potentially appalling outcomes of bullying, it is crucial that we gain an understanding of how such messages affect teens' attitudes toward and likelihood of performing bullying behavior.” (p. 25).

The current project responds to this charge and adds to the existing literature by examining some of these camouflaging features of televised verbal insults in an experimental setting.

Current Research

The following set of experiments investigates how various features of tween sitcoms on television impact participants' perceptions of verbal insults and subsequent tolerance of verbal aggression. By the age of five, children are able to clearly distinguish formal features of television that characterize (for example) documentaries and the nightly news from fictional comedies (Wright, Huston, Reitz & Piemyat, 1994). Therefore, Experiments 1 and 2 (with undergraduates) compare the effects of exposure to

insidious verbal insults from TV with many of the above-mentioned camouflaging features (laugh track, attractive characters and setting) to the effects of exposure to the same verbal insults portrayed in a “real” setting (a mock channel on the popular video streaming site, YouTube.com, where users can upload public videos). All video clips feature verbal insults between friends, the context in which verbal aggression is most often shown on tween television (Coyne & Archer, 2004; Glascock, 2013). Children’s and teens’ favorite shows for the past six years were all Disney and Nickelodeon sitcoms (Viacom International Inc., 2014); therefore, these programs were the source of the TV clips. Experiment 3 probes whether merely knowing that an insult was fictional or real affects undergraduates’ perceptions. Experiment 4 investigates the effect of laugh tracks on undergraduates’ perceptions and behavior.

In order to investigate patterns across development, 10- to 14-year-old children are included in Experiment 5. This age range was chosen because middle school students report more bullying than those in high school (Nansal, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Sijons-Morton & Schedit, 2001; NCES, 2013) Furthermore, emerging adolescence is a critical time for learning what is normal and accepted according to the peer group (Gentile & Sesma, 2003). I chose to focus on females due to the research on gender differences in verbal aggression, the preponderance of females as verbal aggressors on tween TV, and extensive evidence showing that children are more influenced by characters of the same sex on television.

CHAPTER II

EXPERIMENT ONE

Introduction

In Experiment 1, we compared female undergraduates' perceptions of verbal insults presented on television to the same insults presented on a (mock) YouTube.com channel and explored how viewing insults affected subsequent tolerance of verbal aggression. Although the actual verbal insults were identical on the TV and YouTube clips, there were many differences between the two formats: fictional characters versus real teenagers, attractive celebrities versus typical teenagers, glamorized televised settings versus an average bedroom, a laugh track after insults versus no laugh track, and the presence formal television features (multiple camera angles, lighting, etc.) versus the absence of such features. .

We hypothesized that participants would perceive the insults on television as funnier and more acceptable than those on the mock YouTube channel, and the insults on YouTube as meaner than the insults on television. We also predicted that, as a result, participants who viewed the verbal insults on television would be more tolerant of subsequent verbal aggression (i.e. wait longer before saying they would intervene in a situation of verbal aggression).

Method

Participants

Participants were 96 female, primarily Caucasian undergraduate students ($M = 19$ years, 7 months, $SD = 12.8$ months) enrolled in psychology classes at a southeastern university. Random assignment was performed at the class level; one class ($N = 56$) viewed the television clips and the other ($N = 40$) viewed the YouTube clips.

Stimuli

The 12 television clips shown to participants came from popular Disney and Nickelodeon channel tween sitcoms, primarily *iCarly* and *The Suite Life of Zack and Cody*. Each clip featured one insult spoken by a female character to another teen; the insult was always followed by the original canned laugh track. The clips ranged in length from 3 to 13 seconds (averaging 7.8 seconds; see Appendix A for transcripts of the clips). The YouTube versions featured two female teenagers (sometimes with an additional teen, to match the TV version) acting out the same 12 insults. The contextual scripts and situations were matched as closely to the TV versions as possible while remaining believable. The YouTube clips ranged in length from 2 to 11 seconds (averaging 6.5 seconds). It is common practice for children and teens to have their own channels on YouTube.com (a popular video streaming site) where they upload videos of themselves and friends, often talking about seemingly trivial matters both with each other and to the webcam (i.e. the “audience”). Therefore, it is a convenient deception method to portray “real” interactions.

The tolerance outcome clip “sent in by James” (2 minutes and 16 seconds in length) featured an escalating amount of verbal aggression between two boys (see Appendix B for a transcript). This video was actually filmed by teen confederates and captures verbal aggression between two friends, captured on film by “James”. The clip begins with four friends hanging out, although the boy who is filming with his camera phone is never seen. At the start of the clip the friends are playing a game (Never Have I Ever). After one friend (a girl) leaves the room, the aggressor (a boy) begins insulting his male friend. It is clear on the video that James puts the camera down to record inconspicuously (e.g. you see views of the ground intermixed with their faces). To increase believability, a mock email address was created, and a screen shot was taken of “James’ email” sent from the mock email address to our lab’s email with the video actually attached (see Appendix C).

Procedure

The experiment was conducted during the first 15 minutes of class, and all participants signed informed consent forms approved by the Institutional Review Board. Participants viewed the 12 short video clips of verbal insults from television shows or the same insults in the realistic YouTube video format. Participants in the TV condition were told the clips came from popular Disney and Nickelodeon TV shows. Participants in the YouTube condition were told the clips of teens hanging out came from videos posted on the teens’ YouTube channels (two different mocked-up channels, actually featuring two sets of teen actor confederates). For each clip, participants rated how *mean*, how *funny*, and how *acceptable* they thought it was, on a 5-point Likert scale: 1= not at all, 2 =

slightly, 3 = moderately, 4 = very, 5 = extremely. Next, the female researcher set up the necessary deception for the longer tolerance outcome video clip. Participants were told: “*As part of our lab’s work, we travel around the country to various schools discussing bullying. We encourage kids to call or email us with any questions they may have. We’re going to show you one email we received from a boy named James.*” Participants were then shown an email from James with a video as an attachment. Then, the researcher told the participants to pretend that they were friends with the people on the video and that they were there in real life while the interaction was occurring. Participants were asked to write down the time in minutes and seconds (from a stopwatch displayed on the screen) that they would step in, if at all.

Results

Independent sample *t* tests were used to determine if group differences existed between the responses of participants who viewed the insults on TV and those who viewed the same insults on YouTube (see Table 1 for mean ratings). Participants rated the two kinds of video clips as equally *mean*, $t(59.3) = 0.81$, $p = .42$. Compared to the YouTube clips, the TV clips were rated as significantly *funnier*, $t(89.1) = 13.3$, $p < .001$, $d = 2.82$, and more *acceptable*, $t(94) = 5.64$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.16$. Finally, participants waited significantly longer to step in during the tolerance video after watching the televised verbal insults compared to the verbal insults on the YouTube clips, $t(94) = 2.34$, $p = .021$, $d = 0.48$.

Figure 1: Perceptions of Insults from Experiment 1

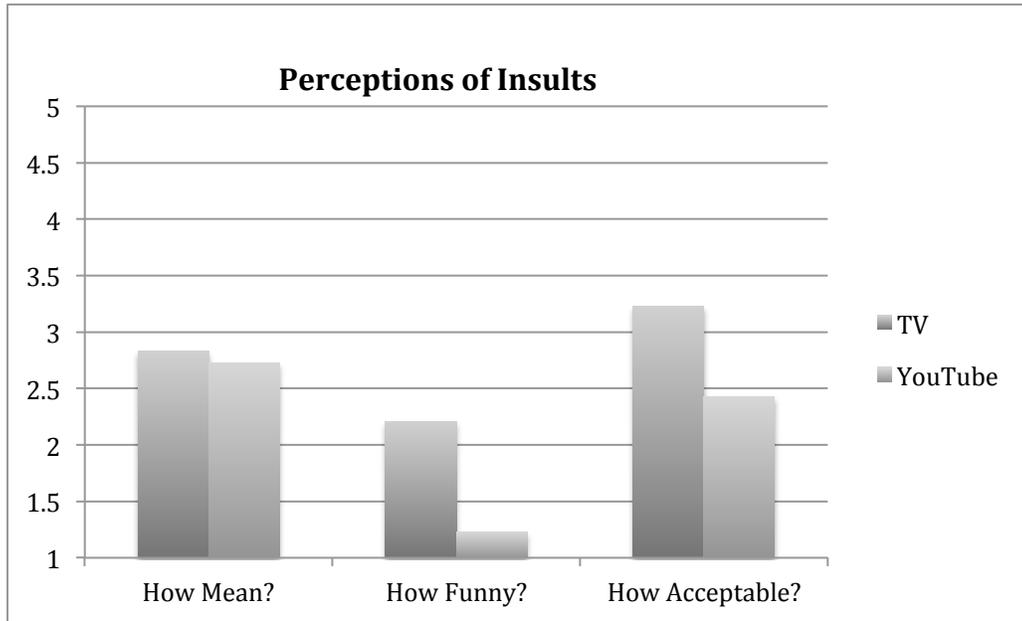


Figure 2: Subsequent Tolerance from Experiment 1

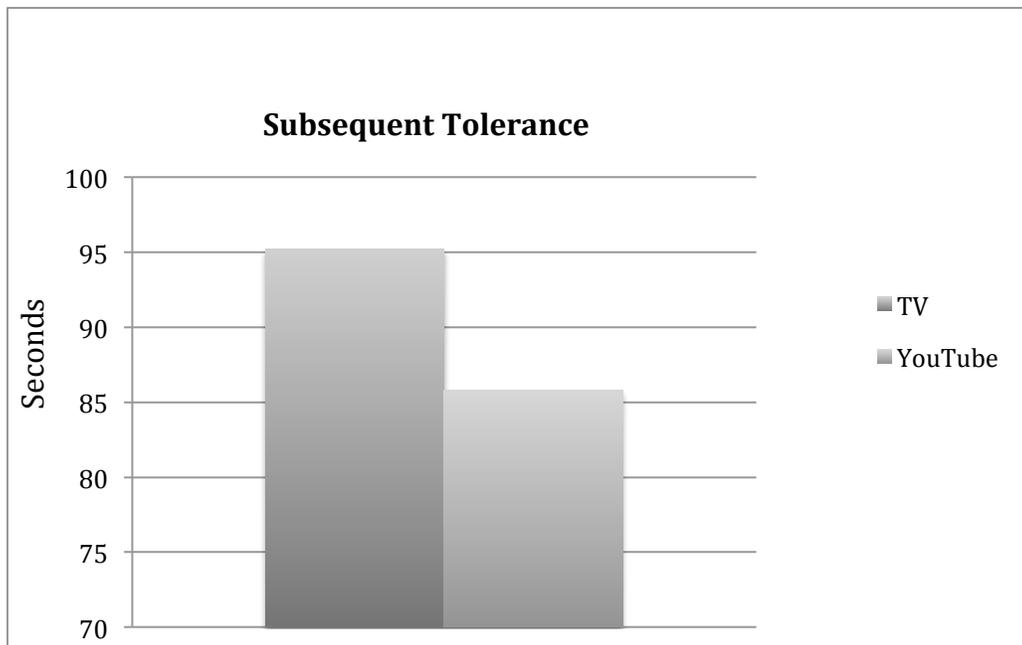


Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations (in parentheses) from Experiment 1

	TV	YouTube
How Mean?	2.83 (0.44)	2.73 (0.72)
How Funny?	2.21 (0.46)	1.23 (0.26)
How Acceptable?	3.23 (0.62)	2.43 (0.78)
How Tolerant?	95.2 (19.6)	85.8 (18.8)
Age	19 years, 3 months (11.4 months)	20 years, 2 months (11.8 months)

The participants in the condition that watched the TV clips were significantly younger ($M = 19$ years, 3 months, $SD = 11.4$ months) than those who watched the YouTube clips ($M = 20$ years, 2 months, $SD = 11.8$ months); $t(93) = 4.71, p < .001$. After adding age as a covariate in a series of ANCOVAs, the same pattern of results emerged for each of the measures: *mean*— $F(1,92) = 0.12, p = .732, \eta^2_{\text{partial}} < .001$; *funny*— $F(1,92) = 107.2, p < .001, \eta^2_{\text{partial}} = .538$; *acceptable*— $F(1,92) = 29.4, p < .001, \eta^2_{\text{partial}} = .242$; and *tolerance*— $F(1,92) = 5.57, p = .02, \eta^2_{\text{partial}} = .057$.

We also analyzed the tolerance data categorically by identifying the first personal insult in the conversation and comparing how many participants in each condition stepped in before or directly following the first personal insult (i.e. less tolerant of the escalating verbal aggression— 0 to 88 seconds) versus waiting longer (i.e. more tolerant of the aggression— 89 to 136 seconds). A chi-square test of association revealed a higher

percentage of participants in the TV condition were “more tolerant” of the verbal attack than in the YouTube condition, $\chi^2(1) = 4.48, p = .034$.

Discussion

Participants perceived the insults in the TV and YouTube clips as equally *mean*. Because we did not predict this result, replication is important (see Experiment 2). The fact that the gravity of the insults came across equally in both formats is important, though, in justifying the comparison of participants’ perceptions across video formats. The insults on the TV clips were rated as significantly *funnier* and more *acceptable* than the same words on the YouTube clips. Finally, watching the insults in this more acceptable and funnier sitcom format led to significantly increased tolerance of escalating verbal aggression, demonstrated in both the number of seconds it took participants to say they would step in and in the categorical analysis of more vs. less tolerant reactions to the aggression.

CHAPTER III

EXPERIMENT TWO

Introduction

Experiment 2 replicated Experiment 1 with new groups of participants to confirm the unexpected results regarding how *mean* participants perceived the verbal insults to be across formats. Specifically, we now hypothesized that the TV and YouTube insults would be rated as equally mean. All other hypotheses remained unchanged. A different outcome tolerance clip was used to see if the pattern of results would generalize across stimuli.

Method

Participants

Participants were 86 ($N_{TV} = 43$, $N_{YouTube} = 43$) female, primarily Caucasian undergraduate students (M age = 19 years, 10 months, $SD = 15.1$ months) enrolled in psychology classes at a southeastern university.

Stimuli

The same 12 TV or YouTube clips from Experiment 1 were shown to participants in each of the two classes. The new 3 minutes and 32 second tolerance video supposedly had been filmed by a female teen (never seen on the video), and it featured her two female friends playing the mobile app game “Heads Up”. When the aggressor began

insulting the other friend, the girl filming put her phone behind the couch so her friends would not notice being filmed (see Appendix D for a transcript). To increase believability, the email from “Charlotte” was sent from a mock address with the video attached to the email (see Appendix E).

Procedure

The procedures were identical to those used in Experiment 1, except a different tolerance outcome video was used. Again, participants were shown an email to set up the new tolerance video, this time from a girl, Charlotte, who “sent in the video”.

Results

In independent sample t tests, participants again rated the TV clips and YouTube clips as equally *mean*, $t(84) = -0.39$, $p = .696$ (see Table 2 for mean ratings). Replicating the results of Experiment 1, the TV clips were rated as significantly *funnier* than the YouTube clips; $t(84) = 5.96$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.30$, and as significantly more *acceptable*, $t(84) = 6.41$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.40$. Participants waited longer to step in during the tolerance video after watching the insults on the TV clips compared to the YouTube clips, but this difference as measured in seconds was not significant, $t(84) = 1.33$, $p = .187$, $d = 0.14$.

There was a marginal difference in age between the groups (TV: $M = 20$ years, 2 months; YouTube: $M = 19$ years, 7 months, $SD = 18.5$ months; $t(79) = 1.96$, $p = .053$). However, when age was added as a covariate in a series of ANCOVAs, the same results emerged: *mean*— $F(1,78) = 0.233$, $p = .631$, $\eta^2_{\text{partial}} < .003$; *funny*— $F(1,78) = 34.1$, $p <$

.001, $\eta^2_{\text{partial}} = .304$; *acceptable*— $F(1,78) = 47.5, p < .001, \eta^2_{\text{partial}} = .379$; *tolerance*— $F(1,78) = 2.06, p = .155, \eta^2_{\text{partial}} = .026$.

As in Experiment 1, we also analyzed the tolerance data categorically by identifying the first personal insult in the conversation and comparing how many participants in each condition stepped in before or directly following the first personal insult (i.e. less tolerant of the escalating verbal aggression— 0 to 61 seconds) versus waiting longer (i.e. more tolerant of the aggression— 62 to 212 seconds). A chi-square test of association revealed a higher percentage of participants in the TV condition were “more tolerant” of the verbal attack than in the YouTube condition, $\chi^2(1) = 6.14, p = .013$.

Table 2: Means and Standard Deviations (in parentheses) from Experiment 2

	TV	YouTube
How Mean?	2.81 (0.56)	2.86 (0.60)
How Funny?	2.05 (0.52)	1.41 (0.47)
How Acceptable?	3.14 (0.65)	2.17 (0.74)
How Tolerant?	79.6 (28.6)	72.7 (18.6)
Age	20 years, 2 months (10.2 months)	19 years, 7 months (18.5 months)

Discussion

Participants once again perceived the insults in both the TV and YouTube clips as equally *mean*, confirming the unexpected results in Experiment 1. The insults on the TV clips were again rated as significantly *funnier* and more *acceptable* than on the YouTube clips. Finally, participants who watched the televised insults waited longer (although not significantly longer, in seconds) to say they would intervene during a verbal attack than those who watched the insults on YouTube. When participants were categorized as more or less tolerant based on the timing of the first insult, however, there was a significant association between having watched the insults on the TV sitcom and greater tolerance for the escalating verbal aggression. Thus, the predicted pattern of results was replicated with two new classes of undergraduates. The finding that female undergraduates were more tolerant of escalating verbal aggression after watching insults from tween sitcoms compared to watching ‘real’ insults on YouTube extended not only to a new sample of participants but also to a different outcome video.

CHAPTER IV

EXPERIMENT THREE

Introduction

To further investigate the various features underlying the differences in students' perceptions between TV and YouTube clips, in Experiment 3, we explored whether or not simply knowing that verbal insults came from a fictional or real context (involving fictional characters or real kids) affected undergraduates' perceptions of how *mean*, how *funny* and how *acceptable* the insults were. To do so, we had participants read transcripts of the same verbal insults. They were simply told that the words either came from TV shows or from teenagers' YouTube channels.

Method

Participants

Participants were 78 ($N_{TV} = 38$, $N_{YouTube} = 40$) female, primarily Caucasian undergraduate students ($M = 19$ years, 8 months, $SD = 11.1$ months) enrolled in psychology classes at a southeastern university.

Stimuli

The transcripts of the 12 verbal insults came directly from the 12 clips used in Experiments 1 and 2 (see Appendix A). All character names were replaced with "girl" and "boy" labels. Participants read and rated the transcripts on a laptop.

Procedure

This experiment was conducted during individual sessions in a laboratory, and participants signed a consent form approved by the Institutional Review Board. In the TV condition, participants were told: “*Now you’ll read various short dialogues between friends that we found on popular television shows.*” In the YouTube condition, participants were told: “*Now you’ll read various short dialogues between friends that we found on popular YouTube shows, where kids record themselves via webcam while hanging out, sometimes talking to the camera.*” Following each of the 12 transcripts, participants then rated how *mean*, how *funny*, and how *acceptable* they perceived the dialogue to be on the same 5-point Likert scale used in Experiments 1 and 2. Because this experiment focused solely on a comparison of students’ perceptions about the video clips, participants did not watch a tolerance outcome clip.

Results

Independent sample *t* tests were used to determine if condition differences in perceptions existed between the participants who read transcripts said to be from TV and those who read the same transcripts said to be from YouTube. Once again, there was no condition difference between how *mean* the “TV” and “YouTube” transcripts (i.e. the identical transcripts) were rated as being, $t(76) = 0.23, p = .819$ (see Table 3 for means). This time, there also was no difference between how *funny* the “TV” and “YouTube” transcripts were rated as being, $t(76) = .631, p = .530$, nor between how *acceptable* the transcripts were rated as being, $t(76) = .206, p = .837$. There were no significant age differences between the TV transcript group ($M = 19$ years, 9 months, $SD = 12.6$ months)

and YouTube transcript group ($M = 19$ years, 7 months, $SD = 9.6$ months; $t(76) = 0.82$, $p = .416$).

Table 3: Means and Standard Deviations (in parentheses) from Experiment 3

	TV	YouTube
How Mean?	3.10 (0.73)	3.06 (0.58)
How Funny?	2.20 (0.62)	2.29 (0.59)
How Acceptable?	2.80 (0.65)	2.83 (0.75)
Age	19 years, 9 months (12.6 months)	19 years, 7 months (9.6 months)

Discussion

There were no significant differences between the perceptions of how *mean*, *funny*, and *acceptable* participants rated the transcripts as being when told they came from TV shows (featuring fictional characters) or from YouTube channel videos (featuring real teenagers). These results suggest that rather than the “fictional versus real” dichotomy, it is other features of tween sitcoms that affected participants’ perceptions of insults in Experiments 1 and 2. Possible features include the laugh track, formal features of television (e.g. dramatic lighting and camera angles), attractive characters, and/or glamorous settings,

CHAPTER V

EXPERIMENT FOUR

Introduction

Experiment 4 further investigates the features involved in participants' different perceptions of the TV and YouTube clips, and their subsequent influence on participants' tolerance of verbal aggression. Specifically, in Experiment 4 we examined the effect of the canned laugh track by removing it from the television clips, showing these clips to a new group of undergraduates, and comparing their response to the data from the TV and YouTube conditions from Experiment 1. Following the consistent findings from the previous experiments that the insults are perceived as equally mean regardless of context, we hypothesized that TV clips without the laugh track would be rated as being just as *mean* as the insults from the unaltered TV clips and the YouTube clips. We predicted that insults from the no- laugh-track TV clips would be rated as less *funny* and less *acceptable* than the TV clips with the laugh track, but *funnier* and *more acceptable* than the insults on the YouTube clips (i.e., the ratings would fall in between those from the other conditions). Furthermore, we hypothesized that participants who viewed the TV clips without a laugh track would be less tolerant of subsequent verbal aggression compared to those who viewed the TV clips with the laugh track, but more tolerant than those who viewed the YouTube clips.

Method

Participants

Participants were an additional 144 female, primarily Caucasian undergraduate students ($M = 19$ years, 1 months, $SD = 10.1$ months) enrolled in a psychology class at a southeastern university. All 144 participants were in the same class and placed in the new *TV No Laugh Track* condition. Because this class was nearly three times larger than the other two classes ($N_{TV} = 56$, $N_{YouTube} = 40$), following the main analyses, we took random samples of 48 (the average between the TV and YouTube conditions) and re-ran all analyses. Importantly, all results remained the same with the various random samples, indicating that significant results were not due to extra power from increased participants in the added condition.

Stimuli

The 12 video clips were the same TV clips shown in Experiments 1, 2 and 3 (see Appendix A) but with the laugh track removed. Using iMovie, filler and white noise sounds were taken from other areas of the clips and inserted in place of the laugh track, rendering the removal of the laugh track unnoticeable.

Because we used comparison data from Experiment 1, we also used the same tolerance clip (see Appendix B for the transcript).

Procedure

The procedure was identical to that used in Experiment 1.

Results

A series of one-way Analyses of Variances (ANOVAs) were run between the data from Experiment 1 (*TV* and *YouTube* conditions) and from the added *TV No Laugh Track* condition. There was no significant group difference in how *mean* the TV, TV No Laugh Track, and YouTube clips were rated as being; $F(2,237) = 0.40, p = .671$ (see Table 4 for mean ratings).

There was a significant group difference between how *funny* the three kinds of clips were rated as being; $F(2,237) = 46.7, p < .001$. We followed up on this difference using a series of independent-sample *t* tests. In Experiment 1, the TV clips were rated as being significantly funnier than the YouTube clips. The TV clips with and without a laugh track were rated as being equally funny, $t(135.6) = 1.21, p = .227, d = 0.21$. Finally, the TV No Laugh Track clips were rated as being significantly funnier than the YouTube clips, $t(158.3) = 13.3, p < .001, d = 2.12$.

There was also a significant group difference between how *acceptable* the clips were rated as being; $F(2,237) = 16.4, p < .001$. In Experiment 1, the TV clips were rated as significantly more acceptable than the YouTube clips. Here, the TV clips were rated as significantly more acceptable than the TV No Laugh Track clips, $t(198) = 4.04, p < .001, d = 0.57$, which in turn were rated as significantly more acceptable than the YouTube clips, $t(182) = 2.97, p = .003, d = 0.44$.

While viewing the tolerance clip, there was a significant group difference in how *tolerant* participants were (the number of second they waited to “step in”) after viewing the video clips, $F(2,237) = 4.12, p = .017$. In Experiment 1, participants waited significantly longer to step in after watching TV compared to YouTube. This was also

significantly longer compared to the number of seconds participants waited after watching the TV No Laugh Track clips; $t(198) = 2.69, p = .008, d = 0.38$. Finally, participants in the TV No Laugh Track and YouTube conditions waited the same amount of time before intervening, $t(182) = .195, p = 0.845$.

The mean age of participants in the TV No Laugh Track condition ($M = 19$ years, 1 month, $SD = 10.1$ months) was equivalent to that of the original TV condition, but not the YouTube condition ($M = 20$ years, 2 months), $SD = 11.8$ months; $t(182) = 6.87, p < .001$. Therefore, an Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was run with age as a covariate for results between the YouTube and TV No Laugh Track conditions. After adjusting for age, the same results emerged: *mean*— $F(1) = 0.21, p = .885, \eta^2_{\text{partial}} < .001$; *funny*— $F(1) = 54.9, p < .001, \eta^2_{\text{partial}} = .233$; *acceptable*— $F(1) = 4.80, p = .03, \eta^2_{\text{partial}} = .026$; and *tolerance*— $F(1) = 0.006, p = .937, \eta^2_{\text{partial}} < .001$.

When the data were analyzed categorically, comparing how many participants in each condition stepped in before or directly following the first personal insult versus waiting longer, a chi-square test of association revealed those who had watched the TV clips had the highest percentage of participants in the “more tolerant” category, followed by those who watched TV No Laugh Track, and finally YouTube, $\chi^2(2) = 12.4, p = .002$.

Figure 3: Perceptions of Insults from Experiment 4

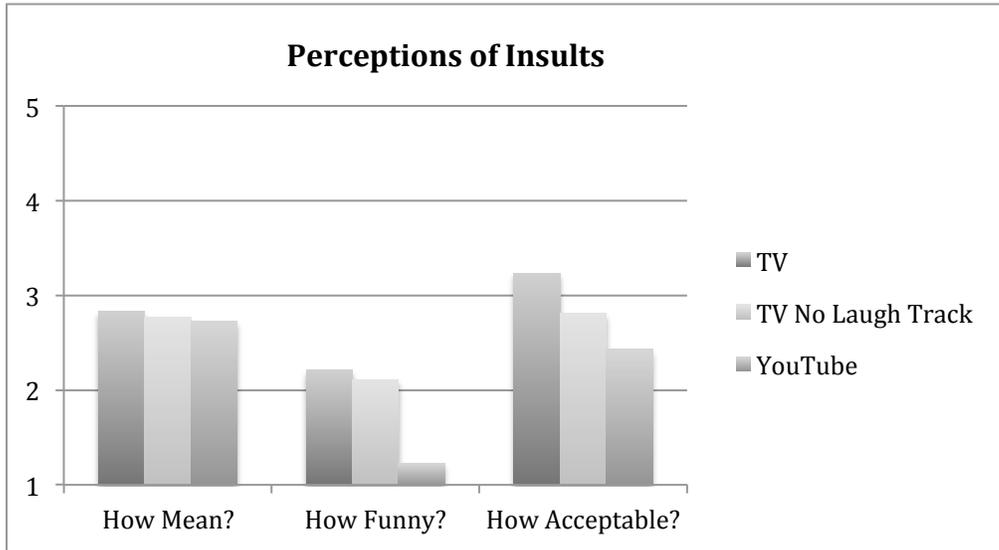


Figure 4: Subsequent Tolerance from Experiment 4

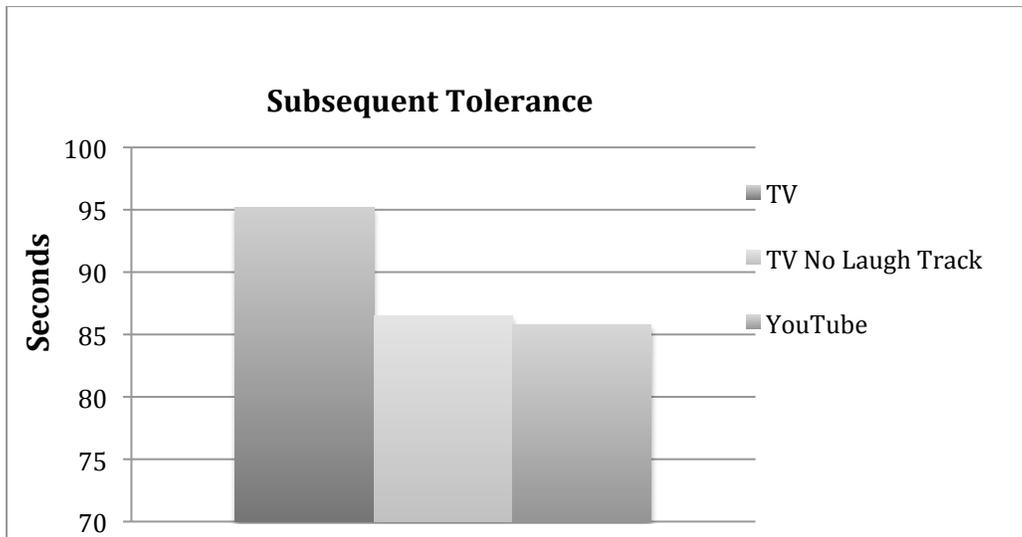


Table 4: Means and Standard Deviations (in parentheses) from Experiment 4

	TV	TV No Laugh Track	YouTube
How Mean?	2.83 (0.44)	2.78 (0.58)	2.73 (0.72)
How Funny?	2.21 (0.46)	2.11 (0.63)	1.23 (0.26)
How Acceptable?	3.23 (0.62)	2.81 (0.69)	2.43 (0.78)
How Tolerant?	95.2 (19.6)	86.5 (20.7)	85.8 (18.8)
Age	19 years, 3 months (11.4 months)	19 years, 1 months (10.1 months)	20 years, 2 months (11.8 months)

Discussion

As hypothesized, the TV clips of verbal aggression without a laugh track were rated as being just as mean as the TV and YouTube clips from Experiment 1. This result further demonstrates that the context of an insult did not affect its perceived “meanness”.

The removal of the laugh track did not decrease how funny undergraduates perceived the TV clips as being. Both kinds of TV clips were rated significantly funnier than the YouTube clips. A potential explanation of this pattern involves Potter and Warren’s (1998) description of *unitized schemas*. In low-involvement situations, such as viewing sitcoms, adults rely heavily on a ‘sitcom script’, developed over years of viewing. This reliance decreases the number of discrepancies we notice between what is in our script and what is actually occurring. Because the presence of a laugh track is likely to be in most people’s ‘sitcom script’, and undergraduates have a fairly concrete

script for this genre of television by their age, they simply may not have noticed the removal of the laugh track, and watched as if one was present.

Although on a conscious level the undergraduates perceived the TV clips without a laugh track as being just as funny as the unaltered TV clips, they evaluated them as being *less acceptable* when the laugh track was removed. The YouTube clips were viewed as even less acceptable. This “stair step” pattern of results, with no-laugh-track TV clips falling right in the middle, suggests that there are other factors inherent in sitcoms (in addition to the laugh track) causing insults in this context to be perceived as more acceptable than “real” insults directed from one teen to another on YouTube.

Finally, undergraduates who viewed the TV clips with a laugh track were significantly more tolerant of subsequent verbal aggression (waiting 10 seconds longer to say they would intervene) compared to those who viewed the TV clips without the laugh track or the YouTube clips. Undergraduates in the TV No Laugh Track and YouTube conditions were equally tolerant. This result demonstrates that the laugh track plays an important role in both the acceptability of and tolerance for televised verbal aggression.

CHAPTER VI

EXPERIMENT FIVE

Introduction

Experiment 5 extended the examination of the effects of verbal aggression on TV to children 10- to 14-years-old— the age range when the prevalence of verbal aggression is highest (Nansal et al., 2001; NCES, 2013), as well as the “tween” age these shows target (Levin, 2007). All three kinds of video exposure to verbal aggression (television with and without a laugh track and YouTube) were investigated with this younger age group.

Method

Participants

Participants were 42 female, primarily Caucasian children ($M = 12$ years, 7 months; $SD = 15.2$ months) with 14 participants in each of the three conditions. There were no significant age differences between the three conditions, $F(2,39) = 0.87, p = .427$ (see Table 5 for means). Participants were recruited via phone calls to parents using Tennessee state birth records, and the children received a small prize for participating.

Stimuli

The four baseline transcripts of verbal aggression came from the popular Disney channel tween sitcom *The Suite Life on Deck*, but character names were excluded (see

Appendix F). All 12 stimulus television clips came from the same TV program (*The Suite Life on Deck*) and featured two female characters, London (the aggressor) and Bailey (the recipient of the insults). The television clips ranged in length from 3 to 23 seconds (averaging 10.7 seconds; see Appendix G for transcripts). For the TV No Laugh Track condition, the laugh tracks were removed as in Experiment 4. The YouTube versions featured real teenagers, Priscilla (portraying London) and Steffi (portraying Bailey), acting out the same insults featured in each of the 12 TV clips. The contextual scripts and situations were matched as closely as possible while maintaining believability. Additionally, the teenagers on the YouTube clips matched the TV actresses in age, gender and ethnicity. The YouTube clips ranged in length from 2 to 22 seconds (averaging 10.3 seconds). To make the clips appear even more realistic, we uploaded them YouTube.com took and video screen shots from the site (see Appendix H). There were no bystanders present in any of the TV or YouTube clips.

The tolerance outcome clip (3 minutes and 44 seconds in length) featured an escalating amount of verbal aggression between two girls (see Appendix I for a transcript). Instead of being filmed surreptitiously by a third person, the video was filmed on the girls' webcam as they rehearsed for a dance project.

Procedure

Children participated individually in a laboratory. Parents signed a consent form, and children signed an assent form. Both were approved by the Institutional Review Board. First, a measure of how participants perceived verbal insults was obtained to ensure that all three groups were equivalent in their baseline ratings. They read four

transcripts of verbal insults and rated how *mean*, *funny*, and *acceptable* they thought each conversation was, without being told any other details (e.g. whether it was real or fictional). Next, participants viewed an introduction clip of either the TV show or mock YouTube channel (depending on condition) to ensure that they understood what a YouTube channel was. Aside from viewing different clips and outcome video, the remaining procedure was identical to that used in Experiments 1, 2 and 4, however no mock email accompanied the tolerance video.

Results

Using a series of one-way Analyses of Variances (ANOVAs), we compared data from children in the three conditions: TV, TV No Laugh Track, and YouTube. There were no group differences in how *mean* ($F(2,39) = 0.88, p = .425$); how *funny* ($F(2,39) = 1.02, p = .370$); or how *acceptable* ($F(2,39) = 0.20, p = .817$) the children rated the baseline transcripts as being (see Table 5 for all Experiment 5 means).

There was no significant difference in how *mean* the three kinds of stimulus clips were rated as being; $F(2,39) = 1.50, p = .236$. In contrast, there was a significant between-group difference in how *funny* the children rated the clips as being, $F(2,39) = 4.75, p = .014$. A series of independent-sample *t* tests revealed that the TV clips were rated as significantly funnier than the YouTube clips, $t(26) = 2.74, p = .011, d = 1.07$, and the TV No Laugh Track clips, $t(26) = 2.11, p = .045, d = 0.83$. Finally, the TV No Laugh Track and YouTube clips were rated as being equally funny, $t(26) = 0.67, p = .509$.

There was a marginally significant group difference between how *acceptable* the 3 kinds of video clips were rated as being; $F(2,39) = 2.93, p = .065$. According to

independent-sample t tests, the TV clips were rated as marginally more acceptable than the YouTube clips, $t(26) = 2.04, p = .052, d = 0.80$, and the TV No Laugh Track clips, $t(26) = 1.95, p = .062, d = 0.76$. Finally, the TV No Laugh Track and YouTube clips were rated as equally acceptable, $t(26) = .110, p = .913$.

After viewing the TV, TV No laugh track, or YouTube clips, children demonstrated a significant group difference in how *tolerant* they were (number of seconds they waited to “step in”) while viewing the tolerance outcome clip, $F(2,39) = 3.26, p = .049$. In a series of follow-up independent-sample t tests, there was a significant difference in tolerance of verbal aggression between children in the TV and YouTube conditions, $t(26) = 2.59, p = .015, d = 1.02, d = 1.02$. Although children in the TV condition waited longer to step in than those in the TV No Laugh Track condition, the difference was not statistically significant, $t(26) = 0.84, p = .411, d = 0.33$. Children also waited longer to step in after viewing the TV No Laugh Track clips compared to the YouTube clips, but again, not significantly so, $t(26) = 1.87, p = .073, d = 0.73$.

As in the previous experiments, we also conducted a categorical analysis of the tolerance data to see who stepped in before or directly following the first personal insult (i.e. less tolerant—0 to 48 seconds) versus waiting longer (i.e. more tolerant—49 to 224 seconds, see Appendix I). A chi-square test of association revealed that those who had watched the sitcom TV clips had the highest percentage of participants categorized as “more tolerant”, followed by TV No Laugh Track, and finally YouTube, $\chi^2(2) = 6.13, p = .047$.

Figure 5: Perceptions of Insults from Experiment 5

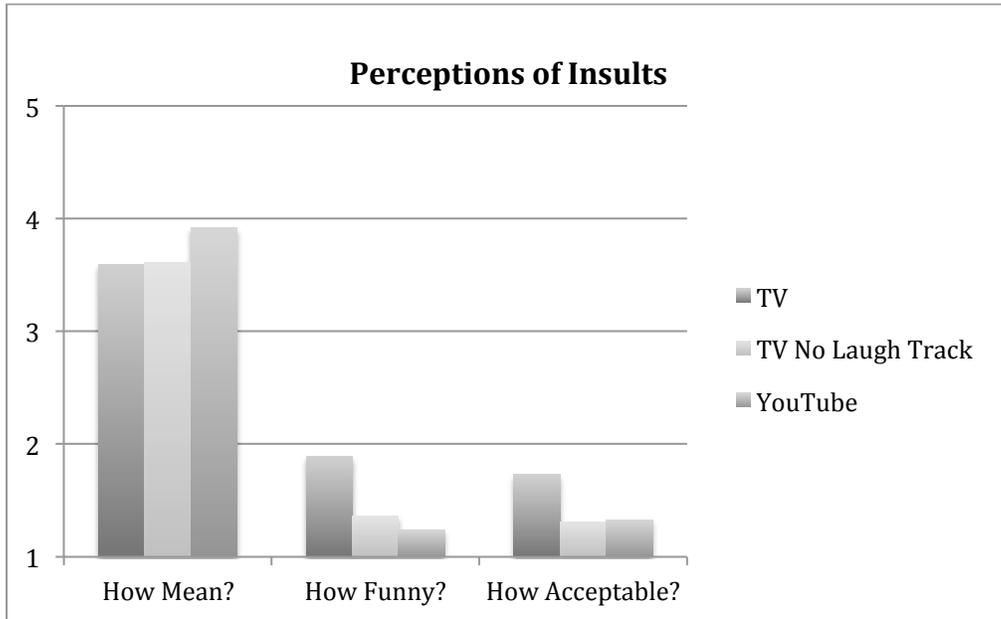


Figure 6: Subsequent Tolerance from Experiment 5

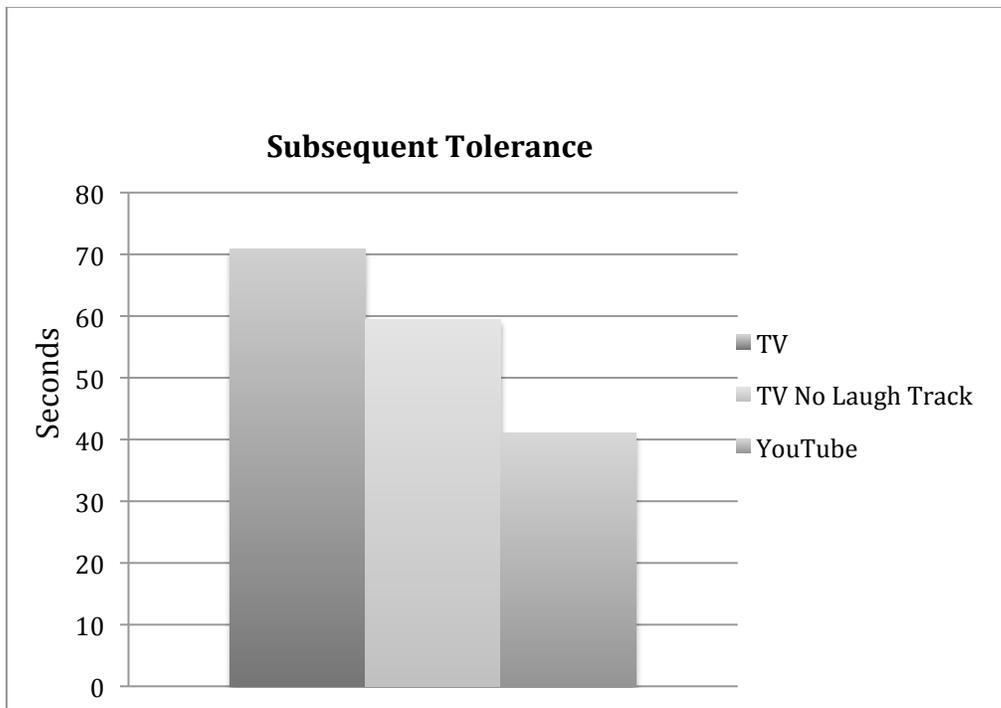


Table 5: Means and Standard Deviations (in parentheses) from Experiment 5

	TV	TV No Laugh Track	YouTube
Baseline:	3.94	3.88	3.64
How Mean?	(0.56)	(0.58)	(0.74)
Baseline:	1.43	1.25	1.29
How Funny?	(0.41)	(0.34)	(0.29)
Baseline:	1.41	1.30	1.41
How Acceptable?	(0.42)	(0.53)	(0.53)
How Mean?	3.59	3.61	3.92
	(0.54)	(0.65)	(0.50)
How Funny?	1.89	1.36	1.24
	(0.78)	(0.52)	(0.42)
How Acceptable?	1.73	1.31	1.33
	(0.61)	(0.50)	(0.38)
How Tolerant?	70.9	59.4	41.0
	(39.7)	(32.7)	(17.0)
Age	12 years, 11 months (11.5 months)	12 years, 4 months (18.3 months)	12 years, 6 months (15.2 months)

Discussion

All three groups rated the insults on the four baseline transcripts the same, indicating that the groups were equally sensitive to insults before watching verbal aggression on the different kinds of video clips. As predicted, children in all conditions rated the video clips as being equally mean. The TV clips with laugh tracks were rated as funnier and more acceptable than both the TV clips without the laugh tracks and the YouTube clips, which were rated as equally funny and acceptable. The fact that children did rate the TV clips as significantly funnier when they contained a laugh track fits with

Potter and Warren's (1998) unitized schema explanation. The idea is that children do not yet have a strong "sitcom schema". Children and young adolescents are still building their scripts, so they *do* notice the discrepancy when the laugh track is removed.

Finally, children who watched the insults on televised clips with the laugh track were significantly more tolerant of subsequent verbal aggression (on average, they waited 30 seconds longer before saying they would intervene) than those who watched the YouTube clips. The responses of children who watched the TV clips without the laugh track fell intermediate (they waited 18 seconds longer than children who watched the YouTube clips and intervened 12 seconds sooner than those who had watched the unaltered TV clips), but were not significantly different from either condition. The lack of significance could be due to sample size, as the groups of children were much smaller than the groups of undergraduates in Experiments 1 to 4.

CHAPTER VII

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The results of the current experiments provide insight into various features of tween sitcoms that affect *perceptions* of verbal insults and *tolerance* of subsequent aggression. Across a series of five experiments, we manipulated the context in which verbal insults were portrayed: on television with a built-in canned laugh track, on television with the laugh track removed, or in a “real” context (i.e. the YouTube condition). We also tracked patterns of responses across development with children (10- to 14-years-old) and undergraduate students.

Context did not affect how *mean* participants perceived the insults. This indicates that the insults in the YouTube clips were delivered in the same manner as in the TV clips, which supports our comparison of participants’ responses to the different video clips formats.

Context influenced participants’ ratings of how *funny* the videos were. Both children and undergraduates rated the insults on the television clips with the laugh track as funnier than those on YouTube. In Experiments 4 and 5, however, the removal of the laugh track affected children differently than adults. Undergraduates’ ratings were not affected by the removal of the laugh track—they rated the two versions of TV clips as equally funny. Children, on the other hand, were affected on a conscious level by the laugh track’s removal, rating the TV clips with the laugh track as funnier than the no-laugh-track TV clips. Schema theory provides a compelling explanation for this age

difference. After watching numerous situation comedies, adults develop a “unitized schema” for what typically happens in this genre of television (Potter & Warren, 1998). As is typical with other concepts (e.g., when using gender schemas), having a unitized schema means the individual may not notice, or may mis-remember, information that does not match his or her schema. Watching a sitcom is a low-involvement situation—one in which people are relaxed and typically not consciously analyzing every aspect. In such a situation, people utilize their script for “what happens in a sitcom” in an “all or nothing” fashion to lessen the cognitive load. When doing so, adults commonly fail to notice discrepancies between the “sitcom schema” and the current features and content of the sitcom they are watching. In contrast, children’s scripts for what happens in a sitcom are still developing and therefore require greater cognitive involvement and awareness. In the research reported here, undergraduates appeared to rely on their unitized script for sitcoms (including the presence of a laugh track) and rated tween sitcom clips with and without a laugh track as equally funny. It seemed that the undergraduates did not notice the absence of the laugh track, as if they “filled it in” where it was removed. The children, still actively constructing their unitized schemas of sitcoms, were more affected by the absence of the laugh track, rating the sitcoms as less funny.

Although undergraduates perceived the clips with and without a laugh track as equally funny, the presence of the laugh track still affected them. They rated the insults with the laugh track as more acceptable, followed by the insults on TV without a laugh track, and found the insults on the YouTube clips the least acceptable. Like undergraduates, children rated the television insults with laugh tracks as the most acceptable. They rated both the televised insults without a laugh track and the insults on

YouTube as (equally) less acceptable. Notably, children's ratings of "how funny" and "how acceptable" they perceived the clips followed an identical pattern.

Finally, after watching the televised insults with the laugh track, both children and undergraduates were significantly more tolerant (i.e. waited longer to say they would intervene) during the subsequent video of escalating verbal aggression, compared to children and undergraduates who viewed the supposedly real YouTube insults. For undergraduates, there was no difference in subsequent tolerance between the groups who watched TV with no laugh track or YouTube; undergrads intervened sooner in both these cases than after watching the typical (with laugh track) tween-sitcom humor. For children, the removal of the laugh track resulted in quicker intervention during an escalating verbal aggression outcome video, and those who watched supposedly real insults on YouTube intervened even more quickly, although the differences between the laugh track removal and the other two conditions (in number of seconds) were not significantly different (perhaps because of small sample sizes).

Although the results demonstrate that the laugh track serves an important role in how both children and undergraduates perceive insults and their tolerance for subsequent verbal aggression, differences were found between the two video forms without laugh tracks (TV clips minus the laugh track and YouTube clips of "real" teens). This suggests that other features of the videos affect participants' perceptions and tolerance, such as their perception of the reality of the videos. By the age of 5, viewers distinguish documentaries and the news from fictional programs (Wright, Huston, Reitz & Piemyat, 1994). Therefore, perceiving the video clips of teens on the YouTube channel as real, and the TV show as fictional, might underlie the striking differences in participants'

responses. This hypothesis was tested in Experiment 3 by having undergraduate participants rate how mean, funny and acceptable they thought each insult was while reading a transcript of the conversations, after having been told that the transcripts came from TV (i.e. fictional characters) or a YouTube channel (i.e. real teens). No condition differences were found, which suggests that merely *knowing* an insult is fictional or real (without actually seeing the behavior) does not influence how mean, funny or acceptable the insults are perceived.

Other “formal features” of television that differ from the features of our YouTube condition include: glamorous versus typical settings, attractive, familiar, celebrity characters versus average teens, multiple high quality camera angles versus a stationary webcam, as well as lighting and sound quality differences. Compared to removing the laugh track, these built-in features of television are more difficult to modify. Future research is needed to pin down the effect of these and other features on viewers’ perceptions of verbal insults and their subsequent tolerance of verbal aggression.

The current research aligns with past research and theoretical frameworks on viewing aggression (e.g., social cognitive theory and information processing theory), in that viewing televised verbal aggression framed in a humorous and acceptable manner influenced tolerance of subsequent aggression. Children’s developing behavioral scripts are influenced by the verbal aggression they view. Therefore, by viewing insults in a televised humorous context, children risk learning that verbal insults are an appropriate social response. Children are more likely to follow scripts with the fewest consequences, so portraying insults followed by a *positive* consequence (e.g. are greeted with laughter), might encourage a child to insult a peer when a social situation evokes their script based

on television. Research demonstrates that tween sitcom content does impact expectations for real life social situations— both short term and habitual viewing of these sitcoms is associated with expectations of less friendliness and more bullying in school (Mares, Braun & Hernandez, 2012). The laugh track also creates a virtual social norm; it stands in for multiple bystanders taking the “reinforcer” role in response to the verbal aggression. Thus, when children are in a similar situation, they might be more likely to laugh as a bystander rather than intervene to help the victim.

The current research has both strengths and limitations. Replication of the original results (from Experiment 1) with 12 different short clips and a different outcome video of escalating verbal aggression in Experiment 2 demonstrated that the results generalized across stimuli. Because different video clips and outcome videos were used for undergraduates and children, it is not appropriate to compare numerical ratings (how funny, how acceptable, etc.) across age; therefore, *patterns* of the results across the three conditions were examined by age group. Another limitation is that the 12 short YouTube clips viewed by the undergraduates did not always match the TV clips perfectly in terms of gender and the number of people present (e.g., sometimes on the TV clip, a female teen insulted a young male, and/or there was a bystander). On the other hand, participants’ rating the insults as equally mean indicates that the acting by our teen confederates in the YouTube clips convincing. Notably, the TV and YouTube clips used with children were matched exactly for the number of people, sex, and ethnicity of the actresses.

Children are exposed to more aggressive content on television than in their daily lives (Coyne Archer & Eslea, 2006). Research (including the current experiments) clearly

documents the negative effects this exposure has on children (Paik & Comstock, 1994), and themes presented on tween TV sitcoms do influence how young viewers perceive peer situations in their actual lives (Mares, Braun & Hernandez, 2012). Nevertheless, media producers deny such effects (Bushman & Anderson, 2001). Therefore, instead of categorizing tween TV as “good” or “bad”, the current research sheds light on *what* it is about tween sitcoms that increases viewers’ acceptance and tolerance of verbal aggression. In an ideal world, writers and producers would reduce the number of senseless insults portrayed on tween sitcoms, and at the very least, remove the laugh tracks following the verbal insults. While on the set during the taping of the hit tween sitcom *iCarly* with producer Dan Schneider (the brains behind many of the most popular programs in the genre), the *New York Times* writer Jonathan Dee (2007) observed:

The most conspicuous sound at the taping was that of Schneider’s own boisterous laughter in the wake of every one of the script’s dozens of jokes; it seemed downright immodest, considering that he had written all the jokes himself and was usually hearing them for the seventh or eighth take in a row, but it turned out that the laughter itself was done for practical reasons. “The kids will forget to leave a beat after the jokes, for when we sweeten the show,” he told me between takes — “sweeten” being the euphemism for the addition of canned laughter. (p. 4).

Which begs the question, why do we want to “sweeten” insults?

Appendix A

Transcripts from the television clips used in experiments 1 through 4. The YouTube versions included the same insults. The names of the TV characters have been replaced by the generic terms used on the transcripts during Experiment 3.

Clip 1:

Boy: What up my peeps?

Girl: Wow, that greeting was uncool in so many ways

Boy: Yeah? Well uncool is the new cool.

Girl: Wow, that comeback was uncool in so many ways.

Clip 2:

Girl on webcam: Hey, is Freddy there? Can I see him?

Girl: Why would a person want to see Freddy?

Boy: Right here Valerie!

Girl: Alright, can I just say: I think you're insanely cute.

Boy: Yeah?

Girl: Uh Valerie, you might want to check your webcam and your brain 'cause I'm pretty sure one of them's malfunctioning.

Clip 3:

Boy: Hey guys, bad news.

Girl: The doctors can't fix your face?

Clip 4:

Girl 1: What is that?

Boy: Looks like a big sheet.

Girl 1: I wanna know what's under the sheet...

Girl 2: And I wanna know what's between your ears, 'cause it sure ain't brain.

Clip 5:

Girl to Boy: Ah get over it. You were unloved before, you're unloved now - nothing's changed.

Clip 6:

Boy: Okay, how about this? What if you guys do an iCarly segment where you compare vegetables?

Girl 1: What?

Boy: You talk about squash, and Carly talks about asparagus

Girl 2: What?

Girl 1: You see, this is why Carly and me are the creative ones, and you're the technical producer who really shouldn't talk so much in these meetings.

Boy: Carly!

Girl 1: Carly! (mocking)

Clip 7:

Girl 1: Maddie, guess where “moi” is off to?

Girl 2: Hopefully French class to learn a word other than “moi”?

Clip 8:

Boy: Hello ladies, what do you think of my new ride?

Girl: Wow! I mean, it’s so so so so...

Both girls: Lame!

Clip 9:

Girl 1: Maddie, what’s a merit scholar? (*mispronounces word “scholar”*)

Girl 2: Well, it’s someone who could read the sign.

Clip 10:

Girl 1: Ooh, I know all about genealogy: it’s where you rub the lamp and get three wishes.

Girl 2: I’ve met bread smarter than you.

Clip 11:

Girl 1: Can I tell you something?

Girl 2: Yeah!

Girl 1: That sweater looks like a moldy lemon.

Clip 12:

Girl 1: So, what are you gonna wear?

Girl 2: I don’t know... Jeans?

Girl 1: Why don’t you wear a sack over your head that says “loser”!

Appendix B

Transcript of the tolerance video used in experiments 1 & 4.

* = The first personal insult used in the categorical analysis. Participants who stepped in before or directly after this insult were deemed “less tolerant” and those who waited longer deemed “more tolerant”. This point was chosen because everything the aggressor said to this point, although mean, could have been true.

Girl: What! Never Have I Ever [playing the game] stolen something.

Aggressor: Umm, like a real stealing..?

Girl: Like a heist

Aggressor: Like a heist?!

Girl: You gotta like get the arm thing...No no I just mean like anything.

Aggressor: No. I mean like I've stolen, not really, no. I mean I've kind of taken stuff every once in a while like, I don't know, but no nothing big.

Girl: Just you know, whatever.

Aggressor: How 'bout you?

Victim: Um, I honestly have never actually stolen something without returning it back.

Aggressor: No. No. That's... you steal stuff all the time.

Girl: Wait, wait. I'm gonna get a soda. You?

Aggressor: Nope.

Victim: I want one. Can you get me a Coke, please?

Girl: Yeah.

Aggressor: No, back...you steal things from me all the time.

Victim: What do you mean? What are you talking about?

Aggressor: Just like last winter. Dude, are you kidding? Last winter.

Victim: What are you talking about last winter?

Aggressor: You stole my goggles.

Victim: I asked for them cuz I didn't have any, not

Aggressor: Yeah I know I lent them to you but you never returned them.

Victim: Well you didn't ask for them. I just forgot.

Aggressor: Well I figured I'd get them back, like.

Victim: Well, sorry, but

Aggressor: I mean, you just...that's theft.

Victim: Why even bring it up now? Why does it matter?

Aggressor: Why do you bring it up? Are you kidding? You bring things up all the time!

Victim: That's not true.

Aggressor: Just. Are you kidding me? Just last week, just last week in front of my mom, you brought up when you took out my dad's car.

Victim: Well I'm sorry but it doesn't matter now, okay?

Aggressor: Well. It doesn't matter? I'm still basically grounded.

Victim: Why don't you just talk about, why are you talking about this all of a sudden?

Aggressor: You steal my stuff.

Victim: What are you talking about?

***Aggressor:** Of course. Of course, you can't afford ski goggles but you can afford new Jordans like every week. Oh yeah!

Victim: Oh of course, yeah. It's the same thing every time.

Aggressor: Of course you can buy what you need to buy but...

Victim: What's wrong with you? Why

Aggressor: You just come by my house. You're a freeloader. Admit you lie all the time.

You just lied about the Turkish thing to impress Amelia up there.

Victim: Well she might hear us, okay?

Aggressor: I don't care if she hears us!

Victim: You always make me look stupid in front of her.

Aggressor: Yeah cuz she, cuz you, ugh you're just so stupid in front of her. It's ridiculous.

Victim: I might like her.

Aggressor: Well, she doesn't like you.

Victim: Well it's not your business. How do you know?

Aggressor: Cuz I know. Cuz I've talked to her friends and she does not like you at all.

Victim: You don't know anything.

Aggressor: Yeah, are you kidding me? I know

Victim: You don't know anything.

Aggressor: Are you kidding me? I don't know nothing? You don't know anything.

You're just an idiot.

Victim: This is just ridiculous. Why are you calling me an idiot?

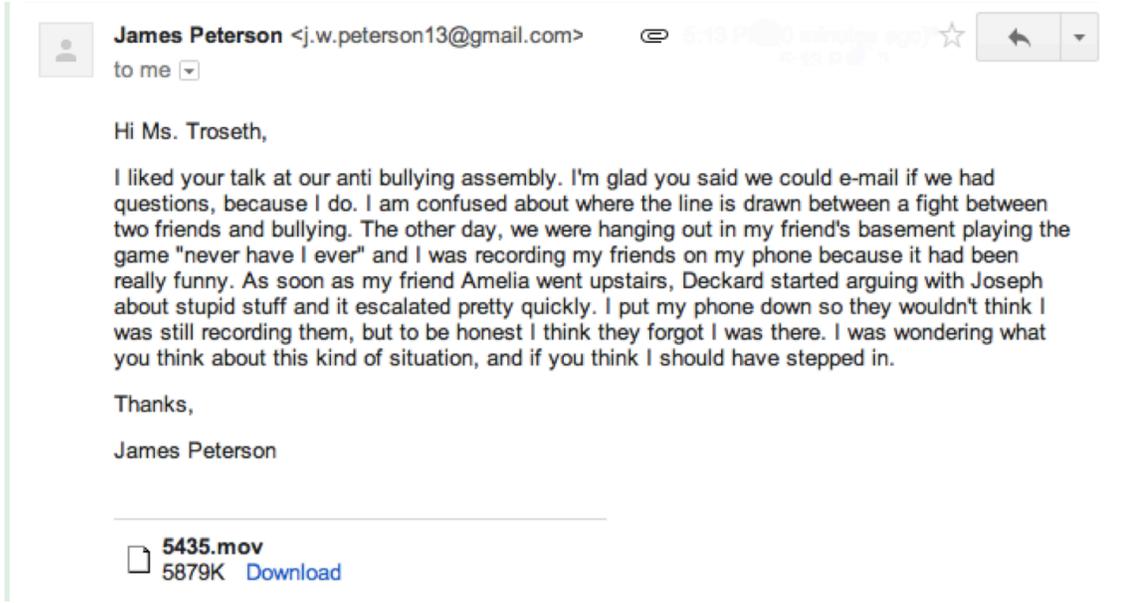
Aggressor: You're a freeloader. You steal my stuff all the time.

Victim: Why'd you call me an idiot?

Aggressor: You don't pay me back for anything, you come to my house and steal...I'm done. Whatever. I'm done with you guys. You guys go, whatever.

Appendix C

Email shown to set up the tolerance video used in experiments 1 and 4.



Appendix D

Transcript of the tolerance video used in experiment 2.

* = The first personal insult used in the categorical analysis. Participants who stepped in before or directly after this insult were deemed “less tolerant” and those who waited longer deemed “more tolerant”. This point was chosen because it was first time the aggressor directly insulted the victim, calling her a “kill joy” at parties.

Aggressor: All right what category do you wanna do? Like, music?

Victim: I'll do anything.

Aggressor: All right let's do music. Here. Just put it on your forehead.

Victim: I don't know much music, but we'll try.

Aggressor: Oh oh! Um it's like that song where it's like...they sound British when they're singing it but they're really not? Or maybe they are, I don't know.

Victim: Um, like Ed Sheeran, right? Like

Aggressor: No, no. Oh! Um um last weekend at Jenna's party we were all dancing to it.

And now it's like our song

Victim: What? Jenna had a party?

Aggressor: Oh. I forgot I wasn't supposed to like bring that up, but um yeah she did. It doesn't matter it was just like a last minute thing or whatever.

Victim: But wait. Why wasn't I invited? I was totally available.

Aggressor: Well she didn't really want you to come, but you know.

Victim: Why didn't she want me to come?

***Aggressor:** It's cuz you're kind of like a kill joy at parties, like I mean it's just kind of like, you're more of a mother figure and always, you know, bring everyone down.

Victim: I'm sorry? I mean, is she the only one that feels that way?

Aggressor: Well not really. I mean that's kind of why we stopped inviting you to parties cuz you kept bringing it down, you kept like ruining it for everyone.

Victim: Well I got invited last week to Jared's party.

Aggressor: That's cuz Jared...Jared just started hanging out with us and he didn't really know that you're so awkward. And I kept telling him and stuff and all of us did so he wanted to see if it's true or not. So then we were just gonna laugh about it later.

Victim: Wait, you were talking to him? And you were saying that I'm socially awkward?

Aggressor: Well you are! I mean you're just kind of like shy and just kind of hide away in your room and play your instrument all day.

Victim: I'm practicing. It's kind of important to me.

Aggressor: What do you even play? Violin or cello or one of those things that just look the same?

Victim: Viola?

Aggressor: Viola?

Victim: Yeah there's like a big difference.

Aggressor: Well only nerds would know that! I mean come on, you're in the orchestra. Only losers are in the orchestra. I mean, you're kind of like bringing down my image by me hanging out with you. I mean I started talking to you to like, cuz I thought you might be cool, you know? And I wanted you to join our group but I realize that that was kind of a mistake because you're such a loser.

Victim: Wow. I didn't know everyone felt this way. You're not the only one who feels this way?

Aggressor: No, we all feel that way. I mean you're just kind of like really clingy. And you can't really like keep up with us. I mean whenever we go shopping or whatever, you never have any money to buy any clothes, you don't ever wear any cute clothes...you don't have a sense of style, you know? You're just kind of like...

Victim: I try...maybe I just have other priorities? I don't know, I try so hard to keep up with you guys. I don't know what I'm doing wrong.

Aggressor: See that's the thing, you try so hard and you just fail. You're a failure! I mean, if you want to hang out with us, you need to try harder. I mean, what you're doing is just not cutting it. You're just not cool enough to hang out with us.

Victim: Am I trying hard enough right now?! Like do you want me here right now?!

Aggressor: Well we didn't really invite you, you just kind of came along. We didn't like want you to come. We never invite you places you just kind of get here! I don't even get it. Why do you think you belong here with us? Haven't you gotten our hints?

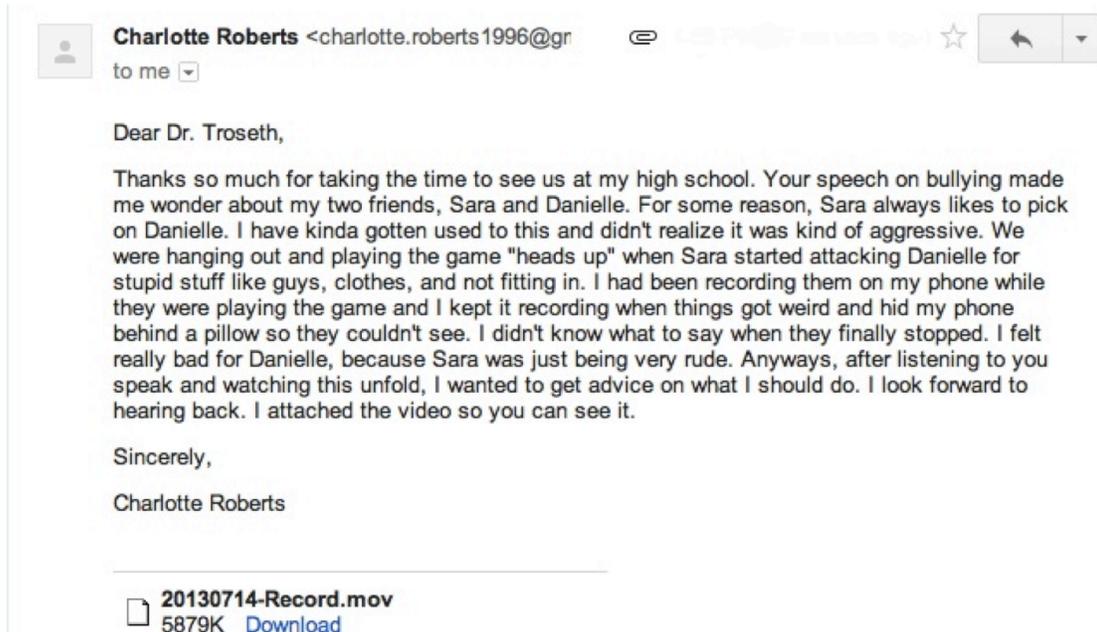
Victim: Do you want me to leave?

Aggressor: Well yeah! I mean, yeah!

Victim (to camera): Do you want me to leave?

Appendix E

Email shown to set up the tolerance video used in experiment 2.



Appendix F

Transcripts used to obtain baseline ratings in experiment 5.

Conversation #1

Kenzie: What don't you own?

Morgan: That dress. You look like a taxi.

Conversation #2

(Kenzie is crying)

Morgan: What is that? Some kind of donkey call? Just because you have donkey teeth doesn't mean you have to sound like one.

Conversation #3

Morgan: Huh? Sorry Kenzie, couldn't hear you over that loud outfit

Conversation #4

Morgan: Oh Kenzie, poor, jealous, badly dressed Kenzie"

Appendix G

Transcripts from the television clips used in experiment 5. The YouTube versions included the same insults.

Clip 1:

London: Kill it, kill it, kill it!

Bailey: London, it's just my pet rat, Buck.

London: Ugh, you know it's bad enough I have to live with you... Now I have to live with another hairy-legged bucktooth creature?

Clip 2:

London: Hey, who said you could wear my clothes?

Bailey: Uh, you did. You told me I should take your advice and show Cody a whole new look.

London: Psh, clothes aren't enough! You should try plastic surgery.

Clip 3:

Bailey: Look at these earrings, they're gorgeous!

London: Wow, they look great on you.

Bailey: Really? Thanks London!

London: Yeah, they draw the attention away from your facial flaws.

Clip 4:

London: You know what would compliment your complexion even more? A paper bag over your head!

Clip 5:

London: Your forehead is so big, they could show movies on it!

Clip 6:

London: Remember your impossible dream of becoming prom queen?

Bailey: Yeah.

London: I've decided not to run, to give you ugly girls a chance to feel better about yourselves. You're welcome.

Clip 7:

London: Well what do you need a tiara shelf for? You enter a beauty contest and the only thing they'll put on your head is a paper bag.

Clip 8:

Bailey: Here, hold this.

London: Um, Bailey, if you're trying to hide those hideous pants, I can still see them.

Clip 9:

Bailey: Oh, so that's why it's "one of a kind".

London: Wow, you're slow.

Clip 10:

London: Bailey?! What are you doing here? You don't buy nice clothes...

Clip 11:

London: I told you that outfit was ugly.

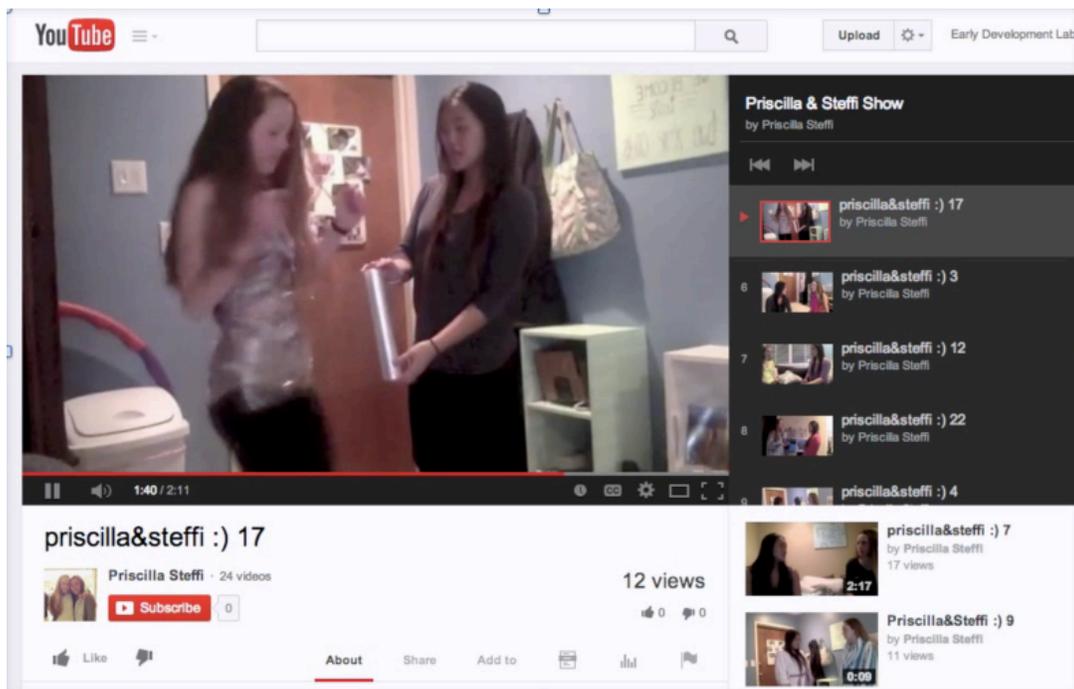
Clip 12:

Bailey: Are you making fun of my clothes again?

London: Heck no! I love your clothing, especially this nightie. It's warm, comfortable and totally unflattering.

Appendix H

Screen shots of a sample clip from the TV and YouTube conditions from experiment 5.



YouTube

Upload Early Development Lab

Priscilla & Steffi Show
by Priscilla Steffi

priscilla&steffi :) 17
by Priscilla Steffi

priscilla&steffi :) 3
by Priscilla Steffi

priscilla&steffi :) 12
by Priscilla Steffi

priscilla&steffi :) 22
by Priscilla Steffi

priscilla&steffi :) 4

priscilla&steffi :) 7
by Priscilla Steffi
17 views

Priscilla&Steffi :) 9
by Priscilla Steffi
11 views

priscilla&steffi :) 17
Priscilla Steffi · 24 videos
12 views
Subscribe 0

Like About Share Add to

Appendix I

Transcript of the tolerance video used in experiment 5.

* = The first personal insult used in the categorical analysis. Participants who stepped in before or directly after this insult were deemed “less tolerant” and those who waited longer deemed “more tolerant”. This point was chosen because it was first time the aggressor directly insulted the victim, saying she looks like an “idiot”.

Aggressor: *(Starts webcam)* All right, you ready?

Victim: Yeah!

Aggressor: Okay.

Dancing to choreography.

Aggressor: What are you doing?

Victim: Um, I’m just doing step, slide, step, slide *(doing moves)*. Right?

Aggressor: It looks kind of awkward when you do it. Try moving like your hips more *(shows move)*.

Both doing the move.

Aggressor: I don’t know, I don’t really like it. Here do you have any ideas?

Victim: We could do just like a, like a shuffle or something? I don’t know, like a little more natural *(shows new shuffle move)*.

Aggressor: Watch yourself doing this. Do it.

Victim: I don’t, I don’t know.

Aggressor: Do it.

Victim starts doing her shuffle move.

Aggressor: Watch yourself do it!

Victim: Okay. *Does shuffle*

Aggressor: Does that look cute?

Victim: I guess it's a little...awkward.

***Aggressor:** Yeah. You kind of look a little like an idiot. So let's just do my idea. I think it's better. Okay. You'll just have to get it down.

Both start doing original dance move.

Aggressor: *Sighs.* I don't like it.

Victim: Well we could change it. Or we could do like cut time or we could do...

Aggressor: Cut time? This isn't orchestra, this is dance. Nobody knows what you're talking about when you say that.

Victim: It's still like music though. Like you apply the same principles to this application as well.

Aggressor: No. I don't like doing that nerdy stuff, sorry.

Victim: Sorry.

Aggressor: Okay.

Both start doing original move.

Aggressor: Maybe I should do it and you could just like be in the background or something? I don't know. Why does she always like pair us together?

Victim: Yeah I know. It's kind of annoying but I mean...

Aggressor: I know! Like we should be able to pick our own partners so it comes out good.

Victim: Whatever. Worked out for us though. I mean at least we like hanging out together. I mean working together.

Aggressor: ...yeah. Sure.

Both start doing the original move.

Aggressor: You s....

Victim: Should we just move on to the next part or something?

Aggressor: I guess...I don't know.

Victim: Or we could take a break! We could go get something to eat.

Aggressor: Why do you always want to get something to eat? Besides, we need to fit into our costumes.

Victim: Oh.

Aggressor: And you're looking a little chubby.

Aggressor: C'mon, you have to get this right or else we're gonna look like an idiot on stage. We don't have time for breaks.

Victim: Okay, you're right. We gotta make this look good. Tryin' to impress someone.

Aggressor: Who?

Victim: Guess.

Aggressor: Is it...Jeremy?

Victim: Jeremy? Really. No?

Aggressor: Why do you have that reaction? I always thought you guys were like in mathletes together so it makes sense.

Victim: It's just one club, it's not like...I don't even talk to him!

Aggressor: Okay whatever! Well who is it?

Victim: It's Jared.

Aggressor: Jared?! He's completely out of your league! Like he's almost out my league. But...well I'm just saying. I mean, you weren't even at his party last weekend. Did he even invite you?

Victim: Not to the party, but...we always talk and stuff in math.

Aggressor: Well duh, cuz he wants to cheat off of you. I don't know, I just don't want you to get your hopes up, you know? I mean, I think you should go after Jeremy.

Aggressor: C'mon, let's do it.

Aggressor starts doing original move.

Aggressor: Why aren't you doing it?!

Victim: I'm sorry, I'm just kind of distracted.

Aggressor: Get more energetic!

Victim starts doing moves too. Aggressor stops and looks at Victim.

Victim: Did I do something wrong?

Aggressor: I don't know. Let's just go on to a different part. *(Turns off video)*

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