

## **Abstract**

Externalizing behavior problems, including aggressive behavior and ADHD symptoms, have been associated with peer rejection in previous studies (Hoza et al., 2005; Putallaz et al., 2006). However, teachers' preferences for their students may buffer children with externalizing behavior problems from peer rejection (Chang et al., 2004). In addition, this buffering effect of teacher liking may be stronger for girls than for boys (Chang et al., 2007). The current study examined the moderating effects of child gender and teacher preference on the association between distinct forms of externalizing problems (i.e., physical aggression, relational aggression, and ADHD symptoms) and rejection. Participants included 216 students in grades 4<sup>th</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> at Burlington area elementary and middle schools. Teachers filled out questionnaires to assess teacher preference and ADHD symptoms. Rejection and aggressive behavior were examined using peer nomination procedures. Findings indicated that teacher preference moderated the association between aggression (both physical and relational) and rejection for girls only. Specifically, aggressive behavior (physical or relational) was less strongly associated with rejection among girls who were liked by their teachers. No significant interactions were found for children exhibiting ADHD symptoms. This research provides evidence that teacher liking may serve as a buffer against rejection among girls exhibiting aggressive behaviors. In addition, these findings indicate that girls may be more influenced by teachers' preferences and perceptions than boys.