

## Background

- Relational aggression and victimization increase in prevalence in early adolescence and can be particularly challenging for girls (Crick, Casas & Nelson, 2002)
- Relational aggression is related to decreased academic functioning and school connectedness (Risser, 2013; Preddy & Fite, 2012).
- Being a victim of relational aggression is also connected to negative school performance. (Glew et. al, 2005; Risser, 2013)
- Relational aggression has been linked to future relational victimization in middle childhood (Ostov & Godleski, 2013)
- Relational aggression and victimization are not always examined simultaneously, so it is unclear how they associate with academic outcomes when both are considered together

## Purpose

The current study examines relational aggression and victimization simultaneously to determine if they have similar associations with academic performance, school connection and academic self esteem among early adolescent girls.

## Sample

- 109 seventh grade girls (*M* age=11.99) and one corresponding parent or guardian (*M* age = 39.1)
- Predominantly from ethnic minority backgrounds (*Fig. 1*)
- Majority of parents/guardians had not completed college (*Fig. 2*)

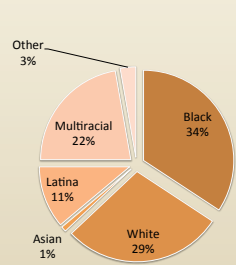


Figure 1. Ethnicity

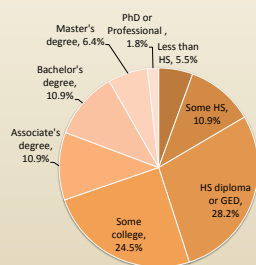


Figure 2. Parent's Level of Education

## Measures

**Predictors:** Problem Behavior Frequency Scale (PBFS; Farrell, Kung, White & Valois, 2000) assessed frequency of behaviors from never (0) to twenty or more times (6) over 3-months of school

- *Relational aggression* (e.g. "spread a false rumor about someone"),
- *Relational victimization* (e.g. "had someone spread a false rumor about you")
- *Delinquency* (e.g. "stolen something from someone")

**Outcomes:** Youth Outcomes Survey (Big Brothers, Big Sisters of America) assessed:

- *Academic self-esteem* (e.g., "I do very well at my class work")- MSG and PG; from "not at all true" (1) to "very true" (4)
- *Academic performance* (e.g., "how are you doing in math?")- MSG; from "not good at all" (1) to "excellent" (5)
- *Educational Aspirations* ("how far would you like your daughter to go in school?")- PG; from "leave before HS" (1) to "graduate school" (4)
- *School bonding* (Hawkins, et al., 1999)
- *Attachment subscale* (e.g., "I like school", "I like my teachers")- MSG; from "NO!!" (1) to "YES!!!" (4)

**Covariates:** Parent education (*Fig 2*) and ethnicity (*Fig 1*). Girls' open-ended responses regarding ethnicity were recoded into six categories and then dummy-coded using African American/Black as the reference group.

Table 1. Regression Models for Academic Outcomes

	MSG Academic Performance $\beta$	MSG School Bonding $\beta$	MSG Academic Self Esteem $\beta$	PG Academic Self Esteem $\beta$	PG Academic Expectations $\beta$
Parent Education	.098	-.043	.149	.051	<b>.341**</b>
Latina	.055	.149	.208	-.065	.111
White	-.057	-.016	-.192	<b>-.264*</b>	<b>-.344**</b>
Multiracial	.053	-.080	.064	-.183	-.121
Relational Aggression	.184	.103	.162	-.006	-.083
Relational Victimization	<b>-.298**</b>	<b>-.263**</b>	<b>-.482***</b>	<b>-.234*</b>	.049
Delinquency	<b>-.282*</b>	<b>-.269*</b>	.003	-.133	<b>-.252*</b>
R <sup>2</sup>	<b>.167***</b>	<b>.178**</b>	<b>.298***</b>	<b>.154*</b>	<b>.220*</b>

Note: \*p < .05; \*\*p < .01; \*\*\*p < .001; MSG = Middle school girl; PG = parent/guardian

## Analyses

- Linear regression analyses were conducted for each outcome
- Parent education and ethnic group were entered first as covariates, given evidence showing they are related to aggression and academic outcomes (Blake et. al, 2013).
- Relational aggression, relational victimization and delinquency were entered in step 2

## Results

Regression coefficients are reported in *Table 1*:

- Relational aggression was not associated with any outcome variables

### School Bonding and Academic Performance

- Both were lower among girls who reported higher levels of delinquency and relational victimization

### Academic Self – esteem

- Those who experienced victimization and parents of those who experienced victimization reported lower levels of academic self esteem

### Parent/Guardian Academic Plans

- Parents reported lower academic future expectations when delinquency reports were higher

## Discussion/Implications

- Contrary to previous literature, relational aggression was not a significant predictor of poor academic outcomes; the trend towards a positive relationship suggests further study is needed
- Victimization overall seems to be the strongest predictor of the outcomes, and is related to negative academic experiences
- Parents and middle school girls seem to maintain similar negative ideals regarding their academic competencies if the girls have experienced relational victimization
- Future research should examine profile analyses of girls focused on the frequency of relational aggression and victimization and its association with academic outcomes

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