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3/10/13

### Abstract

Youth who are relationally victimized (RV; i.e., targeted by relational aggression, defined as the skillful manipulation of relationships; e.g., are more likely to engage in relational aggression (RA) than those who have not been relationally victimized (Mathieson et al., 2011). Additionally, possessing a hostile attribution bias (HAB; tendency to attribute hostile intent in ambiguous relational provocations) has been linked to RA (Bailey & Ostrov, 2008; Crick & Dodge, 1996; Mathieson et al., 2011; Werner, 2012). Research suggests that the possession of a HAB leads to RA when vulnerability factors such as RV are present (Mathieson et al., 2011). In theory, youth who perceive neutral interactions as relational provocations and also are victimized will be most likely to react with relational aggression. Thus, we proposed that the possession of a HAB would moderate the relationship between RV and RA and gender differences were explored. 123 college students completed self-report measures on RA, RV, and HAB. Results were analyzed separately for two functions of RA (i.e., proactive: involving the attainment of an instrumental goal; and reactive: being a more retaliatory reaction). Results indicated that RV, HAB, and gender were significant predictors of reactive RA. RV was the only predictor of proactive RA. While no significant interactions emerged, results underscore unique associations between HAB and reactive RA (Marsee et al., 2008). This finding could be due to the nature of reactive RA, which is used in response to perceived hostile actions, therefore making those with a HAB more susceptible to construing neutral events and retaliating. Results highlight the importance of differentiating proactive RA and

reactive RA as well as the role of HAB and gender in each. Future directions and limitations are discussed.