The Effects of Parenting Style and Psychological Control on Relational Aggression in African-American Girls

By

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Abstract

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This dissertation explored the relationship of parenting styles and psychological control on relational aggression in African American girls. Specifically, it examined African American girls' perpetration and victimization of relational aggression and the influence of their mother's parenting style on their behavior. This study also investigated if parenting style is predictive of relational aggression and relational victimization.

This dissertation sought to answer the following questions: (a) How well do parenting style and psychological control predict relational aggression in African American girls? (b) How well do parenting style and psychological control predict relational victimization in African American girls? (c)Which is the best predictor of relational aggression: psychological control or parenting style? (d)Which is the best predictor of relational victimization: psychological control or parenting style? (e) If the possible effects of parent age and income level are controlled, are parenting style and psychological control be able to predict relational aggression? (f)If we control for the possible effects of mother's age and income level, are parenting style and psychological control still able to predict a significant amount of the variance in the relational

victimization score?

I confirmed that psychological control was negatively associated with authoritative parenting style**.** Additionally, girls' perceptions of their mothers' degree of psychological control was not significantly related to either their daughter's use of relational aggression or their relational victimization. In contrast, parenting style was associated with relational aggression. Additionally, after controlling for age and annual household income, psychological control and parenting style did not significantly predict relational aggression. With regard to relational victimization, after controlling for age and annual household income, an authoritarian parenting style significantly predicted relational victimization.

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CHAPTER I

Dissertation Overview

When school violence makes its way into the media, it is often because some horrific incident has occurred. The events of the recent past have taught us that maladaptive interpersonal relationships tend to precede acts of school violence (Baker, 1998). Very often children and adolescents who enact violence against their peers have been victims themselves (Ma, 2001). Instances of bullying are more common than educators and parents may think. An article by Crockett (2004) stated that one in every seven children reports being bullied in schools. Additionally, the Committee for Children (2003) completed a survey that found that 78% of children reported having been bullied in the month prior to the survey. School violence is not limited to physical attacks. Research shows that adolescents engage in covert forms of aggression that may escape the detection of caregivers, teachers, and school staff (Casey-Cannon et al., 2001).

Definition of Relational Aggression

One type of nonverbal aggression is called relational aggression. Relational aggression is described by Crick and Grotpeter (1995) as a form of indirect aggression where the aggressor harms the target child's relationships among peers while attempting to remain anonymous to the target. Expanding on this definition, Merrell, Buchanan, and Tran (2006) defined relational aggression as deliberate, unfriendly behavior designed to hurt another person through words or other nonphysical means. This includes not talking to, not being around, or deliberately ignoring someone; threatening to withdraw friendship or affection; and excluding someone from a group activity by telling him/her directly that she or he is not welcome (Xie, Cairns, & Cairns, 2002). Adolescents use relational aggression for many reasons, but primarily to maintain social

prominence or perceived popularity (Rose, Swenson, & Waller, 2004).

Outcomes of Relational Aggression

Due to its covert nature, relational aggression often goes unseen or overlooked by school administration and teachers. Even when adults identify relational aggression, they often mistake it for typical adolescent behavior (Casey-Cannon, Hayward, & Gowen, 2001), and ignore it. This leads to a lack of concern about these situations and little, if any, intervention. However, not taking relational aggression seriously can be a costly error. The consequences of relational aggression affect both males and females (Crick & Nelson, 2002; Werner & Crick, 1999). Although this form of aggression affects both sexes, the research shows that relational aggression wounds girls differently than it does boys. While relational aggression leaves no visible scars, its ramifications can be just as damaging as experiencing physical aggression (Merrill et al., 2006). Results of several studies have shown that relational aggression has implications for future social maladjustment and is relatively stable over time (Crick, 1996). Research has revealed social-psychological maladjustments of victims of relational aggression, such as having fewer friends and being further victimized by their peers (Crick, Grotpeter, & Bigabee, 2002; Smith, Talamelli, Cowie, Naylor, & Chauhan, 2004). Other studies have found that children of both primary and post-primary age who were involved in bullying as victims, bullies, or both had a significantly lower global self-esteem than students not involved in bullying (O'Moore & Kirkham, 2001), as well as reported more physical and mental problems and were more likely to contemplate suicide (Rigby, 2001).

Relational aggression affects both males and females; however, females are more likely to be victims of relationally aggressive acts (Cullerton-Sen & Crick, 2005), to be more depressed (Casey-Cannon et al., 2001), to be more anxious, and to have lower self-esteem.

Relational aggression leads to increased use of physical aggression and marijuana among girls (Sullivan, Farrell, & Kliewer, 2006). There is, however, limited research in the area of relational aggression among girls from low socio-economic status areas and girls living in urban settings. Talbott, Celinska, Simpson, and Coe (2002) found a connection between physical and relational aggression for a population of female students in a low-income urban setting. The results of this research suggested that relationally aggressive behaviors among girls in low-income settings could lead to physical aggression and create a cycle in which the girls are both the perpetrators and the victims of aggression.

Parenting Style and Aggression

Additionally, as researchers have attempted to discover more about relational aggression and the unique characteristics of those students who use this as a means of interacting with their peers, parental factors have inevitably become a topic of investigation. Several studies have shown the effects of parenting styles on their children's behavior. Olweus (1980) reported that authoritarian parents' use of power assertive techniques were associated with physically aggressive behavior by adolescent boys towards their peers. On the other hand, permissive parents may communicate that physical aggression is acceptable by not punishing their children for inappropriate aggressive behaviors. Olweus (1980) also found that maternal permissiveness of aggression was the best predictor of actual childhood physical aggression. Researchers have also found that children who are exposed to harsh discipline practices at home tend to have maladaptive social information processing patterns, which lead to aggressive behaviors at school (Hall & Bracken, 1996). A study that focused specifically on African American preschool children and parenting styles found that authoritative parenting was most predictive of fewer child behavior problems (Querido, Warner, & Eyberg, 2002). A study conducted with preschool

children in Russia investigating parenting styles and relational aggression found that maternal and paternal coercion and maternal lack of responsiveness were associated with relational aggression. Examining a more direct relationship between relational aggression and parenting styles, Grotpeter (1995) found that children who were relationally aggressive with their peers were also targets of relational aggression from their parents.

Psychological Control and Relational Aggression

Psychological control, which Barber (1996) defined as "control attempts that intrude into the psychological and emotional development of the child" (p. 3296), is another factor that has been found to influence relational aggression. There are few studies that have focused on the association between aggression and psychological control; however, those studies have yielded significant associations between physical aggression and behaviors similar to psychological control (Hart, Nelson, Robinson, Olson, & McNeilly-Choque, 1998; MacKinnon-Lewis et al., 1994). Yan, Hart, Nelson, Porter, Olsen, Robinson et al. (2004; as cited in Crick & Nelson, 2002) found a positive relationship between maternal and paternal psychological control and relational aggression in Chinese preschoolers. Additionally, Crick and Nelson (2002) found that paternal psychological control was associated with relational aggression in a sample of third grade girls. In another study, Casas et al. (2006) found significant associations between children's use of both relational and physical aggression, parental reports of their parenting style, psychological control behaviors, and indicators of the attachment relationship. Research is still needed with regard to the effects of relation aggression, psychological control, and parenting style in the African American population. All of the previously mentioned studies, if they included them at all, used only a small percentage of African American participants. Therefore, it is not known if the findings are generalizable to the African American population.

The Dissertation Study

The purpose of this study was to build on existing research to determine the effects of parenting style and psychological control behaviors on African American girls' use of relational aggression in a lower SES urban school setting. The study examined whether previous findings can be generalized to African American participants. The questions that this study addressed are:

1. How well do parenting style and psychological control predict relational aggression and relational vicitmiziation in African American girls?
2. What is the best predictor of relational aggression and relational victimization: psychological control or parenting style?

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

This chapter provides a review of the literature concerning several concepts that are integral parts of this dissertation. It begins with an overview of the history of aggression and then provides a review of the literature on relational aggression. Because this dissertation focused on relational aggression, parenting styles, and psychological control, the chapter provides a review and critique of the existing research on these factors as they relate to each other. This review of the pertinent research provides the framework for the dissertation rationale and hypotheses.

History of Aggression Research

Some researchers, such as Konrad Lorez, conducted studies on aggression in animals in the late 1950's and into the 1960's. Beginning in the 1960's, Albert Bandura conducted research on aggression in humans that would lead to the development of the social learning theory. Bandura and Huston (1961) found that learning for children is imitative in nature. In the first phase of their study, the researchers divided the participants into three groups: a nurturing group, a non-nurturing group, and a small control group. "Half of the experimental and control subjects experienced two nurturant rewarding play sessions with the model while the others had a cold nonnurturant relationship" (p. 312). In the non-nuturant group, each child was instructed to play with the toys while a model engaged in paper work. In the nurturant group, the model sat on the floor with the child and responded to requests for help, attention, and encouraged a warm and rewarding interaction. In the second phase of the study, the participants performed a divergent two-choice task. During this task, stickers were placed in one of two boxes and the model selected the box he thought the stickers were in first, he left the room, and then the participant was told to select a box. It is important to note that the model exhibited explicit, functionless

behavior during the selection process such as saying, “Here, I go and March, March, March,” as the model took a direct path and walked to the box. Additionally, the model in the experimental group aggressively knocked a doll off the top of the box, removed the stickers, and replaced the doll. In the control group, the model took a less direct route to the box, said “Walk, Walk, Walk,” lifted the doll off the top of the box, and left the doll on the floor at the completion of the trial. The participants were then brought back into the room to see if they would imitate the behaviors of the models when the models were present.

Bandura and Huston (1961) found that those subjects who experienced the rewarding interaction with the model “matched and verbalized imitatively and reproduced other responses” more than the subjects in the nonnurturant group (p. 315). Additionally, Bandura and Huston (1961) also found that 90% of the subjects in the experimental groups engaged in incidental learning, which they defined as “learning that apparently takes place in the absence of an induced set of intent to learn the specific behaviors or activities in question” (p. 311). They also obtained a main effect of nurturance on the production of partially imitative verbal response, suggesting that “nurturance not only facilitates imitation of the specific behaviors displayed…but also increases the probably of responses of a whole response class (for example, verbal behavior)” (p. 316). Importantly, aggression was “readily imitated by subjects regardless of the quality of the model-child relationship” (p. 315).

In one of Bandura’s most well known studies, Bandura, Ross, and Ross (1961) investigated whether participants would generalize the behavior of the model to a new setting if the model was not present. The researchers divided the participants into 8 groups of 6 participants each and a control group of 24 participants. Half of the experimental group was assigned to the aggressive models and the other half to the nonaggressive models. They were

then subdivided so that half of the participants observed same sex models and the other half observed opposite sex models. The control group had no prior exposure to the models, and was tested only in the generalization situation. The participants in the experimental and the control groups were matched individually based on ratings of their aggressive behavior in social interactions by their nursery school teacher. In the experimental group in the aggressive condition, the researchers brought participants into a room and presented them with materials to design pictures. The model went to the other side of the room where there were tinker toys, a mallet, and a 5-foot inflated Bobo doll. The model initially started playing with the tinker toys, but then began being aggressive toward the Bobo doll. The model laid the doll on its side, sat on it, and repeatedly punched it in the nose, struck the doll with the mallet, tossed the doll in the air, and kicked it around the room. All thorough out the behaviors, the model made aggressive statements like "Hit him down…Throw him in the air…Kick him.Pow". The model also made these nonaggressive statements: "He keeps coming back for more….He sure is a tough fella" (p. 576). In the nonaggressive condition, the model quietly assembled the tinker toys and ignored the Bobo doll.

Each participant was then introduced to a mild arousal experience, where an experimenter took the participant into another room that contained various types of toys. The experimenter told the participant that the toys were for her/him to play with. After a few moments, when the participant were thoroughly engaged in playing, the experimenter said that these were her best toys, and that she decided to reserve her toys for another child. The experimenter and the participant then went into another room. The experimenter stayed with the participant because many children did not want to be alone. To minimize any influence on the participant's behavior, the experimenter tried to be as inconspicuous as possible. The participant

spent 20 minutes in the room, which contained a 3-foot Bobo doll, a mallet, a pegboard, two dart guns, and a tetherball with a face painted on it, which hung from the ceiling.

Bandura et al. (1961) found that " the main effect of treatment conditions is highly significant both for physical and verbal imitative aggression" (p. 578). One third of the participants in the aggression group reproduced the model's aggressive and nonaggressive verbal responses. The difference was reported to be significant at beyond the $p < .001$ level. This group also exhibited significantly more partially imitative behaviors and nonimitative aggressive behavior. With regard to sex, the researches found that boys reproduced more imitative physical aggression than girls ($t = 2.50$, $p < .01$); however, the genders did not differ in the imitation of verbal aggression. Researchers also found that the participants were influenced by the sex of the model, with boys showing more physical, verbal imitative, non-imitative, aggression, as well as more aggressive gun play than girls following exposure to a male model. In comparison, girls exposed to a female model reportedly performed more verbal aggression and more non-imitative aggression than boys did; however, the means did not meet statistical significance.

Bandura and colleagues' research showed the powerful effect of modeling aggression on children's behavior and is particularly relevant to this dissertation, which examined mothers' aggressive behavior as it related to their daughters' aggressive behavior. In subsequent research on aggression, researchers focused on children's physical and verbal behaviors in places such as the classrooms and playgrounds (Frodi, Macaulay, & Thome, 1977; MacCoby & Jacklin, 1974). Boys appeared to be more aggressive than girls to such an extent that some researchers eliminated girls from studies entirely (Buss, 1961; Frodi et al., 1977). Eliminating an entire group from the research on aggression raised questions in the mind of Bjorquist (1994) who also questioned the observational methods that most authors of the time used for studying aggression.

Bjorquist (1994) believed that just because girls are physically weaker than boys should not mean that they are any less prone to conflict. Because they are physically weaker, Bjorquist believed that girls have to come up with creative ways to enact their aggression. As a result of Bjorquist's theory, researchers began to rethink the definitions of aggression that they used. These early studies began to show the connection between the models that children follow and the aggressive behaviors that children display. A review of the different forms of aggression follows.

Aggression Defined

Earlier researchers generally defined aggression as behaviors that could be described by roughhousing and rough play on the playground or schoolyard (Frodi et al., 1977; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974). As research in this area progressed, the terms direct and indirect aggression emerged. Direct aggression is defined as "straight-forward attacks that are often visible, disruptive, and frightening even to spectators" (Valles & Knuton, 2008, p. 497).

The topic of direct aggression would not be complete without discussing bullying. Matsunaga (2009) defined bullying as "a pervasive social problem that impairs victims' mental, physical and relational well-being" (p. 221). Bullying seems to encompass emotional, physical, and verbal abuse inflicted on the target child by the bully. Victims of bullying have been reported to "suffer academically, have problems with relationships later in life, and have increased susceptibility to depression and other psychiatric disorders" (Jones et al., 2009, p. 853).

Indirect aggression, on the other hand, is defined as " a type of behavior in which the perpetrator attempts to inflict pain in such a manner that he or she often makes it seem as if there has been no intention to hurt at all" (Valles & Knuton, 2008, p. 497). When researchers began to study gender differences in aggression, they distinguished between direct and indirect

aggression. Conflicts in research arose as researchers used different terms to define indirect aggression. Some researchers found that boys used more aggression, both indirect and direct, than did girls. Others found that males consistently scored higher than females on aggression measures, and still others found that girls preferred more indirect means of aggression (Carlo, Raffaelli, Laible, & Meyer, 1999; Lagersperz, Bjorkquist, & Peltonen, 1988; Lindeman, Harakka, & Keitikangas-Jarvinen, 1997). The variation in the results of these studies appeared to be in part due to the differing definitions of indirect aggression that the studies used.

Pakaslahti and Keitikangas-Jarvinen (1998) investigated the dominant types of aggressive behavior and gender differences in a predominantly Caucasian sample of 14-year-adolescents that consisted of 408 girls and 431 boys. They asked participants to name three girls and three boys from their class that they spend most of their time with when they were at school. Social rejection was assessed by the participants naming three girls and three boys from their class that they did not like. The students were also presented with a questionnaire, which consisted of 18 behavioral characteristics, 7 of which focused on aggressive behaviors and 11 that focused on nonaggressive behaviors. The students were asked to name three of their peers who often or never behaved in the way described by each item. In a subsequent analysis of the items, only the seven items that focused on aggressive behavior were included in the analysis. The researchers focused on four aspects of aggression: fighting, arguing, intriguing, and bullying. Fighting was considered a part of direct physical aggression, arguing was considered verbal aggression, intriguing as a form of indirect aggression, and bullying was measured by summing items from the other scales.

Pakaslahti and Keitikangas-Jarvinen (1998) found that girls tended to be more indirectly aggressive, also referred to as being intriguing, and boys tended to be more directly aggressive.

Boys preferred bullying, which the researchers referred to as direct aggression, their target first and intriguing their target second. Fighting or arguing appeared to be a last resort for boys. Girls, on the other hand, preferred intriguing their target first, then arguing, and fighting as a last resort. These results were consistent with the research conducted by Lagerspetz et al. (1988) where they found that girls used more indirect means of aggression and boys used more direct means of aggression.

As indirect forms of aggression gained popularity, there was a progression in the research, from research on physical aggression to research on indirect forms of aggression. Researchers began to focus on a particular form of indirect aggression coined relational aggression.

Relational Aggression

Crick and Grotpeter (1995) introduced the term relational aggression into their research. Relational aggression is described by Crick and Grotpeter (1995) as a form of indirect aggression where the aggressor harms the target child's relationships among peers while attempting to remain anonymous to the target. Expanding on this definition, Merrell, Buchanan, and Tran (2006) defined relational aggression as deliberate, unfriendly behavior designed to hurt another person through words or other nonphysical means. This includes not talking to, not being around, or deliberately ignoring someone; threatening to withdraw friendship or affection; and excluding someone from a group activity by telling him/her directly that she or he is not welcome (Xie, Cairns, & Cairns, 2002). Due to the gender differences found in the aggression research, they hypothesized that both boys and girls acted out in ways that were important to their socialization.

For girls, socialization centers on relational issues and forming friendships and alliances through relationships. However, for boys, Feder et al. (2010) suggested that the traditional roles

of masculinity are reinforced; vulnerability is suppressed and punished. Crick and Grotpeter (1995) suggested that aggression among girls "would include behaviors that are intended to significantly damage another child's friendships or feelings of inclusion by the peer group" (p. 711). Behaviors such as withdrawal of friendship and spreading rumors fall into the realm of relational aggression. Examples of relationally aggressive behaviors are using social exclusion as a form of retaliation, threatening to end a friendship unless the other individual complies with a request, or using the "silent treatment" as a means of coercion or punishment (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). Relational aggression includes behaviors that are meant to damage another child's friendships or feelings of inclusion by the peer group. Merrell et al. (2006) expanded the definition of relational aggression to include deliberate unfriendly behavior designed to hurt another person through words or other nonphysical means. This includes not talking to or being around someone, deliberately ignoring someone, threatening to withdraw friendship or affection, and excluding someone from a group activity by telling him/her directly that she or he is not welcome (Xie et al., 2002).

In their study, Crick and Grotpeter (1995) created a peer nomination instrument that helped in the exploration of relational aggression. They used it to explore relational and overt aggression, as well as prosocial behavior and isolation. Four hundred and ninety one students in the third through sixth grades participated in the study. The majority of the participants were European-American and 37% of the participants were African-American from a mid-west medium size town. The majority of the participants were from a low SES area. The instrument consisted of three subscales: overt aggression, relational aggression, and prosocial behavior. The children nominated up to three classmates who fit the descriptions of each item. The researchers then interviewed the students individually and asked about behaviors that were mean, which was

used as a synonym for harmful. The students were separated into four groups as follows: non-aggressive, overtly aggressive, relationally aggressive, and both overtly and relationally aggressive.

The researchers found that girls cited relational aggression and verbal insults as the norm for mean behavior towards other girls. As for girls' behavior towards boys, girls cited verbal insults and relational aggression significantly more often than all other behaviors (i.e., verbal threats, nonverbal aggression, avoidance, and annoy others) as the norm. However, boys cited physical aggression significantly more often than nonverbal aggression, avoidance, and annoys others as behaviors directed towards boys. Physical aggression and verbal insults more often than any other behavior constituted the norm for boys' mean behaviors towards each other. As for boys' behaviors towards girls, the researchers found that boys cited verbal insults significantly more often than verbal threats, nonverbal aggression, relational aggression telling, avoidance, and annoy others. For boys, physical responses superseded nonverbal responses.

Additional findings from the aforementioned study were that boys and girls did not agree about the norms for harmful behaviors exhibited by girls toward other girls. Additionally, boys were more likely to cite physical aggression and not insults as the norm for girls' harmful behavior toward boys. Boys and girls agreed about the mean behaviors used by boys. When the target was a boy, girls believed that physical aggression was more normative for boys than for girls and relational aggression was more normative for girls than for boys. When the target of the mean behavior was a girl, girls viewed relational aggression as a more normative mean behavior for girls than for boys. Girls viewed relational aggression as more normative mean behavior for girls than for boys, regardless of the sex of the target.

Subsequent studies supported these findings. Crick, Casas, and Mosher (1997) conducted

a study to identify relational aggression in a group of young children and to develop a reliable, age-appropriate instrument that could be used to assess relational aggression in preschool children. They also wanted to investigate the distinctiveness of relational and overt aggression in young children, gender differences, and social-psychological adjustment. A multi-informant approach to relational aggression was used in this study. Sixty-five preschool children from two junior classes (ages 3.5-4.5) and two senior classes (ages 4.5-5.5) participated. The participants were primarily European American and Asian American.

Crick et al. (1997) constructed a teacher rating measure, Preschool Social Behavior Scale—Teacher Form; PSBS-T), for use in this study. It was adapted from the teacher-rating instrument for elementary children (Children's Social Behavior Scale—Teacher Form; CSBS-T; Crick, 1996) and consisted of 23 items, 8 of which assessed relational aggression. The teachers completed one form for each of the participating students. The authors also developed a peer measure for this study called the Preschool Social Behavior Scale—Peer Form (PSB5-P). Similar to the teacher form, it was based on a rating scale created for elementary school children. The measure consisted of 17 items, 6 assessed overt aggression, 7 assessed relational aggression, and 4 assessed prosocial behavior. A picture nomination procedure was used for the interviews. Both the teacher measure and the peer measure included two items that assessed the child's social-psychological adjustment. Two relational aggression and two overt aggression items were dropped because of cross-loading. The Cronbach's alpha showed all four scales to be highly reliable; a =.96, .94, .88, and .87 for the relational aggression, overt aggression, prosocial behavior, and depressed affect scales, respectively. On the peer-nomination scale, five items were dropped because of cross-loadings. Computation of Cronbach's alpha showed that children's responses to all three scales were reliable; a = .71, .77, and .68, for the relational

aggression, overt aggression, and prosocial behavior scales, respectively.

Crick et al. (1997) revealed that teacher reports of aggression showed a significant effect for gender, with preschool teachers reporting that boys were significantly more overtly aggressive than girls were, and girls were significantly more relationally aggressive than boys were. When they calculated descriptive analysis of the percentage of boys versus girls for the aggressive behaviors, they identified 12% of the boys and 3% of the girls as overtly aggressive; 0% of the boys and 26% of the girls as relationally aggressive, and 15% of boys and 7% of girls as overtly plus relationally aggressive. Peers reported 11% of the boys and 7% of the girls as overtly aggressive; 9% of the boys and 3% of the girls as relationally aggressive; and 14% of the boys and 3% of the girls as overtly plus relationally aggressive. Relational aggression was related to high peer rejection for both boys and girls. However, it was also related to peer acceptance for boys.

When reporting about peer acceptance, Crick et al. (1997) found that for boys, teacher reports of relational aggression significantly predicted peer reports of peer acceptance, and teacher reports of acceptance by same-sex peers. In addition, peer reports of relational aggression tended to predict teacher reports of acceptance by same-sex peers. These analyses also revealed that, for girls, teacher reports of relational aggression tended to predict peer reports of peer rejection, and teacher reports of depressed affect. In addition, peer reports of relational aggression significantly predicted peer reports of peer rejection.

Taking into account peer perceptions of aggression and gender, Crick, Bigbee, and Howes (1996) investigated whether children view relationally manipulative behaviors as "aggressive", and whether or not children view relationally aggressive behaviors as normative within their peer groups. The two studies were conducted concurrently. The participants in both

studies were predominantly European American from a Midwestern town in grades 4-6. The participants responded to two open-ended questions about what most boys do when they are mad at someone and what most girls do when they are mad at someone. The responses were assigned to behavior categories.

Crick et al. (1996) found that boys cited physical aggression significantly more often as the norm for boys' angry behavior than any other type of behavior. Girls cited relational aggression significantly more often as the norm for angry girl behavior than any other type of behavior. Additionally, boys and girls tended to agree on the behavior boys tend to exhibit; however, boys and girls did not agree on the behaviors girls tend to exhibit when they are angry. The researchers found that boys viewed physical aggression and telling the teacher as normative behaviors for girls. However, girls were significantly more likely than boys to view relational aggression as normative angry behavior for girls. Additionally, boys and girls viewed physical aggression as significantly more normative for boys to exhibit than for girls to exhibit. Girls, however, viewed relational aggression as a more normative angry behavior for girls than boys.

Another interesting find in this first study with regard to grade was that girls' normative beliefs about angry behavior changed with age (Crick et al., 1996). Fourth-grade girls viewed relational aggression as more normative angry behavior than did third-grade girls, and fifth- and sixth-grade girls viewed relational aggression as more normative for girls than did third- and fourth-grade girls.

Research in the area of relational aggression continued to focus on gender based differences with consistent results across studies. Crick and Werner (1998) investigated response decision processes of relationally and overtly aggressive children. The subjects were 1166 third- through sixth-grade predominantly European American boys and girls from moderately sized

central Illinois communities. The children's ages ranged from 9-12 years. The participants participated in two 60-minute classroom sessions over a 1-month period. During the first session, the children completed a peer-nomination instrument to identify overtly aggressive, relationally aggressive, and nonaggressive children. The items fell into the following scales: overt aggression, relational aggression, and prosocial behavior. During the second session, the participants completed a measure designed to assess social information processing. Participants nominated up to three children from their classroom who best fit the behavioral description for each scale item. The authors used the overt and relational aggression scores to classify children into aggression groups. The participants were then presented with a hypothetical-situation instrument, which consisted of six stories: three involved instrumental conflict situations and three involved relational conflicts. The children evaluated one overtly aggressive strategy, one relationally aggressive strategy, and one prosocial strategy in response to each of the six stores. The children rated both their instrumental and relational outcome expectations on a 3-point scale. To assess-self-efficacy beliefs, children rated on a 4-point scale how easy or hard it would be for them to enact each aggressive strategy.

The researchers (Crick & Werner, 1998) found that overtly aggressive children evaluated overtly aggressive conflicts significantly more positive than nonovertly aggressive children did. More specifically, boys evaluated overt aggression in instrumental (overt) conflicts more positively than girls did. With regard to relational aggression, young relationally aggressive children evaluated relational aggression used in instrumental conflicts more positively than nonrelationally aggressive children did. Additionally, the researchers found that girls evaluated relational aggression in relational conflicts more positively than did boys, and boys evaluated overt aggression more positively in relational conflicts than did girls. When the analysis was

conducted with same-sex subjects, the results were the same in that overtly aggressive boys evaluated overt aggression more positively than did nonovertly aggressive boys in instrumental conflict. The same results were found for girls. There was a main effect for grade in that older boys felt that overt aggression was more positive than younger boys. With regard to relational aggression, there was a main effect of relational aggression status, in that relationally aggressive boys evaluated relational aggression more positively than did not relationally aggressive boys; and younger boys evaluated relational aggression more positively than older boys did.

Cairns, Cairns, Neckerman, Ferguson, and Gariepy (1989) followed a group of 209 students over the course of six years as they moved from childhood to early adolescence. The participants completed a series of measures each year to assess their interpersonal competence. Their teachers also competed Interpersonal Competence Scale-teacher edition.

Additionally, Cairns et al. (1989) obtained school nominations for aggressive risk at the beginning of the study from teachers and principals for students whom they believed to be extremely aggressive. They conducted individual, tape-recorded interviews annually. The students were asked "to identify the peers in the school who bothered them or caused them trouble (same sex and opposite sex) and (b) to describe two recent conflicts with peers (one same-sex conflict and one opposite-sex conflict)" (p. 321). Peer nominations for aggressiveness were gathered from peers for the number of times each subject was names by peers as having "bothered them" or "caused them trouble" (p. 322). The researchers reported that obtaining this information became difficult as the children matriculated at different schools. Therefore, the results should be taking with caution.

Cairns et al. (1989) found that as boys aged, their incidences of physical aggression with girls decreased, while this continued to remain their main method of interacting with other boys.

On the other hand, as girls aged, their incidences of physical aggression decreased regardless of the target. Themes of "social aggression" were rarely reported by boys, either in the fourth or seventh grade. However, “by the seventh grade, over one third of the same-gender conflicts among girls (female-female) involved the manipulation of group acceptance through alienation, ostracism, or character defamation” (p. 323). All of these behaviors are features of relational aggression.

The research shows that girls tend to be more relationally aggressive than boys. Girls reported that relational aggression is more the norm in their relationships. This may be due, in part, because for girls, socialization centers on relational issues and forming friendships and alliances through relationships; however, other researchers report contradictory findings with regard to gender and relational aggression.

Contradictory findings in relational aggression research according to gender. Although the previously reported findings have consistently shown a distinct difference between boys and girls with regard to relational aggression, some researchers have reported differing results. In their study, Rys and Bear (1997) attempted to replicate the Crick and Grotpeter (1995) study and examined gender differences with respect to relational aggression and acceptance or rejection by peers. The participants consisted of 131 third graders (61 boys and 70 girls) from nine elementary schools (grades K-3) and 135 sixth graders (71 boys and 64 girls) from five middle schools (grades 4-6) in a mid-Atlantic public school system. Of the participants, 64% were white, 29% African-American, and 7% other minority students. The participants were provided a list of all their classmates and were asked to write the name of three classmates in response to two questions “"Which of the people in your class do you like to play with the most?" and 'Which of the people in your class do you like to play with the least?" Frequency scores were

calculated for each child for both positive and negative nominations and raw scores were standardized within classrooms.

Rys and Bear (1997) collected information about each child's friendships by asking the children to name their "best" friends in the class. They used a peer nomination measure developed by Crick and Grotpeter (1995) to assess children's aggressive and prosocial interactions. The CSBS-T is a teacher rating version of the peer nomination instrument previously described (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995).

Rys and Bear (1997) reported that contrary to the results of Crick and Gropeter (1995), they did not find, in general, that girls were more relationally aggressive than boys were. "A multivariate analysis of variance on the peer nomination measures of relational aggression, overt aggression, and prosocial behavior, showed a significant multivariate effect for gender, $F(3, 260) = 23.93$, $p < .001$ (p. 94).

Rys and Bear (1997) noted that they did not classify the students into aggression groups the same way Crick and Grotpeter (1995) did in their study. However, when they used this classification method, gender differences emerged with regard to relational aggression. For girls, negative nominations were more strongly associated with relational aggression than with overt aggression. However, this difference was only statistically significant in the sixth grade. Among girls, only one measure of aggression, the peer measure of relational aggression in third grade, correlated significantly and negatively with positive nominations. Additionally, among both younger and older girls, relational aggression added significantly to the prediction of peer rejection. Relationally aggressive girls were also found to have a reciprocal friend. As previously reported, Crick et al. (1996) found that, although boys and girls engaged in the same level of relational aggression, the social and emotional effects of relational aggression were greater for

girls than for boys. Thus, what was once called “female aggression” is now known to exist in both males and females. Girls, however, reported that relational aggression and verbal insults were more harmful, whereas boys more frequently cited physical aggression as harmful.

In several other studies, boys obtained higher ratings than girls for both overt and relational aggression. Hennington, Hughes, Cavell, and Thompson (1998) wanted to determine gender differences in levels and correlates of relational and overt aggression in children in the early elementary grades and to determine the implications of assessing relational aggression when identifying children for an intervention. Fifty-six general education teachers from six elementary schools identified two or three children who met a particular behavioral description of aggressive to participate in one of two mentoring programs. They also obtained peer ratings from the classrooms in which at a least one child was nominated for the study. The racial make up of the 904 participants was as follows: was 47.5% Caucasian, 25% African-American, 24.5% Hispanic, and 3% other.

In order to obtain information on their peers, Hennington et al. (1998) asked the children to pretend that they were directors of a class play, and to choose three of their classmates who would best fit into different parts described in the play. They nominated three classmates who fit a description of a relationally aggressive child and three classmates that fit the description of an overtly aggressive child. The description of a relationally aggressive child comprised those descriptors that Crick and Grotpeter (1995) found correlated with relational aggression, such as “tell rumors or mean lies about someone they are mad at” (p. 461). Likewise, the description of an overtly aggressive child comprised those descriptions that correlated with overt aggression, such as “These children pick on kids, start fights, beat up others, and hit or push other kids a lot”(p. 461). The children also nominated three children who met the description of friendly and

cooperative, withdrawn/depressed, or victimized, and these scores were standardized. The children also rated each same-gender peer on a 5-point Likert-type scale with respect to how much they like to play with this person. One was treated as a "like least" nomination. They also nominated three same gender classmates who they" like to play with the most" (p. 462). The teachers completed the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) for a subsample of 112 students for which they obtained parental consent to match sociometric data to the child's name.

Hennington et al. (1998) found that girls were rarely perceived by their peers as exhibiting high levels of overt aggression. Additionally, a one-way analysis of variance found that boys were more aggressive than girls for both types of aggression (relational and overt). Both types of aggression were positively related to negative peer evaluations. These findings were contrary to the results obtained by Crick and Grotpeter (1995). However, the fact the participants were identified as aggressive before the study may have affected the results.

David and Kistner (2000) investigated whether positively biased self-perceptions were associated with elevated levels of aggression in elementary school-age children. The participants were 859 children in third, fourth, and fifth grades at nine public elementary schools in northern Florida. The participants came from both urban and suburban areas. The distribution of ethnicity in this sample was 69% Caucasian and 31% African American. The researchers gave participants a roster of the students in the class and asked them to rate how much they liked each classmate. They then presented participants with another roster of the students in the class and asked them to predict the rating they would receive from each classmate. The authors created a measure of perceptual bias by regressing participants' perceived acceptance onto their actual acceptance. They assessed participants' level of aggression using the peer nomination measure created by Crick and Grotpeter (1995).

David and Kistner (2000) found that males received lower peer ratings of acceptance than females. Additionally, females reported more positive perceived acceptance than males, and African-American participants reported more positive perceptions of their social acceptance than Caucasian peers did. Males were nominated more frequently for overt and relational aggression than females. African-American participants were perceived by peers as significantly more overtly and relationally aggressive than Caucasian students. The researchers reported that the variations in the sample may have been a reason they achieved different results than in the Crick and Grotpeter (1995) study.

However, other researchers have reported no gender differences in the prevalence of relational aggression. Tiet, Wassermnan, Loeber, McReynolds, and Miller (2001) examined a range of different antisocial behavior problems, including relational aggression in boys and girls from a high-risk sample. The also investigated sex differences, and whether or not the results varied with age. This was a three-year assessment on "children at risk for developing antisocial behavior by virtue of family history, male sex, and urban residence" (p. 183). After losing some participants because of age and attrition, the total sample consisted of 228 boys and 80 girls. The ethnic composition of the sample was as follows: 54% of the families were African American, 42% Hispanic, and 4% of "Other" ethnicity.

Mothers completed the Child Behavior Check List (CBCL), as well as the Indicators of Conduct Problems (ICP). The ICP was developed from maternal reported conduct problems by Loeber, Farrington, Stouthamer-Loeber, and Van Kammen (1998) in an effort to expand on the conduct problems measured by the CBCL.

Tiet et al. (2001) found that although boys showed significantly higher levels of physical aggression than girls did, there was no significant sex effects for relational aggression.

Additionally, the mean scores for the Relational Aggression subscale, for both boys and girls, were higher than those for Physical Aggression. "Results showed that relatively equal proportions of girls and boys were classified as relationally aggressive (12.5% and 13.2% respectively), and the difference was not statistically different" (p. 192).

Similarly, Maresee, Silverton, and Frick (2005) investigated the association of psychopathic traits with aggression and delinquency. The subjects were 235 non-referred boys and girls fifth through ninth grades at two public schools in a large urban area. The participants were predominantly African American (60%). They assessed aggressive and prosocial behavior using the Ratings of Children's Social Behavior (RCSB; Crick, 1996), antisocial behavior was assessed using the Antisocial Process Screening Device (APSD; Frick & Hare, 2001). Both the participant and the teacher completed the appropriate version of this measure. Last, the students completed the Self-Report of Delinquency (SRD; Elliott, Huizinga, & Ageton, 1985) that assesses delinquent acts committed in the past 12 months. The students completed their assessments during class and the teachers completed their measure over a three-week period.

Maresee et. al (2005) found that "boys reported more overt aggression and delinquency, and were rated by teachers as showing more psychopathic traits" (p. 810). The result most pertinent to the current study was that there was no significant association between gender and relational aggression. Finally, ethnicity was generally not significantly associated with most variables, with the exception of a correlation between ethnicity and overt aggression indicating that ethnic minority students reported higher levels of overt aggression.

These inconsistencies in the literature may be in part due to the differences in the selection criteria and the ethnic make up of the populations examined by the various researchers. In some cases, the participants were already identified as having difficulties with aggressive

behavior as in the Tiet et. al (2001) study. In other studies, only a small percentage of African American subjects participated (David & Kistner, 2000; Hennington et al., 1998; Rys & Bear, 1997). Ethnicity may play a role in the results but some groups were represented in such small numbers, and genealizeability of the results of the research studies should be questioned.

In one of the very few studies of predominantly African-American participants, Waasdorp and Bradshaw (2009) investigated children's and parent's beliefs about relational aggression and children's coping strategies when experiencing relational aggression in close friendships. Fifty-four children in forth and fifth classes from five public schools in an urban low-income neighborhood and their parents (mostly mothers) participated in the study. Eighty-two percent of the participants were African American. The parents completed a demographic questionnaire, as well as a questionnaire about their children's beliefs about relational aggression. The children responded to a series of questions about "the sex and age of their closest friends, their satisfaction with their friendship, and whether they experienced relational aggression within their friendship" (p. 733). The child's perception of the harmfulness of relational aggression was assessed using the Indirect Social and Relational Aggression scale (Coyne et al., 2006) and a modified version of the Survey for Coping with Rejection Experiences (Sandstrom, 2004).

Waasdorp and Bradshaw (2009) found a significant difference between boys and girls, as well as between children and parents. Parents perceived their children as being happier about their friendships than the children reported, and boys reported being happier with their close friendships than girls did. Additionally, both boys and girls reported that relationally aggressive behaviors were common among friends. Parents underestimated the frequency with which relational aggression occurred within their children's friendships. There was no significant sex

difference when reporting who was more likely to experience relational aggression and most children reported that boys and girls experience it equally. Girls tended to rate relational aggression more harmful than boys. Both boys and girls indicated relational aggression to be the most harmful behavior a friend could do.

Contradictory findings for male and female participants show that relational aggression affects both males and females. Although relational aggression was once believed to be a female form of aggression, males are also victims of relational aggression. One of the mitigating factors for victimization or perpetration of relational aggression may be the age of the participants. Age should be considered to determine the differences in perpetration and victimization of relational aggression.

Relational Aggression and Age

In addition to gender, age is an important variable in the study of relational aggression. Researchers have found that a girl's developmental level may affect her tendency to be relationally aggressive. Young girls appear to use more direct forms for aggression and become more relationally aggressive as they mature and develop more advanced social skills (Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, & Peltonen, 1988). As previously reported, Crick et al. (1996), who analyzed peer nomination and teacher measures across grades, found that girls' beliefs about the way girls behave when they are angry changed over time. As girls aged, relationally aggressive behaviors became more and more the normal way to respond. The results of this study showed that fourth-grade girls viewed relational aggression as more normative angry behavior than did third-grade girls, and fifth- and sixth-grade girls viewed relational aggression as more normative for girls than did third- and fourth-grade girls. Crick et al. (1996) found that, as girls moved from middle childhood to adolescence, themes of social exclusion became more common in girls' peer

conflicts. Later childhood and preadolescence bring challenges to forming friendships**.**

Bjorkqvist, Osterman, and Kaukiainen (1992) investigated relational aggression among children and young adults. In a study of children ages 8, 11, 15 and 18, the researchers found girls to be more relationally aggressive than boys. They also found that, as girls moved from age 8 to age 11, relationally aggressive behaviors increased. However, this trend was not reported for boys. As previously mentioned, through the use of peer nomination and teacher measures, Crick and Grotpeter (1995) also reported that girls were more relationally aggressive than boys were when studying third through sixth grade participants. In contrast, Kistner et al. (2010) found that in the third grade, boys received more relational aggression nominations than girls. However, by the end of the fifth grade, girls received more relational aggression nominations than boys. Bjorkqvist et al. (1994) suggested that this increase in relational aggression among girls as they age may be a result of increased verbal skills. More subtle aggression forms, such as relational, social, and indirect aggression, may increase as children develop the verbal and social-cognitive skills necessary to execute more subtle forms of aggression effectively.

Adolescents use relational aggression for many reasons, but primarily to maintain social prominence or perceived popularity (Rose, Swenson, & Waller, 2004). It can also include damaging social relationships and reputations through manipulation (Kistner et al., 2010).

Due to its covert nature, relational aggression often goes unseen or overlooked by school administration and teachers. Even when adults identify relational aggression, they often mistake it for typical adolescent behavior (Casey-Cannon et al., 2001), and frequently ignore it leading to a lack of concern and intervention in these situations. However, not taking relational aggression seriously can be a costly error. The consequences of relational aggression affect both males and females, but research shows that relational aggression wounds girls differently than it does boys.

Outcomes of Relational Aggression

Crick (1996) and Crick and Dodge (1996) provided the first evidence of the relative stability of relational aggression over time, as well as its predictive nature for future social maladjustment. Crick (1997) found that teachers perceived overtly aggressive and relationally aggressive children as more maladjusted than their peers, who were not identified as overtly or relationally aggressive. Crick and Nelson (2002) investigated gender differences in physical and relational victimization and "whether, as has been shown in past studies of peer victimization, friend victimization is associated with significant social–psychological adjustment problems for children" (p. 600). The participants were 496 boys and girls in the fourth through sixth grades. The sample was predominantly European American (84.3%).

To identify mutual friendships, they provided participants a class roster and asked them to select up to three classmates that they considered their first, second, and third best friends. Participants completed several scales to obtain the necessary information. Friend relational and physical victimization were assessed with the Friend Relational and Physical Aggression subscales of the Friendship Qualities Measure—Self-Report (FQM-S; Grotpeter & Crick, 1996). Additionally, a "peer-nomination sociometric was administered that included peer rejection and peer acceptance items (i.e., nominations of disliked and liked peers; Coie & Dodge, 1983)" (Crick & Nelson, 2002, p. 601). The Franke and Hymel (1984) Social Anxiety Scale assessed self-reports of social anxiety and avoidance. Loneliness and social dissatisfaction were measured using the Asher and Wheeler (1995) measure. Last, the teacher form of the Child Behavior Checklist assessed children's internalizing and externalizing problems.

The researchers reported that friend victimization was related to adjustment difficulties for both boys and girls. More specifically, "for girls, friend relational victimization was related

to relatively high levels of social anxiety, social avoidance, loneliness, psychological distress, externalizing difficulties, and relatively low levels of self restraint" (Crick & Nelson, 2002, p. 604). Sullivan et al. (2006) also found relational victimization was strongly related to physical aggression and marijuana use among girls. Additionally, Smith et al. (2004) found that students, 13-16 year-old predominantly European American high school girls and boys who were continual victims of bullying, regardless of gender, had fewer friends in school, and were more likely to be involved in bullying others. O'Moore and Kirkham (2001) found that children of both primary and post-primary ages who were involved in bullying as victims, bullies, or both had a significantly lower global self-esteem than students not involved in bullying. Groptpeter (1995) found that relationally aggressive children perceived themselves as not being accepted by their peers and felt more isolated from peers than nonaggressive boys and girls.

Although reported for both genders, relational aggression appears to reach to the heart of female socialization. Girls' socialization is somewhat different from that of boys. Girls tend to socialize in small groups, sharing personal experiences, secrets, and allowing for intimate talks. Boys' socialization appears to focus on physical activities, such as playing games in the schoolyard and sports as boys get older. Girls' development emphasizes emotional and interpersonal situations and events (Goodwin, 2002). Girls value talking among groups of girls and the sharing of social information or sharing others' secrets. This creates intimacy within these groups and thus, the ability to gossip about others could mean group inclusion (Owens, Shute, & Slee, 2000). It appears that an effective way to damage a girl's self-esteem and self-worth is to manipulate her relationships within her peer group, which is precisely the aim of relational aggression (Goodwin, 2002). It is clear that the consequences of relational aggression can have far-reaching effects on both the victims and the perpetrators of this form of aggression

(Casey-Cannon et al., 2001).

Cullerton-Sen and Crick (2005) examined the relation between teacher reports of victimization and indices of social-emotional adjustment and whether teacher reports would offer a unique perspective on students' adjustment not accounted for by peer and self-reports. The participants of this study were 119 fourth grade boys and girls. The ethnicity of the subjects was predominantly European-American and African-American. The children's perceptions of peer victimization were assessed using the Social Experience Questionnaire-Self-Report (SEQ-S; Crick & Bigbee, 1998). Peer reports of victimization were obtained through a class-wide administration of a modified version of the Social Experience Questionnaire-Peer Report (SEQ-P, Crick & Bigbee, 1998). Teachers completed the Social Experience Questionnaire-Teacher Report (SEQ-T), which was developed for use in this study. The researchers obtained information on adjustment as assessed by peers via peer reports. The children identified three children with whom they liked to play and three children with whom they did not like to play. The number of nominations children received on each item was standardized and used as a measure of acceptance and rejection. Last, teacher reports of adjustment were obtained using the Child Behavior Checklist, Teacher Form (CBCL, Achenbach, 1991).

Cullerton-Sen and Crick (2005) found that teacher reports of relational victimization were distinct from reports of physical victimization and were uniquely related to children's adjustment problems. This was particularly for their experiences of peer rejection and internalizing and externalizing difficulties. Additionally, peer and teacher reports indicated that girls were more relationally victimized than physically victimized.

Casey-Cannon et al. (2001) investigated peer victimization in middle school girls and the consequences of these interactions. This study was apart of a larger study conducted by Gowen,

Hayward, and Compain (2000) in which 157 seventh-grade female students participated. There were no African American participants in this study. Twenty of these girls were selected for a follow-up qualitative interview one year after the initial data collection. As part of the larger study, the girls were asked to complete the Social Experience Questionnaire (SEQ) created by Crick and Grotpeter (1996). These girls then participated in qualitative interview in which they were asked about there interactions with their peers.

Due to the small sample size of 20, Casey-Cannon et al. (2001) did not conduct statistical analyses and they reported the SEQ results as a count of victimization behaviors. The results that were most pertinent to the current study were that victims of relational aggression tended to be depressed, anxious, and have lower self-esteem. Additionally, the girls reported that the relational aggression behaviors they experienced most often were being excluded from a peer group, having lies told about them, and being left out. Some girls reported that being relationally bullied affected the way they felt about themselves. Yoon et al. (2004) argued that relational aggression in middle childhood and adolescence might have more impact because of developmental milestones involving interpersonal skills during these years. The desire to "fit in" appears to leave children vulnerable.

The effects of relational aggression appear to have long-term consequences. Werner and Crick (1999) investigated relational aggression and social-psychological adjustment in a sample of young adults. The researchers recruited 225 male and female undergraduate students from a large Midwestern University. The sample consisted primarily of European Americans (94%) who ranged in age from 18 to 23. The participants were recruited from seven university-affiliated fraternities and sororities.

Werner and Crick (1999) used a peer-nomination instrument to assess aggression and social adjustment. There were subscales that assessed aggressive behaviors, prosocial behavior, and a peer sociometric. Relational aggression was assessed with seven items. The researchers reported that the items were generated by adapting those used in childhood studies of relational aggression, and some items were constructed based on information collected in another study of relational aggression and college students. The researchers also used several self-report measures to assess social-psychological adjustment. The Eating Attitudes Test (EAT; Garner & Garfinkel, 1979) assessed symptoms of anorexia and bulimia. Life satisfaction was assessed by participants' perceptions of overall life satisfaction. Last, the Personality Assessment Inventory (PAI; Morey, 1991) was used to "assess features of the adult personality, wellbeing, and clinical symptomatology" (p. 617). The PAI assessed the following features: stress, perceptions of nonsupport, depression, antisocial personality features and borderline personality features. Participants completed the peer-nomination instrument and self-report measures individually during group sessions conducted within each organization.

Werner and Crick (1999) found that relational aggression was positively correlated with peer rejection and egocentricity for men. The researchers found that:

> For women, relational aggression was positively correlated with peer rejection, antisocial behavior, stimulus-seeking, egocentricity, affective instability, identity problems, negative relationships, self-harm behavior, affective features of depression, and bulimic symptoms, and it was negatively correlated with life satisfaction. (p. 619)

In all cases, relational aggression was associated with higher levels of maladjustment. Higher scores on relational aggression were associated with more severe bulimic symptomatology for women.

In another study, Gomes et al. (2009) investigated the link between the experience of peer relational aggression victimization (PRAV) and depression. They conducted the study in an historically black college. The study participants consisted of 241 African American freshman girls in an introductory college course. The participants completed the Beck Depression Inventory-II and the Self-Report of Aggression and Social Behavior Measure. The participants completed the two measures at the Behavioral Research Center at the school.

Gomes et. al (2009) found that peer relational aggression victimization was significantly correlated with depression r (214) = 0.29, $p < .01$. It is clear that, while relational aggression leaves no visible scars, its ramifications can be just as damaging as experiencing physical aggression (Merrill et al., 2006). The research suggests that the effects of relational aggression are far reaching and are experienced by very young children as well as young adults.

The above studies show that relational aggression has been found to be associated with internalizing disorders, eating disorders, depression, and peer rejection, antisocial behavior, stimulus seeking, egocentricity, affective instability, identity problems, negative relationships, self-harm behavior, affective features. These effects can be far reaching and have implications for the quality of life of the individuals affected. This list of difficulties cannot be overlooked and further research must be conducted to study if these difficulties are found in all ethnicities when people experience relational aggression.

Relational aggression and African American girls. While some of the studies cited above had participants from ethnic minorities, generally there is limited relational aggression research that focuses on individuals who are members of families who live in low SES areas or who are people of color. One such study by Talbott, Celinska, Simpson, and Coe (2002) examined the connection of physical and relational aggression for a population of sixth through

eighth grade predominantly African America and Latina girls students from a low income neighborhood. The participants were 30 girls in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. The students attending the school where the study was conducted were considered high risk because of socio-economic factors, as well as below grade level academic progress.

The teachers of the participants completed the Conner's Teacher Rating Scale-Revised to obtain mental health information for the participants. The girls were interviewed individually, and audio recorded, in the school during one 30-minute session. The researcher asked the girls to describe each conflict, fight, or disagreement they had with their peers. The interviewer took notes and coded their responses by the type of episode that each participant described. The categories were as follows: physical aggression, physical confrontation, verbal confrontation, name-calling, social aggression, and verbal-argument. The results of this study suggested that relationally aggressive behaviors among girls are often precursors to physical aggression and create a cycle in which the girls are both the perpetrators and the victims of aggression (Talbott et al., 2002).

Putallaz et al. (2007) investigated overt and relational victimization across multiple perspectives in the school setting. The participants in this study were two successive cohorts of fourth grade public school children from a midsized southwestern city. A total of 1397 boys and girls from 13 different schools participated in the study. The majority of the participants were African American (52%) and European American (42%), but also included Asian (3%) and Hispanic (2%) children. All of the children nominated all their peers who they felt fell into a the categories that were presented to them such as "who fights a lot" or "who they like most." The authors then classified the children as popular, rejected, average, or controversial based on the criteria specified in a previous study by Coie, Dodge, and Coppotelli (1982).

Putallaz et al. (2007) selected a target sample of 238 girls (119 African American, 119 European American) for more detailed study. The teachers of the participating students completed questionnaires evaluating the girls on several dimensions. The measure used in this study was adapted from the Teacher Checklist of Social Behavior (Coie, Terry, Underwood, & Dodge, 1992). The measure consisted of 82 items and 15 scales measuring aggression, relational aggression, overt victimization, relational victimization, and hyperactivity to name a few. Researchers also conducted lunch room observations of each girl, during lunch time on five separate occasions. They coded the behaviors that the girls exhibited using a 21-item behavioral coding system. Last, the participants completed the child Depression Inventory (CDI; Kovacs, 1981), the Social Anxiety Scale for Children-Revised (SASC-R; LaGreca & Stone, 1993), and the Children's Loneliness Scale (Asher & Wheeler, 1985). The target girls also completed Crick and Grotpeter's (1996) self-report measure of peer victimization.

Putallaz et al. (2007) found that, overall, girls were perceived by peers as more likely victims of relational aggression and boys were more likely to be seen as victims of overt aggression. African American children were seen by their peers, as well as by lunchroom observers, as more overtly aggressive than European American children. Conversely, European American girls were reported by peers and teachers to use relational aggression more often when compared to overt aggression. In the target group, teachers perceived African American girls to be higher in both forms of aggression and victimization than their European peers. Teachers thought that children whom they perceived as high on relational victimization avoided social situations. These girls were observed in the lunchroom to be sad and reported feeling lonely. Both European and African American girls showed a greater tendency towards relational aggression and victimization than overt aggression and victimization. Poor adjustment was also

found to be high in both of these groups.

Wassdorp and Bradshaw (2009) investigated child and parent perceptions of relational aggression within urban predominantly African American children's friendships. Fifty-four children and a parent participated in the study. More than half of the participants were female (53%) and most of the parents who participated were mothers (81.5%). The participants were predominantly African American (82%), 13.0% were White, 3.7% identified themselves as Latino(a)/Hispanic, and the remaining identified themselves as other/mixed.

The parents and children completed a brief demographic questionnaire. The children then answered a series of questions about their friendships, such as the age of the close friends and their satisfaction with the friendship. The parents responded to similar items in which "they reported their perceptions of their child's friendships and experiences with relation aggression" (Wassdorp & Bradshaw, 2009, p. 733). The children's beliefs about relational aggression were assessed, as well as the parents' perception of relational aggression that occurred within their children's friendships. The child's perception of the harmfulness of relational aggression was assessed using the Indirect, Social, and Relational Aggression Scale (ISRA; Coyne et al., 2006). Parents then rated how their child would perceive each behavior. The way the participants coped with relational aggression was assessed with a modified version of the Survey for Coping with Rejection Experiences (SCORE; Sandstrom, 2004). Last, to find out who the child would go to for support when experiencing relational aggression, the children responded to a series of three questions. Parents responded to three parallel questions about the frequency with which they perceive their child would seek support from a parent, a teacher, and another adult.

Waasdorp and Bradshaw (2009) found that parents perceived their children to be happier than the children reported. The researchers did not find a significant sex differences in the

students perceived harmfulness. Both boys and girls reported that relationally aggressive behavior was the most harmful aggressive behavior a friend could do. Additionally, boys reported being happier with their close friendships than girls. With regards to beliefs about relational aggression, parents perceived that relational aggression happened less than the children reported it happening, and some parents believed that relationally aggressive behaviors were not as stressful as children perceive them to be. Both boys and girls reported using ruminative/avoidance most when dealing with relational aggression. Parents underestimated the use of these strategies. Parents also thought their children would come to them for support; however, girls reported that they would turn to their teachers and boys reported that they would seek support from another adult if they were the victim of a relationally aggressive. Girls and their parents did not differ on the perceived harm of relational aggression.

Williams, Ferdland, Han, Campbell, and Kub (2009) examined relational aggression and its relationship to psychosocial and physical health symptoms. The sample in this study consisted of 185 predominantly African American (95.1%) seventh-grade students. The participants were 109 females and 76 males participated. The participants attended four urban middle schools in a mid-Atlantic state. The students completed the Children's Social Behavior Scale-Self Report that assessed perpetration of relational aggression. They also completed the Social Experience Questionnaire, which measures relational victimization. Last, the authors measured psychosocial difficulties using the Pediatric Symptom Checklist Youth Report (Y-PSC; Jellinek et al., 1988).

Williams et al. (2009) found that males were significantly more likely to report being a victim of relational aggression; however, there was no significant gender differences for perpetration of relational aggression. As for the psychosocial and physical health symptoms in this sample of participants, the most common problem reported were internalizing behaviors,

which were not delineated. As for health symptoms, the majority of the students reported having colds/flu, headaches, and stomach aches. It should be noted that there was a significant difference with reports of headaches "with females reporting these symptoms "always" more than males" (p. 493). The results of these studies indicate that relational aggression in an African American sample may play out differently than it does in a sample of White students. Additional research is needed with this population as the predominant participants to determine if similar results are achieved. This will help extend the research on the way African American girls develop friendships.

Parenting Styles and Children's Aggression

Research has shown that children learn how to interact with others through their interactions with their caregivers. The parent-child relationship is the primary relationship children have with another person. Children depend on their parents to have our basic needs met, as well as for love, support, and comfort. This relationship is the first example of how to interact with another person. How parents interact with their children at a young age may have behavioral, as well as, psychological implications for the child.

Shirely Brice Heath discussed the language development of children living in urban and rural settings. Heath (1989) reported that "When children learn language, they take in more than forms of grammar. They learn to make sense of the social world in which they live and how to adapt to its dynamic social interactions and role relations (pg. 367)". When speaking specifically about African American children, Heath reports that in rural settings, specifically with her experiences in Trackton, African American children learn from their interactions with multiple members of their community. The children developed both oral and written language skills that helped them to navigate their environments. Heath (1983) provides accounts of the different

ways boys and girls learn to use language. In Trackton, boys learn how to use language when they are challenged by older men in the community. It is reported that girls, on the other hand, learn through "fussing" with other girls.

However, Heath (1989) contrasts these interactions and experiences with African American children living in urban settings. Heath reports that urban living "forces such young mothers into dyadic rather than multi-party interactions with their children"(p. 369). This lack of multiple person interaction causes children to lose some of the skills seen in the interactions among rural families. This research implies that African American children in dyadic interactions with their mothers may be deficient in some of the skills that were once part of the rural African American experience. **S**tudies conducted by Bandura and colleagues (Bandura & Huston, 1961; Bandura et al., 1961) found that children learn behaviors that parents model for them. Therefore, if, according to Heath, African American children living in urban settings are exposed to fewer examples, this have implications as to how they interpret social information.

Baumrind is well-known for developing a classification for parenting styles. Her parenting style descriptions were first published in 1966. Baumrind identified three styles: authoritative, authoritarian and permissive. She modified her descriptions as a result of her 1967 study. These additions have been added to her descriptions of the following parenting styles.

According to Baumrind (1966), the authoritative parent "attempts to direct the child's activities but in a rational, issue-oriented manner" (p. 891). This parent encourages verbal interactions with the child and will share the reason behind her decisions; however, this parent also wants to hear the child's objections when she does not want to conform to what he is being told.

According to Baumrind (1966):

> This parent wants the child to be autonomous, yet exercise disciplined conformity. The parent exerts firm control when she and the child may differ, but is not so restricting that the child is not able to themselves. As the adult, she enforces her own perspective, but recognizes that the child has her own interests and is special in her own way. This parent affirms the child's present qualities; however, she sets and communicates the expected standards for the child's behavior in the future. This parent uses reason, power, and shaping by regime and reinforcement to achieve her objectives, and does not base her decisions on group consensus or the individual child's desires. The parent understands that she may make mistakes along the way (p. 891).

Baumrind (1966) described the permissive parent as:

> non-punitive, acceptant, and affirmative manner towards the child's impulses, desires, and actions. This parent consults with the child about the policies and decisions, and gives explanations for the rules. The parent makes very few demand for orderly behavior. This parent presents herself as a resource for the child to use as she may wish, and not as an example for the child to model, nor as an active participant in shaping or altering the child's behavior, present, or future. This parent allows the child to largely regulate her own activities and avoids the exercise of control. This parent does not encourage obeying externally defined standards and attempts to use reason and manipulation, but not overt power to accomplish her ends (p. 889).

Lastly, the authoritarian parent:

> attempts to shape, control, and evaluate the behavior and attitudes of the child in accordance with a set standard of conduct, which are usually absolute (Baumrind, 1966).

> This parent values obedience as a virtue and prefers to use punitive, forceful measures to control self-will when the child's actions or beliefs are in conflict with what the parent thinks is right. This parent believes that a child should know her place, and believes in keeping her there. She does this primarily by restricting autonomy. This parent regards the preservation of order and traditional structure as a highly valued end in itself. This parent does not encourage verbal give and take, believing that the child should accept the parent's word for what is right (p. 890).

In the 1967 study, Baumrind examined the relationship of parenting style to the behavior of preschool children. The participants in the study were 32 children between the ages of three and four. Teachers and independent observers categorized the participants along five dimensions: Self-control, approach-avoidance, self-reliance, subjective mood, and peer affiliation. Parental influence/style was measured by the amount of parental maturity demands on the child, degree of communication between the parent and the child, and how nurturing or warm the parent reported being toward the child.

Baumrind (1967) found that children of authoritative parents were more mature, independent, and achievement oriented than children raised by parents who used other types of parenting styles. The effects of a permissive parenting style showed the worst outcomes, in that the children raised by parents who used this style were the least competent, and had low levels of self-control and self-reliance. Children who had authoritarian parents were reported to be less happy and less trusting. These children also were reported to show signs of withdrawing from their peers. Baumrind's research found that authoritarian and permissive parenting styles were associated with higher rates of physical aggression in preschool-aged children. However, she did not make a direct link between parenting styles and relational aggression.

Authoritarian parents who use physical punishment to discipline their children may inadvertently be teaching them that physically aggressive behaviors are appropriate when interacting with others. In contrast to children of children of authoritarian parents, children of authoritative parents were well adjusted. In a follow up study, Baumrind (1989) found that the effects of parenting type continued when the children were in middle school. Children of authoritative parents scored higher on measures of self-esteem and academic performance than did children of authoritarian parents when tested in middle school. Children with authoritative parents also appeared to be well-adjusted, reporting fewer problem behaviors, fewer internalized distresses, and a more positive school attitude

Several researchers have looked at the relationship between parenting styles and children's externalizing behaviors, social adjustment, and academic achievement. A study by Chen, Dong, and Zhou (1997) examined the relations between authoritative and authoritarian parenting practices and social adjustment and academic achievement in Chinese children. A total of 304 second-grade children (161 males and 143 females) attending two elementary schools that were randomly selected in Beijing, People's Republic of China participated in the study. Mothers and fathers provided data about child-rearing practices and family background. The majority of the children were from parents who were described as " ordinary workers", and the rest of the children were from professional families. Due to China's "one child per family" policy, almost all of the children were only children. The majority of the children (96%) lived with both parents.

The children completed a peer assessment measure of social behavior called the Revised Class Play (Masten, Morison, & Pelligrini, 1985). Children also nominated three of their peers whom they liked to be with the most and three peers whom they liked to be with the least. The

nominations received from all classmates were totaled and standardized within each class to permit appropriate comparisons. The teachers completed a measure that provided information about the children's school-related competence and problems (The Teacher Child Rating Scale; Hightower et al., 1986). Parents completed the Chinese version of Block's Child Rearing Practices Report (CRPR; Block, 1981) that provided information about parent's beliefs and child rearing processes. Finally, school administrative records provided information on children's social achievement and academic achievement in Chinese and mathematics.

Chen et al. (1997) found that authoritarian parenting was associated positively with aggression in children and was negatively associated with peer acceptance, sociability-competence, and school academic achievement. The authoritative parenting style was associated positively with social and school adjustment and negatively with adjustment problems. Authoritative style of both parents was significantly and positively correlated with peer sociometric preference, sociability-competence, distinguished studentship, and school achievement.

Dornbush et al. (1987) extend Baumrind's typology to a larger and more ethnically diverse sample of adolescents. The participants were 7,836 high school students enrolled in six schools in the San Fransico Bay area. The participants completed a questionnaire that asked questions about their ethnic background, information about their parent's education, self-report information on their grades, perceptions of parental attitudes and behaviors, family communication patterns. Participants also completed a parenting style questionnaire based on Baumrind's typology (authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive) and each of their parents were assigned a style. Grades were used as a measure of academic performance at the suggestion of

school officials. The researchers then analyzed school grades and parenting styles to the influence of parenting style on academic success.

Dornbush et al. (1987) found that females were less likely to perceive their parents as authoritarian. Additionally, as the age of the participants increased, they were less likely to perceive their parents' style as authoritarian. This was also the case for permissive parenting style. Authoritarian and permissive parenting styles had significant negative correlations with grades and authoritative parenting was significantly and positively correlated with grades.

Steinberg, Elmen, and Mounts (1989) conducted a study of the over-time relationship among three aspects of authoritative parenting and school achievement. The researchers were interested in finding out if authoritative parenting facilitated schools success rather than just being associated with school success. One hundred and twenty children ages 10-16 from a Madison, Wisconsin school district participated. The participants were predominantly white (88%) from various socioeconomic levels. The authors collected data from the adolescents during school and home visits one year, and again a year later. The participants completed the following measures: a revised version of the Child Report of Parent Behavior Inventory (CRPBI), a checklist concerning 17 areas of family decision making on issues relevant to children in the age range studied, and a 10 item subscales of the autonomy scale of the Psychological Maturity Inventory. Last, the authors averaged each student's test scores on the verbal and mathematics California Achievement Tests and obtained school grades from school records.

The results of this study (Steinberg et al., 1989) showed that it was likely that authoritative parenting facilitates academic achievement, because adolescents who describe their parents as granting them greater psychological autonomy and high levels of involvement showed

greater increases in grades over the one year period of this study. Authoritative parenting also had a positive impact on psychosocial maturity, which had a high impact on school achievement. Additionally, the researchers found that the three components of authoritative parenting (parental acceptance, psychological autonomy, and behavioral control) each made individual contributions to an adolescent's academic achievement. Authoritative parenting fostered the development of a healthy sense of autonomy. Steinberg(2001) also found that adolescents from authoritative homes achieve more in school, report less depressions, and anxiety, score higher on measure of self-esteem and self-reliance, and are less likely to engage in antisocial behaviors including delinquency and drug abuse. Additionally, this research also reported that longitudinal studies show that authoritative parenting influences adolescent competence over time.

Steinberg, Dornbusch, and Brown (1992) also found that adolescent competence is higher among young people raised in authoritative homes when compared to young people raised in authoritarian and permissive homes. Additionally, with regards to psychosocial development, psychological distress and behavior problems, children from authoritative homes performed better on measures in the previously mentioned areas than their peers from nonauthoritative homes in all ethnic groups. However, when the researchers looked specifically at minority families, the researchers found that within African-American and Asian-American groups, children who had authoritative parents did not perform better academically than children whose parents were not authoritative. The researchers found that regardless of their parents' practices, Asian-American students received higher grades in school than other students and African-American students received relatively lower grades than other students. Additionally, Steinber, Smrekar and Walker (2002) found that authoritative parenting is less prevalent among African-American, Asian-American, or Hispanic families than it is among European-American families.

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Querido et al. (2002) focused specifically on African American preschool children and parenting styles and the relationship to the children's behavior. They recruited 108 African American caregivers of preschool children ages 3 through 6 years old from a waiting room of a pediatric dentistry clinic. Fifty three percent of the parents and caregivers were single parents /caregivers.

The participants rated the children on the Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory, which is a parent report of disruptive behavior. None of the participants rated the children's behaviors to be in the clinical range. The participants also completed the African American Acculturation Scale-33,which measures 10 dimensions of African American culture. High scores on this scale indicate a more traditional cultural orientation and low scores correspond to a more acculturated orientation. On average, the participants endorsed a bicultural orientation. They also completed the Parenting Styles and Dimensions measure that was based on the Robinson, Mandelo, Olson, and Hart (1995) Parenting Styles Questionnaire.

Queido et al. (2002) found that parent-reported child behaviors were significantly associated with maternal education, income, and all three parenting styles. Caregivers who reported higher levels of behavior problems tended to have lower education and income and to endorse the permissive and authoritarian parenting styles. Additionally, lower maternal education was associated with permissive and authoritarian parenting styles. Authoritative parenting was most predictive of fewer child behavior problems even when controlling for mother's education, income, and acculturation.

Researchers have also found that children who were exposed to harsh discipline practices

at home tended to have maladaptive social information processing patterns, which lead to aggressive behaviors at school (Hall & Bracken, 1996). These studies show that parenting styles are related to children's physically aggressive behaviors. Given the influence of parenting style on the occurrence of physical aggression, parenting style may also be predictive of children's use of relational aggression.

Parenting style and relational aggression. Few studies, however, have focused on children's relational aggression and parenting styles. Hart et al. (1998) conducted a study with preschool children in Russia that investigated parenting styles and relational aggression. They found that maternal and paternal coercion and maternal lack of responsiveness were associated with relational aggression. Crick and Grotpeter (1995) found a more direct relationship between relational aggression and parenting styles. Specifically, they found that a group of predominantly European American third through sixth grade girls who were relationally aggressive with their peers were also targets of relational aggression from their parents. Few researchers have studied a connection between parenting style and relational aggression. Further research must be conducted in this area to determine the influence on relational aggression in older populations of children and children of various ethnicities.

Hall and Bracken (1996) examined the relationship of maternal parenting style and adolescent's interpersonal relationships with their mothers, male peers, female peers, and teachers. The 150 participants were male and female high school students in from a rural school system in Mississippi. The students were enrolled in grades 8 through 12 and were ages 13 through 19. The ethnicity of the participants was African American and European American. The students came from varying socioeconomic backgrounds ranging from lower to upper-class. The students completed a demographic questionnaire, the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ;

Buri, 1991), and the Assessment of Interpersonal Relations Scale (AIR; Braken, 1992). The participants completed the questionnaires during a 50-minute class period. Based on the results of the PAQ, the authors made parenting style classifications.

Results revealed a difference with regard to race in the type of parenting style reported (Hall & Bracken, 1996). African American students (48%) classified their homes as authoritarian, and only 18.18% of European American students classified their homes as authoritarian. Conversely, 40% of European American students classified their homes as authoritative, and 27.38% of African American students made this claim. There was only about a 10% difference between the races in the reporting of the permissive parenting style. However, a chi-square analysis to compare the incidences of the three parenting styles race and gender, found no significant differences in parenting style according to race. This suggested that one race did not disproportionally use one parenting style. Those students who classified their homes as authoritative scored higher on the mother subscale, indicating that their mother uses relational aggression, than those who classified their homes as authoritarian or permissive. Additionally, these students also scored higher on the female peers subscale than those who classified their homes as authoritarian.

There was also a significant interaction between race and relationship type (Hall & Bracken, 1996). African American students scored higher on the Mother subscale than they scored on the Male and Female peers subscale. White students scored significantly higher on the Teacher subscale than the Mother subscale. White students also scored higher on the Male and Female peers subscale as well as the Teacher subscale than African American students.

Although there are few studies have focused on relational aggression and parenting styles, the available research suggests that parenting style does effect how children interact with

their peers. More specifically, the effect of parenting style on the use of relational aggression by African American students is beginning to emerge. Similar to the effects of parenting style on physical aggression, the impact of parenting styles on relational aggression, and therefore on peer relationships is significant. An aspect of relational aggression, psychological control, has begun to become important when discussing relational aggression and parents interactions with their children.

Parenting Style and Psychological Control

The majority of the studies that investigate parenting style and psychological control consider psychological control as a dimension of parenting style. It is often not examined as a separate dimension, but as an element of parenting style. There are some studies, however, that investigate psychological control as a separate and unique factor that contributes to the parent-child relationship. Galambos et al. (2003) found that parents' high level of psychological control combined with a high level of behavioral control was related to externalizing problems. The researchers suggested that behavioral control may not be uniformly effective when combined with less desirable parenting. Pettit and Laird (2002) found that high levels of parental psychological control, when combined with low levels of parental involvement, was associated with delinquent behavior among adolescents. However, high levels of psychological control combined with high levels of parental involvement were not associated with delinquent behavior. Lastly, Gray and Steinberg (1999) found that parental affection was found to prevent internal distress among adolescents when combined with psychological control more so than when combined with a high level of authority granting.

Aunola and Nurmi (2005) investigated which combination of mothers' and fathers' parenting styles, which included the dimension of psychological control, would be most

predictive of their children's behavior problems. The researchers conducted a longitudinal study conducted with 196 Finnish 5-6 year old children which followed them as they moved from kindergarten to second grade. The mother and fathers of the children were asked to complete the Johns Hopkins Depression Scale and the Finnish version of the Block's Child Rearing Practices Report. The information was gathered on a yearly basis for three years.

The researchers found that high levels of psychological control used by mothers, when combined with high affection, predicted increases in both internal and external behavior problems among children. Additionally, behavioral control, when used by mothers, was reported to decrease children's external problem behaviors; however, this was only when combined with a low level of psychological control.

Manzeske and Stright (2009) investigated the relationship between maternal parenting styles and young adults' emotional regulation. Psychological control was one of the dimensions studied. The investigators recruited participants who attended a large Midwestern University. The participants were predominantly European American (92%) with 3 % African American, 2% Hispanic-American, and 2% multiracial. Three participants did not report their race. The participants completed a questionnaire that measured their emotional regulation. The questions were derived from the Social Skills Inventory, Differentiation of Self Inventory, and one item created for the study. The mothers' of the participants were sent a questionnaire on their parenting styles by mail. The Child Rearing Practices Report was used to rate the mothers warmth, and behavioral and psychological control.

The researchers found that, on average, the mothers in the sample were highly warm and behaviorally controlling; however, they were moderately psychologically controlling. They also reported that maternal behavioral and psychological control was negatively correlated with

young adult emotional regulated. In other words, mothers with higher levels of behavioral and psychological control had children with less emotional regulation during young adulthood, even when maternal warmth was high. Therefore, "maternal psychological control rather than behavioral control was related to less emotional regulation in young adults" (p.226)

Casas et al. (2006) investigated early parent-child relationships to study how children's use of relational and physical aggression are affected by their relationship with their parents during the pre-school years. Parenting styles and parents' use of psychological control were assessed, along with parent's report of their child's reunion behaviors. The researchers recruited 122 families from two large Midwest schools. The participants consisted of 87% Anglo American, 9% Asian American, and 4% 'other' ethnicities. The parents were asked to complete a packet of questionnaires which contained the Children's Social Experiences measure, (CSE, Crick, Casas et al., 1999; Crick, Werner et al., 1999), Parenting Practices Questionnaire (PPQ) (Robinson, Mandleco, Olsen, & Hart, 2001), Psychological Control measure (Barber, 1996; Hart et al.,1998; Olsen et al., 2002), and the Parent/Child Reunion Inventory (Marcus, 1991). All of the childrens' teachers completed the Preschool Social Behavior Scale. The researchers found significant associations between children's use of both relational and physical aggression, parental reports of their parenting style, as well as the parenting style of their partner, psychological control behaviors, and indicators of the attachment relationship.

Psychological Control and Relational Aggression

When compared to other areas of research, relational aggression and psychological control is a relatively new area of focus for investigators. When linking parental psychological control and relational aggression, a social learning framework appears to be the most appropriate frame work in which to consider this relationship. Bandura's social learning theory posits that

people learn through observing other's behaviors, attitudes, and outcomes of behaviors. Bandura (1973) proposed that parents' behaviors and practices may serve as models for the children and how they may learn aggressive behaviors. Children's behaviors may parallel parenting practices such that when parent punish them physically, they may become physically aggressive towards their peers. Therefore, when using this theory as a framework for the link between relational aggression and psychological control, we can see how parental influence, in the form of psychological control, could be an important factor in the discussion of relational aggression.

Shafer (1965) first addressed the concept of psychological control in research on parenting. Psychological control was defined as " covert psychological methods of controlling the child's activities and behaviors the would not permit the child to develop as an individual apart from the parent" (Shafer, 1965, p. 555). Several decades would pass before the concept would be studied with more regularity. Steinberg (1990) made the distinction between parental psychological control and parental behavioral control. As defined by Barber, psychological control "refers to control attempts that intrude into the psychological and emotional development of the child" (Barber, 1996, p. 3296). This includes behaviors such as withdrawing love, using guilt, shame, disappointment, and possessiveness or protectiveness.

Few studies have focused on psychological control and relational aggression. Some studies found a relationship between maternal psychological control and child physical aggression, but not relational aggression. Hart et al. (1998) studied a sample of Russian parents and pre-school aged children to examine the relationship between childhood aggression subtypes, parenting styles, and marital interactions. The parents completed measures of marital interactions and parenting styles. Teachers completed aggression scales for the children that contained relational and overt aggression items. With respect to the psychological control

construct, the researchers found that it was not associated with relational aggression for boys or girls. However, maternal psychological control was significantly associated with overt aggression for both boys and girls.

However, Yan, Hart, Nelson, Porter, Olsen, Robinson et al. (2004),(as cited in Nelson & Crick, 2002) found a positive relationship between maternal and paternal psychological control and relational aggression in Chinese preschoolers. Crick and Nelson (2002) researched the influence of psychological control on subtypes of aggression in a U.S. sample of predominantly Caucasian middle childhood population and their parents. The children completed a peer rating form, and the parents completed parenting behaviors and a self-report psychological control measure. Crick and Nelson (2002) found that fathers used significantly higher levels of psychological control than did mothers with both sons and daughters. Surprisingly, paternal psychological control was associated with relational aggression in this sample of third grade girls.

Casas et al. (2006) investigated the influence of early parent-child relationships on preschool children's use of relational or physical aggression with predominantly Caucasian participants. The parents completed assessments of aggression, parenting styles, and psychological control. The teachers also completed assessment of aggression measures. The investigators found significant associations between girls use of relational aggression and mothers' report of their psychological control behaviors. Additionally, teachers also rated these girls as relationally aggressive. Mothers' reports of psychological control was not related to boys' relational aggression.

Loukas, Paulos, and Robinson (2005) investigated the factors contributing to the self-report of social and overt aggression in a group of Caucasian and Latino participants. Students

reporting as African American, Asian American, or other ethnicities were not included in this study. The participants ranged in age from 10-14 years old. They completed measures on maternal psychological control, social anxiety, overt aggression, and social aggression. The results of this study showed maternal psychological control to be a significant predictor of physical and social aggression for both boys and girls.

Reed, Goldstein, Morris, and Keyes (2008) investigated relational aggression in mothers and children and its links to psychological control and child adjustment. The children attended a primary school in an urban area. The average age of the participants was 9.89 and 9.46 for girls and boys respectively. The researchers found that mothers who were relationally aggressive with their peers tended to be more psychologically controlling with their children. Relational aggression by the children was also associated with externalizing problems among boys and girls and internalizing problems among boys. In another study, Kuppens et al. (2009) investigated parental psychological control and child relational aggression in a sample of 600 Flemish 8- through 10-year-old children. The parents completed measures of parental psychological control, and child relational aggression. The teachers completed the child relational aggression measure, and the children completed a peer nomination measure. The researchers found that there was a reciprocal relationship between relational aggression and psychological control in the mother-child dyad. These effects were reported to be consistent using a two-year interval.

Albrecht, Balambos, and Jansson, (2007) found similar results as the previous two researchers when they investigated adolescents' internalizing and aggressive behaviors and perceptions of parents' psychological control. The investigators recruited 530 predominantly Caucasian adolescents ages 12-19. The participants completed scales on parents' psychological control, internalizing behavior, and physical and relational aggression. They collected these data

at baseline and again 2 years later. The investigators found that reported higher rates of perceived mothers' and fathers' control were related to higher rates of adolescents' physical and relational aggression. The researchers found that relational aggression at time 1 was positively related to relational aggression 2 years later. There was also a significant effect for age, in which younger adolescents reported more relational aggression. Additionally, "the effect of maternal psychological control at time 2 indicated that adolescents who reported increase in their relational aggression across the 2-year period also perceived that their mothers became more psychologically controlling" (Albrecht et al., 2007, p. 680).

Soenens, Vansteenkiste, Goossens, Duriez, and Niemiec (2008) investigated psychologically controlling parents, relational aggression, friendship quality, and loneliness during adolescents. They found that psychological control, by either parent, positively predicted adolescents' self-reported relational aggression and loneliness, and negatively predicted friendship quality.

The literature reviewed in this chapter has cataloged potential negative outcomes for both victims and perpetrators of the various forms of aggression. More specifically, the review highlights the emergence of relational aggression as an area of great concern due to its covert nature and potential deleterious effects. The other factors that contribute to relational aggression, such as parenting style and psychological control open up other areas of discussion. However, given the limited body of research that combines these aforementioned topics, they require further research.

Rationale and Hypotheses

The aforementioned research, while instructive, does not provide information about the relationship of relation aggression, psychological control, and parenting style in the African

American population. Previous studies have utilized Caucasians individuals as the majority of the participants (Casa et al., 2006; Crick et al., 2002; Taub, 2001; Van Schoiack-Edstrom, Freay, & Beland, 2002). The majority of the studies mentioned previously enlisted only small percentages of African American participants and did not examine relational aggression in girls from lower SES urban settings. Elementary school age girls were the focus of this study because of the shift from the use of physical aggression to relational aggression that occurs as girls transition from elementary school into middle school (Bjorkqvist et al., 1992; Crick et al., 1996; Kistner, 2010)**.** Additionally, the girls' mothers were the focus of this study because of the research that supports the effects of maternal psychological control and parenting style and relational aggression (Albrecht et al., 2007; Casas et al., 2006; Kuppens et al., 2009; Loukas et al., 2005; Nelson & Crick, 2002; Reed et al., 2008). Thus, the purpose of this study was to determine the effects of parenting style and maternal psychological control behaviors on African American girls use of relational aggression in a low SES urban setting.

Crick and Grotpeter (1995) found that European American third through sixth grade girls who were relationally aggressive with their peers were also targets of relational aggression from their parents. Additionally, Hall and Bracken (1996) found that the majority of the African American students classified their homes as authoritarian and reported having a closer relationship with their mother. The studies that investigated psychological control show it has to be related to relational aggression (Albrecht, Balambos, & Jansson, 2007; Casas et al., 2006; Crick & Nelson, 2002; Reed, Goldstein, Morris, & Keyes, 2008; Soenen et al., 2008).

This dissertation investigated the following research questions:

1. How well do parenting style and psychological control predict relational aggression in African American girls? How much variance in the relational aggression scores can

be explained by scores on these two scales?

2. How well do parenting style and psychological control predict relational victimization in African American girls? How much variance in the relational aggression scores can be explained by the scores on these two scales?
3. Which is the best predictor of relational aggression: psychological control or parenting style?
4. Which is the best predictor of relational victimization: psychological control or parenting style?

In research studies reviewed, the parents of the participants varied in income, education, and in some cases ethnicity. Participants in this study were all African American, but did vary relative to parent age and income. Thus, supplemental analyses included mother's age and income level to answer the following additional questions:

5. If the possible effects of parent age and income level are controlled, are parenting style and psychological control still able to predict a significant amount of the variance in the relational aggression score?
6. If we control for the possible effects of mother's age and income level, are parenting style and psychological control still able to predict a significant amount of the variance in the relational victimization score?

Yan et al. (2004) found a positive relationship between maternal and paternal psychological control and relational aggression in Chinese preschoolers. Casas et al. (2006) also found significant associations between girls use of relational aggression mother's report of their own psychological control behaviors. However, neither of these studies included a significant number of African American participants. Reed et al. (2008) found that mothers who were

relationally aggressive with their peers tended to be more psychologically controlling with their children. Kuppens et al. (2009) found that there was a reciprocal relationship between relational aggression and psychological control in the mother-child dyad in a sample of Flemish children. This research suggests a relationship between maternal psychological control and relational aggression. Given the results of these studies, this dissertation investigated the following hypotheses:

HO 1: Parenting styles and psychological control will be correlated. More specifically, authoritative parenting style will be negatively associated with psychological control and authoritarian parenting style will be positively associated with psychological control.

HO 2: Authoritative parenting style will be negatively associated with relational aggression.

HO3: Authoritarian parenting style will be positively associated with relational aggression.

HO 4: Authoritative parenting style will be negatively associated with relational victimization.

HO5: There will be a positive association between relational aggression and relational victimization.

HO 6: There will be a positive association between daughters' ratings of their mothers' use of psychological control and the daughters' use relational aggression.

HO7: There will be a positive relationship between daughters' ratings of their mothers' use of psychological control and the daughters' relational victimization.

The following supplemental hypotheses (from research questions 5 and 6) were also examined:

HO 8: Parenting style and psychological control will predict relational aggression after controlling for maternal age and income level.

HO9: Parenting style and psychological control will predict relational victimization after controlling for maternal age and income level.

Chapter III

Method

This chapter describes the location where study took place, and the method by which the investigator selected and solicited participants for the study. This chapter also describes the instruments that the investigator used to determine parenting style, relational aggression, and psychological control. The chapter closes with a description of the study's design and data analyses procedures that were used.

Setting

The author of this dissertation study was the principal investigator (PI) and conducted the study in four inner city public elementary schools in Brooklyn, New York. The schools asked to participate were selected because they have predominantly African American populations. The PI defined predominately African American as schools that have a student population that was at least 60% African American. This study was conducted during the 2010-2011 school year. After obtaining approval from the New York City Department of Education Institutional Review Board, the PI contacted the principals of the elementary schools that met the predominately African American criteria. African American girls were the focus of the study because the research shows that as girls move from elementary school to middle school, the use of relational aggression by girls increases (Bjorkqvist, et al. 1992, Crick et al. 1996, Kistner, 2010). The PI focused specifically on African American girls to determine if the results found in previous research can be replicated with a homogeneous sample in terms of race and gender.

Participant Selection

Fifth grade students were the focus of the study because the research shows that as girls move from elementary school to middle school, their use of relational aggression increases

(Bjorkqvist et al., 1992, Crick et al., 1996; Kistner, 2010). Only students who were in fifth grade for the first time were included in this study because being held back in school could be a confounding variable that may influence the results. Thus, all student participants were African American fifth grade girls 9-11 years of age. The PI contacted the parents of the eligible students by mail (Appendix A) to notify them of the schools' approval for them to participate in the study. Only students whose parents provided consent and who assented to participate were included in the study.

The participants in this study were female volunteers from the General Education classes in the participating schools. In this study, General Education students were used to control for any compounding variables, such as emotional disturbance or learning disabilities, that may have an effect on the results. The principals of 80 schools were invited allow their students to participate in the study; however, only 5 principals (6.25% of those solicited) agreed to allow participation in the study. Of the five schools, one school was engaged in statewide testing during the data collection period, and the principal recinded her offer to participate. In the four schools that participated, 173 girls were eligible to participate in the study. The participants were 97 fifth grade African American females ages 9-11 (56.1% of those solicited) and their mothers.

The frequencies and percentages for the marital status, age, education and income for the mothers in this sample are displayed in Table 1. Half of the sample of respondents were single parents (49.5%), a third were married (29.9%), a fifth were divorced (16.5%), and a minority were widowed (4.1%). Thirty-eight percent of the respondents were between 20 and 29 years old, 36.1% were between 30 and 39 years old, 16.5% were between 40 and 49 years old, and only 9.3% were 50 years or older.

A tenth had less than a high school degree, close to half had a high school diploma (42.3%), a third had a college degree (30.9%), and close to a fifth had a graduate degree (16.5%). Twelve percent of the respondents earned $20,000 or less, 37.1% earned between $20,001 and $30,000, 40.2% earned between $30,001 and $40,000, and 10.3% earned $40,001 or more. Close to a fifth had one child (17.5%), close to half had two children (48.5%), a fourth had three children (25.8%), and close to a tenth had four children or more (8.2%).

Table 1

Frequencies and Percentages for Marital Status, Age, Education and Income (N = 97)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Marital status		
Single parent	*48*	*49.5*
Married	*29*	*29.9*
Divorced	*16*	*16.5*
Widowed	*4*	*4.1*
Age in years		
20 to 29	*37*	*38.1*
30 to 39	*35*	*36.1*
40 to 49	*16*	*16.5*
50 and over	*9*	*9.3*

Table 1 (continued)

Frequencies and Percentages for Marital Status, Age, Education and Income (N = 97)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Highest level of education		
Less than high school	10	10.3
High school diploma	41	42.3
College degree	30	30.9
Graduate degree	16	16.5
Annual income		
$20000 or less	12	12.4
$20001 to $30000	36	37.1
$30001 to $40000	39	40.2
$40001 or more	10	10.3
Number of children		
One	17	17.5
Two	47	48.5
Three	25	25.8
Four or more	8	8.2

Instruments

The Children's Self-Experiences Questionnaire (student) (CSEQ; Crick & Grotpeter 1996) (see Appendix F). The CSEQ was used to assess the girls' experiences with relation aggression. This questionnaire consists of three subscales that the creators of the scale identified through factor analysis: Relational Victimization, Overt Victimization, and Prosocial Behaviors. The measure consists of 17 items that are answered based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *Never* to 5 = *All the time*. The measure has been shown to be highly reliable with test-retest reliability over a 4 week interval of .90 (Crick, 1996) and internal consistencies ranging from .82 to .97 for each scale (Crick, 1995; Crick & Grotpeter, 1996; Grotpeter & Crick, 1996). The Cronbach's alpha for the Overt Victimization, Relational Victimization, and Prosocial Behavior scales in the Crick & Grotpeter (1996) sample were .84, .84, and .86. The results from various research studies that utilized this scale suggest favorable evidence from the validity of this measure. The Relational Victimization scale, which consists of 5 items (item numbers 5, 8, 11, 13, and 15 in Appendix F), was used to determine the extent to which the participants had been victims of relationally aggressive behavior. The scale asks questions such as item 8 which asks "How often does a kid who is mad at you try to get back at you by not letting you be in their group anymore?" in an attempt to identify student's experiences with relational victimization In the current study, the Cronbach alpha for the relational vicitimization scale was .68.

Psychological Control Scale-Youth Self-Report (PCS-YSR)-Students (Barber, 1996) (Appendix G). The PCS-YSP was used to assess the level of psychological control that the girls reported experiencing from their mother. The students responded to the scale's eight questions using a 3-point Likert scale (1 = *not like her* to 3 = *a lot like her*). Barber (1996) reported a

Cronbach alpha for this scale as .83. Areas that the PCS measures are constraining verbal expressions, invalidating feelings, personal attack on child, and love withdrawal. The scale asks to rate their mother on statements such as item 7"My mother blames me for other family member's problems."

Soenens et al. (2008) used this scale in their study of the intervening role of relational aggression between psychological control and friendship in a Belguim sample. These researchers reported a coefficient alpha reliability for this measure of .82 for adolescent report of maternal psychological control. Kuppens et al. (2009) also investigated the association between parental control and children's overt and relational aggression behaviors in a sample of Flemish children. These researchers reported an internal consistency value of .72. With regard to convergent validity, Kuppens et al (2009) reported that "children and parents had unique but related perceptions of parental psychological control." Additionally, criterion validity "with regard to children's behavior was established across informants" (p.121). Yu and Gamble (2008) investigated correlates of overt and relational aggression between young adolescent siblings. The researchers reported that Cronbach's alphas for younger and older siblings were both .85. Albrecht et al. (2007) used this scale to investigate internalizing and aggressive behaviors and perceptions of parental psychological control over time. They reported (citing Barber et al., 2005) that this scale " performed similarly in several regions outside of North America, including South Africa, China, and Europe" (p. 677). Albrecht et al. (2007) reported Cronbach alphas for mothers over times 1 and 2 of .74 and .74 respectively. The coefficient alpha for this scale in the current study was .70.

Children's Social Behavior Scale-Self-Report (Student) (CSBS; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995) (Appendix H). The CSBS is designed to assess children's perceptions of their peer interactions. This questionnaire consists of 15 items that are designed to assess children's perceptions of their peer interactions. This scale consists of five subscales: Relational Aggression, Physical Aggression, Prosocial Behavior, Verbal Aggression Inclusion, and Loneliness. The CSBS was first reported in a study by Crick and Grotpeter (1995) in which they investigated relational aggression, gender, and social-psychological adjustment. The students responded to items based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*is never*) to 5 (*all the time*). Internal consistency statistics showed that children's responses to items were reliable with Cronbach's alpha of .74 for the Relational Aggression scale, .76 for the Physical Aggression scale, .66 Prosocial Behaivor scale .82 for the Verbal Aggression Inclusion scale, .73 for the Loneliness scale, and .75 for the total scale (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). However, only the five items in the Relational Aggression scale (items 1, 2, 4, 10, 12) were analyzed in this study to assess the participants' perpetration of relational aggression. Students were asked to answer questions like "When they are mad at someone, some kids get back at the person by not letting the person be in their group anymore. How often do you do this?" in order to determine their use of relational aggression toward their peers.

Williams et al. (2009) used this scale to study relational aggression and adverse psychosocial and physical symptoms among urban adolescents. Although they administered the whole scale, only the relational aggression subscale was used. In their study, the Cronbach coefficient for this subscale was .86, indicating a high internal consistency of relationally aggressiveitems. Additionally, Kuppens et al. (2009) also used this scale, albeit the Dutch

version, when investigating the relationship between parental psychological control and relational aggression. Similar to Williams et al. (2009), Kuppens et al. (2009) only used the relational aggression subscale, reporting an internal consistency of .80 for mothers. This scale appears to be consistent in measuring the construct of relational aggression. Discriminant validity was reported to be "in line with previous research (Crick, 1996; Crick and Grotpeter, 1995), which indicated that relational aggression was perceived as "fairly distinct from physical/verbal aggression and prosocial behavior" (p. 121). In the current study, Cronbach alpha for the relational aggression scale was .77.

Parenting Styles Questionnaire (PSQ: Robinson, Mandleco, Olsen, & Hart 1995) (Appendix I). The PSQ was used to assess the parenting style of the mothers of the study participants. The original survey consisted of 62 items used to measure the characteristics of authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting styles. Twenty-seven items on this scale relate to authoritative parenting style with a Cronbach alpha of .91, 20 of the items relate to the authoritarian parenting style with a Cronbach alpha of .86, and 15 questions that are related to the permissive parenting style with a Cronbach alpha of .75. The researchers created a short-form version that consists of 32 items. This was the form used with the mothers in this study. The authoritarian scale has 12 items (items 2, 4, 6, 10, 13, 16, 19, 23, 26, 28, 30, 32 in Appendix I), the authoritative scale has 13 items (1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 14, 18, 21, 22, 25, 29, 31), and the permissive scale has 5 items (8, 15, 17, 20, 24). Parents answer the questions using a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *Never* to 4 = *Always*. Mother's were asked to respond to statements such as "I use physical punishment as a way of disciplining my child" on the authoritarian scale, "I am responsive to my child's feelings and needs" on the authoritative scale and "I find it difficult to discipline my child" on the permissive scale. Each mother's dominant parenting style

was determined based on her responses to the questionnaire. The mother's highest score was considered her dominant parenting style. In the current study, the Cronbach alpha for the three scales were .96, .93 and .98 for authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative respectively.

Client Demographic Questionnaire (Appendix J). Mothers who participated in the study provided information about the number of children they have, income level, education level, age, and marital status. This information was necessary to provide descriptive information, as well as to determine possible effects of mother's age and income level on predicting relational aggression and relational victimization in African American girls.

Procedure

Flyers that provided basic information about the study were placed around the participating schools (see Appendix E). The PI also sent mothers of fifth grade girls a form letter to describe the study and their FERPA rights in a form letter (Appendix A). This letter introduced the study to the mothers, provided a brief explanation of the goals of the study, and informed them of the regulations governing the release of directory information. The PI also visited fifth grade classes to introduce the program to the students and give potential participant students a flyer (Appendix E) to take home. These flyers provided basic information about the study, as well as advertised incentives that would be given at the end of data collection. All of the participants received a desk clock that was valued no greater than $5.00.

Those parents who agreed to have their daughter participate in the study were invited to an information session to receive detailed information about the study (Appendix B). This information session was held during after school hours. The purpose of the study was explained to the parents. The parents were given the opportunity to ask questions about the study and

express any concerns they had. Consent forms were handed out at the information session (Appendix C). The consent forms also provided information about the purpose of the study, the responsibilities of the mothers and daughters as study participants, their right to withdraw from the study at anytime, and additionally information about the gift the participants would receive after the data collection. Those who decided to participate in the study were instructed to return signed consent forms via the self-addressed stamped envelope provided, or to the collection box in the main school office. Parents were instructed to contact the researcher with any questions they had about the study or for any additional information pertaining to the study.

Next, the PI held a meeting during lunch time with all the students whose parent/ signed the consent form. They were told the purpose of the study, what was required of them, and were given the opportunity to participate in the study. Those students who agreed to participate were provided assent forms (Appendix D). These forms described the purpose of the study, their responsibility as participants, the student's right to withdraw from the study at any time, and provided information about the participation gift. The students also provided the PI with phone numbers so that the PI could call their homes the day before the data collection day to make sure the student participants would be in school the next day for testing. These assent forms were signed and returned to the PI via self-addressed stamped envelope, as well as the collection box in the main office.

For each school, at the beginning of the week that the data were collected, the PI called the home of each girl to tell her the day she would be at their school. The day before the data collection, the PI called the homes of the girls who were to participate in the study to remind them that she would be coming to their school the next day. On the day of data collection, the students participating in the study were given a pass by their homeroom teacher that allowed

them to go to another classroom during their lunch period. This time and place was chosen to limit any input from the participant's parents. For each school, the data from the student participants were collected in one day. Lunch was provided for the students.

The PI handed out the surveys. Each survey packet was numbered and as they were handed out, the PI wrote down the students name on a master sheet and the number that corresponded to their survey packet. This was done in order to ensure anonymity to everyone but the PI. In the interest of time, and in an attempt to avoid any skipped questions because of slow readers, the PI read each question and possible answer to the students. The PI also answered any questions that the students had as they at responded to each questionnaire. The PI clarified questions for the students by providing examples to the students when they were uncertain as to what the question was asking of them.

The surveys for the parents were sent home with the students in sealed envelopes, and each survey had the number on the envelop that corresponded to the number on their daughters' surveys (see Appendix I and Appendix J). As an incentive to ensure that the students gave the surveys to their mothers, the students were offered a set of silly bands if their parents returned their survey within five days. The parents were instructed to mail their surveys back to the PI via the self-addressed stamped envelope provided, or have their daughter place the survey in the collection box in the principal's office. The parents were asked to send the surveys back within five days. As an incentive for them to return the survey, they were offered a gift that cost no more than $5.00. If the students attempted to return the surveys to their teachers, teachers instructed them to place them in the collection box in the main office.

Design and Data Analysis

This is a correlational study that used Pearson Product Moment correlations and hierarchal regression analyses to test the hypotheses. Based on the research on parenting styles, psychological control, and relational aggression, four different models were tested in this dissertation in order to learn more about the relationship between the predictor variables (parenting style (PS) and mothers' psychological control (PC)) and the criterion variables (relational aggression (RA) and relational aggression victimization (RAV)). First, a multiple regression analysis was conducted for relational aggression with parenting style and psychological control serving as the predictor variables and participants relational aggression (RA) score serving as the criterion variable. This addressed the question of how well parenting style and psychological control predict relational aggression in African American girls. Second, a multiple regression analysis was conducted for relational victimization with parenting style and psychological control serving as the predictor variables and participants relational aggression victimization (RAV) score serving as the criterion variable. This addressed the question of how well parenting style and psychological control predict relational victimization in African American girls. Third, hierarchical regression was conducted to determine which is a better predictor of relational aggression and relational victimization: PC or PS. Finally, a supplementary multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine if parenting style and psychological control are still able to predict relational aggression and relational aggression victimization when controlling for the effects of age and income level.

To obtain significance at the $p < .05$ for a large effect size, there should be at least 30 participants for each predictor variables (PS and PC)(Cohen, 1992). In addition to hypothesis testing, the PI also presented means, standard deviations, and ranges for predictor and criterion

variables.

Chapter IV

Results

The purpose of the study was to determine whether parenting style and psychological control predict relational aggression and relational victimization in a sample of African American fifth grade girls. This chapter first presents statistics reliability and descriptive statistics for the study variables and their interrelationships. Thereafter, the chapter summarizes inferential statistics testing the study hypotheses and supplementary questions.

Reliability of Measures

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics and alpha coefficients for each of the study variables. These variables include mothers' scores on the three parenting style subscales (Authoritarian, Permissive, and Authoritative) of the Parenting Styles Questionnaire (Robinson et al., 1995), students' scores on the Psychological Control Scale-Youth Self-Report (Barber, 1996) that assesses the control that students perceived that their mothers exercise, and students' scores on the Relational Victimization and Relational Aggression scales of the Children's Self-Experiences Questionnaire (Crick & Grotpeter, 1996). The table also provides the number of items for each of the variables.

Authoritarian parenting style: As shown in Table 2, the alpha for this subscale was high at .97. Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) indicated reliability for use as a research measure is acceptable if alpha is .70. The highest possible score for this variable is 5. The mean score for the sample was only 1.82 (*SD* = .92), which indicates that, on average, sample mothers were not very authoritarian. Note, however, that the distribution of this variable (refer to Appendix K for the histograms of the variables) was bimodal (See Figure 1 of Appendix K). Slightly more than half of the respondents (65 participants) had scores between 1and 2; the rest of the sample (32

participants) had scores close to 3, with most of these falling between 3 and 4. Thus, about two thirds of the sample was not authoritarian, but about a third was moderately authoritarian.

Permissive parenting style. Table 2 shows that the alpha for this subscale was high at .93. The highest possible score for this variable is 5. The mean score for the sample was only 1.71 (*SD* = .92), which indicates that, on average, sample mothers were not very permissive parents (See Appendix K, figure 2)

Authoritative parenting style. Table 2 shows that alpha for this subscale was high at .98. Similar to the other parenting style (authoritarian and permissive) scales, the highest possible score for this variable is 5. The mean score for the sample was 2.34 (*SD* = .92), which indicates that, on average, sample mothers were not authoritative parents. Similar to the distributions of authoritarian and permissive scores, the distribution of authoritative scores was bimodal (see Appendix K, Figure 3). About half of the respondents (49 participants) had scores between 1 and 2; but the other half (48 participants) had scores between 3 and 4. Thus, half of the sample was not authoritative and the other half was moderately authoritative.

Psychological control. The alpha for the eight-item Psychological Control Scale was unacceptably low at .66. Because the item-total correlation for Item 6 was very low at .07, this item was dropped from the scale. Table 2 shows that the remaining seven items yielded an acceptable alpha of .70. The highest possible score for this variable is 3. The mean score for the sample was 1.85 (*SD* = .47). Thus, on average, students believed that their mothers had a strong need for psychological control.

Relational victimization. The alpha for the five-item Relational Victimization scale was unacceptable at .68. Because the item-total correlation for Item 5 was low at .25, this item was dropped from the scale. Thereafter, the alpha for the four items was an acceptable .70 (see Table

2). The highest possible score for this variable is 5. The mean score for the sample was 2.54 (*SD* = .92). Thus, the sample of girls had, on average, moderately low relational victimization scores.

Relational aggression. Table 2 shows that the alpha for this subscale was acceptable at .78. The highest possible score for this variable is 5. The mean score for the sample was 2.05 (*SD* = .85). Thus, the sample of girls had moderately low relational aggression scores.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics, Alpha Coefficients, and Skewness and Kurtosis for the Study Variables (N = 97)

Variable	Range	*M*	*SD*	Alpha	Skewness	Kurtosis
Parenting style	1.00 to 3.50	1.82				
Authoritarian (12)	1.00 to 4.00	1.71	.92	.97	.68	-1.42
Permissive (5)	1.07 to 4.00	2.34	.92	.93	1.54	.76
Authoritative (14)	1.00 to 2.75	1.85	.98	.98	-.01	-1.77
Psych. Control (7)	1.00 to 4.75	2.54	.47	.70	.17	-.67
Relational Victim. (4)	1.00 to 4.20	2.05	.92	.70	.26	.04
Relational Aggression(5)			.85	.78	.63	-.61

Note. Number of items for each subscale is in parentheses. *SE* for skewness = .25. *SE* for kurtosis

Correlations among the Variables

Table 3 presents intercorrelations among study variables as well as mothers' ages and incomes. Annual household income was negatively associated with authoritarian parenting ($r(95) = -.56$, $p < .001$) but positively associated with authoritative parenting ($r(95) = .56$, $p < .001$). Income was also negatively associated with relational aggression ($r(95) = -.34$, $p < .001$). Therefore, the higher the annual household income, the less authoritarian and more authoritative the mothers were and the less relationally aggressive the girls were. Not surprisingly, Table 3 shows that authoritarian parenting was negatively associated with authoritative parenting ($r(95) = -.69$, $p < .001$).

Maternal age was negatively associated with authoritarian parenting ($r(95) = -.28$, $p = .006$) but positively associated with authoritative parenting ($r = .31$, $p = .002$). Accordingly, the older the mothers, the less authoritarian and more authoritative they were with their children.

Correlational Hypotheses

HO 1: The relationship between psychological control and parenting style was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. As hypothesized, maternal psychological control was negatively associated with authoritative parenting ($r(95) = -.26$, $p = .01$). However, authoritarian parenting was not significantly related to mothers' degree of psychological control (r (95) = .17), which does not support Hypothesis 1.

HO 2: Authoritative parenting style will be negatively related to relational aggression. The relationship between authoritative parenting style and relational aggression was investigated using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Table 3 shows that, in support of

Hypothesis 2, authoritative parenting was negatively related to relational aggression, ($r(95) = -.54$, $p < .001$.

HO 3: The hypothesized positive relationship between authoritarian parenting style and relational aggression was investigated using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. There was a positive association between authoritarian parenting style and children's relational aggression ($r = .56$, $p < .001$), providing support for Hypothesis 3.

HO 4: The hypothesized negative relationship between authoritative parenting style and relational victimization was investigated using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. There was no significant association between authoritative parenting style and children's relational victimization ($r(95) = .18$), which does not provide support for Hypothesis 4.

HO 5: The hypothesized positive relationship between relational aggression and relational victimization was investigated using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. The correlation ($r(95) = .33$, $p < .001$) supported Hypothesis 6.

HO 6: The hypothesized positive relationship between daughters' perceptions of mothers' use of psychological control and their (daughters) use of relational aggression was investigated correlationally. Table 3 shows that girls' perceptions of their mothers' degree of psychological control was not significantly related to their own use of relational aggression ($r(95) = .08$) and thus did not provide support for Hypothesis 7.

HO:7 The hypothesized positive relationship between daughters' perception of their mothers' psychological control and their own relational victimization was investigaged. Table 3 shows that girls' perceptions of their mothers' degree of psychological control was not significantly related to their relational victimization ($r(95) = .16$), a result that does not provide

support for Hypotheses 7.

Table 3

Correlations between the Regression Model Variables (N = 97)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Income						
2 Age	.53***					
3 Psych. Control	-.01	.04				
4 Authoritarian	- .56***	-.28**	.17			
5 Authoritative	.56***	.31**	-.26*	.69***		
6 Relational Victim.	-.07	.02	.08	.17	-.18	
7 RelationalAggression	-.34***	-.09	.16	.56***	-.54***	.33***

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

Prediction of Relational Aggression from Parenting Style and Parental Psychological Control

Examination of Table 4 shows positive correlations between mothers' age and income and authoritative parenting style and negative correlations between age and income and authoritarian parenting style. Thus, older mothers with higher incomes tended to have an authoritative parenting style. Table 4 also shows that both parenting styles are related to relational aggression and victimization. Therefore, there was a need to control for age and income when predicting relational aggression and victimization.

Table 4 summarizes the results of the hierarchical linear regression analysis to test supplementary hypothesis 8, which states that parenting style and psychological control will predict relational aggression after controlling for maternal age and income level. The findings reveal that, after controlling for age and annual household income, psychological control and parenting style did not significantly predict relational aggression (see Table 4 shows that).

Table 4

Hierarchical Linear Regression Results for Relational Aggression (N = 97)

Variable	*B*	*t*	Sig.	TOL
Income	.003	.01	.98	.46
Age	.06	.58	.56	.71
Psychological control	.05	.26	.79	.89
Parenting style				
Authoritarian	.03	.25	.79	.61
Authoritative	-.14	-1.07	.28	.51

Note. TOL = Tolerance. The results of the second step are summarized. Overall model F (5, 91) = .585, p = .712. Overall model R^2 = .031.

Prediction of Relational Victimization from Parenting Style and Parental Psychological Control

The results of the hierarchical linear regression procedure are summarized in Table 5. The findings reveal that, after controlling for age and annual household income, psychological control did not significantly predict relational victimization. However, parenting style significantly predicted relational victimization.

After controlling for age and annual household income, an authoritarian parenting style significantly predicted relational victimization, t (91) = 3.44, p = .001. More specifically, authoritarian parenting style was positively associated with relational victimization such that when authoritarian parenting style scores increase by one unit relational victimization increases by 34% (B = .34).

In addition, an authoritative parenting style significantly negatively predicted relational victimization, t (91) = -2.51, p = .014. More specifically, authoritative parenting style was negatively associated with relational victimization such that when a authoritative parenting style scores increase by one unit relational victimization decreases by 25% (B = .25).

Table 5

Hierarchical Linear Regression Results for Relational Victimization (N = 97)

Variable	*B*	*t*	Sig.	TOL
Income	-.03	-.23	.81	.46
Age	.11	1.23	.21	.71
Psychological control	.04	.24	.80	.89
Parenting style				
Authoritarian	.34	3.44	.001	.61
Authoritative	-.25	-2.51	.014	.51

Note. TOL = Tolerance. The results of the second step are summarized. Overall model F (5, 91) = 9.59, p = .00. Overall model R^2 = .309.

Analysis by Parental Income Level

T-tests for independent samples were used to determine if there were differences in the key variables by parental income. The income variable was recoded into two levels to reflect those who reported their parents' income as equal to or lower than $30k and those who reported their parents' income as greater than $30,000.

There were several significant differences by income (see Table 6). Those with incomes of $30,000 or less had significantly higher average relational aggression scores (M = 2.39, SD = .93) than those with incomes greater than $30,000 ($M$ = 1.70, SD = .59), ($t(95) = 4.33$, $p < .01$). Those with incomes of $30,000 or less also had significantly higher average authoritarian parenting scores (M = 2.30, SD = .98) than those with incomes greater than $30,000 ($M$ = 1.35, SD = .53), ($t(95) = 5.29$, $p < .01$). In addition, those with incomes of $30,000 or less also had significantly lower average authoritative parenting scores (M = 1.83, SD = .79) than those with incomes greater than $30,000 ($M$ = 2.84, SD = .88), ($t(95) = -5.29$, $p < .01$). There were no significant differences by income for psychological control or relational victimization.

Table 6

T-test for Independent Samples Comparing Lower and Upper Income Households

Variable	Income	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*df*	*P*
Psychological control	< $30,000	48	1.82	.42	-.43	95	.66
	> $30,000	49	1.86	.51			
Relational victimization	< $30,000	48	2.57	.82	.44	95	.65
	> $30,000	49	2.49	1.01			
Relational aggression	< $30,000	48	2.39	.93	4.33	95	.00
	> $30,000	49	1.70	.59			
Authoritarian parenting	< $30,000	48	2.30	.98	5.29	95	.00
	> $30,000	49	1.35	.53			
Authoritative parenting	< $30,000	48	1.83	.79	-5.29	95	.00
	> $30,000	49	2.84	.88			

Analysis by Marital Status

T-tests for independent samples were used to determine if there were differences in the key variables by whether parents were single or not. The marital status variable was recoded into two levels to reflect those whose parents were single and not single (i.e., married, divorced, or widowed).

There were several significant differences by marital status (see Table 7). Single parents had significantly higher average relational victimization scores (M = 2.79, SD = .98) than non-single parents (M = 2.28, SD = .77), ($t(95) = 2.86$, $p < .01$). Single parents also had significantly higher average authoritarian parenting scores (M = 2.03, SD = 1.00) than non-single parents (M = 1.60, SD = .78), ($t(95) = 2.38$, $p < .05$). In addition, single parents had significantly lower average authoritative parenting scores (M = 2.10, SD = .94) than those with incomes greater than $30,000 ($M$ = 2.57, SD = .96), ($t(95) = -2.43$, $p < .05$). There were no significant differences by marital status for psychological control or relational aggression.

Table 7

T-test for Independent Samples Comparing Single and Non-Single Parents

Variable	Marital Status	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*df*	*P*
Psychological control	single parent	48	1.80	.44	-.86	95	.39
	not single	49	1.88	.50			
Relational victimization	single parent	48	2.79	.98	2.86	95	.00
	not single	49	2.28	.77			
Relational aggression	single parent	48	2.09	.90	.55	95	.58
	not single	49	2.00	.80			
Authoritarian parenting	single parent	48	2.03	1.00	2.38	95	.01
	not single	49	1.60	.78			
Authoritative parenting	single parent	48	2.10	.94	-2.43	95	.01
	not single)	49	2.57	.96			

Summary

Table 8 presents an overview of the study's hypotheses. Readers will note that three of the study's nine hypotheses received support, and an additional two hypotheses received partial support. Hypotheses concerning parenting style and relational aggression tended to be supported, but those involving relational victimization and psychological control were not supported.

Table 8

Overview of Study Hypotheses

HO Number	Study Hypothesis	Supported/Not Supported
1	Authoritative parenting style will be negatively associated with psychological control and authoritarian parenting style will be positively associated with psychological control.	Partially Supported
2	Authoritative parenting style will be negatively associated with relational aggression.	Supported
3	Authoritarian parenting style will be positively associated with relational aggression.	Supported
4	Authoritative parenting style will be negatively associated with relational victimization.	Not Supported
5	There will be a positive association between relational aggression and relational victimization.	Supported
6	There will be a positive association between daughters' ratings of their mothers' use of psychological control and the daughters' use relational aggression.	Not Supported
7	There will be a positive relationship between daughters' ratings of their mothers' use of psychological control and the daughters' relational victimization.	Not Supported
8	Parenting style and psychological control will predict relational aggression after controlling for maternal age and income level.	Not Supported
9	Parenting style and psychological control will predict relational victimization after controlling for maternal age and income level.	Supported

CHAPTER V

Discussion

This chapter summarizes and discusses study results in terms of how parenting style and psychological control influenced relational aggression and relational victimization in African American girls. The chapter also presents the study's limitations and suggestions for future research. I also discuss the implications of the study for school psychologists.

Results of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between parenting style and psychological control on relational aggression and relational victimization. The participants in the majority of the studies reviewed for this current study, whether they were studies of relational aggression, (Crick, Bigbee, & Howes, 1996; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Crick et al., 1997; Crick & Werner, 1998; Rys & Bear, 1997; Werner & Crick, 1999), parenting style (Crick & Grotpeter 1995; Steinberg, 2001; Steinberg, Elmen, & Mounts, 1989), or psychological control (Aunola & Nurmi, 2005; Galambos et al., 2003; Gray & Steinberg, 1999; Manzeske & Stright, 2009; Pettit & Laird, 2002) were predominately European American/Caucasian. Although there were some studies whose participants were of predominantly African American descent (Gomes et al., 2009; Putallaz et al., 2007; Talbott, Celinska, Simpson, & Coe, 2002; Waasdorp & Bradshaw, 2009), this was not the case for the majority of the studies. The current study investigated the effects of parenting style and psychological control on relational aggression with African American fifth grade girl participants. It is important to note that none of the studies reviewed investigated all of the variables used in the current study. This makes the current study unique.

The results of this study show that psychological control was negatively associated with authoritative parenting style**.** Additionally, girls' perceptions of their mothers' degree of psychological control was not significantly related to either their daughters use of relational aggression nor their relational victimization. In contrast, parenting style was associated with relational aggression. Authoritative parenting style was negatively related to relational aggression and authoritarian parenting style was positively associated with relational aggression. There was also a positive relationship found between relational aggression and relational victimization. Additionally, after controlling for age and annual household income, psychological control and parenting style did not significantly predict relational aggression. With regard to relational victimization, after controlling for age and annual household income, an authoritarian parenting style significantly predicted relational victimization. When considering parental income, those with incomes of $30,000 or less had significantly higher average relational aggression scores and higher authoritarian parenting scores than those with incomes greater than $30,000. When considering marital status, single parents had significantly higher average relational victimization and higher average authoritarian parenting scores than non-single parents.

Perceptions of maternal parenting style and relational aggression. The results with regard to parenting style and relational aggression were generally consistent with results achieved in previous research in that there was a positive association found between parenting style and relational aggression. Crick and Grotpeter (1995) found a direct relationship between relational aggression and parenting styles when working with predominantly Caucasian participants. In current study, the results show more specifically that authoritative parenting style was negatively related to relational aggression and authoritarian parenting style is positively

related to relational aggression. Some research suggests that the authoritarian parenting style, in some cases, appears to be protective for African American children. Greening et al. (2010) found that a significant positive relationship between depressive symptoms and childhood suicidal behavior was lessened by using authoritarian parenting practices for African-American children. Studies like this suggest that an authoritarian parenting style may not always be associated with negative outcomes with African American populations. It is important to remember when Baumrind's parenting styles were developed, none of the participants were African American. Therefore the results that are obtained using those parenting styles may not be consistent with the experiences of some segments of the African American population. In an attempt to answer important research questions, researchers may be using the wrong tools to accurately represent the dynamics between African American mothers and their children. Researchers have to determine if the typologies developed by Baumrind apply to people of different races and ethnicities.

Hall and Bracken (1996) found that students who rated their homes as authoritative also rated their mothers' use of relational aggression as higher than those who classified their homes as authoritarian or permissive. These results differed from results achieved in this current study. Additionally, the current study found that children whose mothers had high authoritarian scores had significantly higher relational aggression scores than children whose parents were authoritative. Thus, at least in the present study, the relationship between African American maternal parenting style and children's relational aggression is similar to that found within other ethnic groups.

Relational victimization. Although the body of research on relational aggression continues to grow, research on relational victimization is lacking. The results of this study

revealed after controlling for age and annual household income, an authoritarian parenting style significantly predicted relational victimization. These results are consistent with results achieved in the bullying research. The research on bullying shows that children who use violence against their peers have often been victims of bullying themselves (Ma, 2001). Smith et al. (2004) found that adolescents, who were predominantly European American, who were continual victims of bullying were more likely to be involved in bullying others. These results suggest that although a girl may not be a perpetrator of relational aggression, parenting style and psychological control factors may make her more likely to be a victim. Even though Cullerton-Sen and Crick (2005) found that teacher reports of relational victimization were distinct from reports of physical aggression, peer and teacher reports indicated that girls were more relationally victimized than physically victimized.

The current study investigated whether African American girls who are relationally aggressive were also victims of relational aggression. The results revealed a positive relationship between relational aggression and relational victimization, suggesting that those who use relational aggression are also victims of relational aggression. These results are consistent with the bullying and physical aggression research, and the limited relational victimization research studies that have been conducted. However, after controlling for parent age and annual household income, and psychological control, parenting styles did not significantly predict relational victimization.

Perceptions of maternal psychological control and relational aggression. The results of past research differed from the results obtained for some of the variables researched in this study. The current finding that girls' ratings of maternal psychological control were not significantly related to girls' relational aggression is inconsistent with findings from previous

research (Casas et al., 2006; Crick & Nelson, 2002; Kuppens et al., 2009; Loukas, Paulos, & Robinson, 2005; Soenens et al., 2008; Yan et al., 2004) that found that psychological control was related to relational aggression. Differences in the ethnicity and gender of participants among the studies could be a reason for the differences in results. Previous studies of relational aggression and parental psychological control used participants who were either Chinese or predominantly Caucasian (Casas et al., 2006; Crick & Nelson, 2002; Kuppens et al., 2009; Loukas et al., 2005; Soenens et al., 2008; Yan et al., 2004). The study conducted by Loukas et al. (2005) excluded African Americans altogether.

It is important to mention that the study by Soenens et al. (2008) found that psychological control by either parent positively predicted adolescents' self-reported relational aggression. These results differed from the results achieved in this current study. It is the belief of the primary researcher that the difference in participant age between the current study and the study by Soenens and colleagues may have contributed to the difference in results. The participants in the current study were between the ages of 9-11, and the participants in the Soenens et al. (2008) study were adolescents. This age difference could have contributed to different results obtained in the current study.

Hart et al. (1998) found that parental psychological control was not associated with relational aggression for boys or girls. Thus, Hart and colleagues findings were similar to those of this dissertation. To explain the similarity of results, one must consider the role ethnicity plays in the research results. Neither of the studies involved European Americans. Although the Hart et al. study involved Caucasians, they were Russian.

While parental psychological control has been associated with a number of undesirable child outcomes in predominantly European American populations (Aunola & Nurmi, 2005;

Galambos et al., 2003; Pettit & Laird, 2002), this has not been the case when researchers study the African American population. For example, Bean, Bush, McKenry, and Wilson (2003) found that maternal psychological control was associated with lower self-esteem for European American adolescents, but was not related to self-esteem for African American teens. Bean, Barber, and Crain (2006) found no relationship between maternal psychological control and depression, delinquency, and academic achievement in African American youth. Smetana and Daddis (2002) found that African American mothers exercise more psychological control over early adolescent girls than boys. They also found that mothers' psychological control over their daughters is lower for girls in later adolescence than in younger girls. The girls in the Smetana and Daddis study were pre-adolescents who described their mothers as being psychologically controlling, but psychological control did not relate to any of their study variables. The author agrees with Bean et al. (2006) that maternal psychological control appears to work differently in the African American community than in the Caucasian community, and this merits more study.

One reason maternal psychological control may not have the same impact on African American girls from low income homes with regard to relational aggression may be because of the familiarity of matriarchal control in many African American homes. The Kids Count data center reports that in 2010, 66% of African American children lived in a single-parent home and the majority of those homes were headed by mothers. It may be that when African American mothers are called on to play the role of both mother and father, the need to control the various aspects of their children's life may be greater. Given that many of these families have limited financial resources, the mothers may depend on their emotional resources to manage and control various aspects of their children's lives. Additionally, the need to control the behavior of their children may be mediated by their ability to control them, both behaviorally and emotionally,

through psychological control. Given that this happens at a young age, psychological control may be seen as normal. Therefore, psychological control may not be seen as negative by the daughters and therefore not have the same negative effects one would see in other races. The concept of psychological control may not be that is problematic for African Americans in this pre-teen group.

Limitations

There are limitations of this study that may have influenced the results. The current study utilized a small, purposeful sample of African American fifth grade girls attending urban public schools. Given that other ethnic minorities were not included in this study, it is difficult to say if the results achieved are generalizable to other ethnic minorities. Future studies could use a larger sample of ethnic minority children from urban areas in order to compare the differences within and between groups. Secondly, time constraints were a factor during data collection. The data were collected during a time of the school year where there were several practice exams, which were followed by state exams. If the study were conducted during another time during the school year, more principals may have been willing to allow their students to participate. Additionally, if data had been collected on more participants, the study may have had a different outcome.

A third limitation is the fact the measures used in this study were created using a heterogeneous sample that included few African American participants. Given that the participants in the current study were all Africa American, the measures used may not be capturing the same information as when used on a predominantly European American/Caucasian population. A fourth limitation is fact that the data was collected via self-report. The mothers completed the parenting style questionnaire, and their daughters completed questionnaires

relating to relational aggression, relational victimization, and maternal psychological control. Given that the information was collected from each person about her own behavior, or actions, there may have been an attempt to respond favorably.

Lastly, the fifth limitation relates to the measures themselves. The measures used in this study were created with participants who differed in race from the participants that participated in this study. Additionally, the sample used had restricted ranges for both the relational aggress and relational victimization variables. If the ranges of the scores were wider, more hypotheses may have been supported. The measures were not normed on African American participants, which may have influenced the results achieved. A review of the studies in which the measures were developed reveals that the majority of the participants were European American or Caucasian. The participants in the current study were African American. There may have been racial differences that influenced the results of this study.

Implications of the Study for Practice

Given the results of this study, it appears that the authoritarian parenting style yields African American girls who are more relationally aggressive. Additionally, there was a positive relationship between relational aggression and relational victimization. Previous research shows that an authoritative parenting style yields children that perform better academically, and have less social-emotional difficulties. Armed with this knowledge, early childhood education and parenting training courses for new parents could focus on teaching them why the authoritative parenting style would be more beneficial to child's development. Parent's could be taught the behaviors of parents who use this parenting style, with the hopes of achieving similar social-

emotional and academic results. New and young parents could be specifically taught the behaviors authoritative parents engage in.

Future Research

In the current study, the participants were African American girls and their mothers. A small sample of participants was used to achieve the results. However, future researcher should use a larger African American sample, which should include boys in the same age range, as well as fathers. Researchers should investigate if the same results are achieved when participants vary with regard to gender in a homogenous African American sample. Future studies should include various ethnicities to determine further how parenting style and psychological control relate to relational aggression and victimization across ethnicities.

For the present study, I relied on children's self-reports of relational aggression. This is a common approach when examining children's victimization experiences, as others may not be aware of the child's experiences. However, during the collection of the data, there were times when the girls commented on how they were going to respond, their peers often commented about the girl's response selection. Although self-report may be a valid way to capture information about children's experiences, future researchers should consider using various informants, such as peer ratings, teacher ratings and observations, of relational aggression and relational victimization. Researchers may create measures that are normed on minority participants, which could include African Americans, Black participants from different ethnicities and Latin Americans. In order to create these measures, researchers could meet with parents in small groups to determine if the current parenting styles accurately reflect the lives of ethnic and racial minorities. They can also discuss current items with the parents and determine if the represent their experiences as parents. Additionally, it may be useful for researchers to

meet with girls in small focus groups to discuss their experiences with relational aggression and relational victimization. They can ask the participants about their friendships, enemies, and experiences with their parents to determine if current measures can be modified, or if new measures need to be created. Future studies should also use a larger sample of ethnic minority children from urban areas and compare the results from minority students in suburban areas in order to compare the differences within and between groups.

Appendix A

(Information letter to parents)

Dear Parents,

Our school has been given a wonderful opportunity to participate in a study that can potentially help us to understand young girls better. We hope to obtain information as to how young girls interact with each other, and how these interactions affect them. More specifically, this program will be conducted with the 5th grade girls. You and your daughter will be asked to complete two surveys a piece.

The primary researcher's name is Yolanda Slade and she doctoral student from the Graduate and University Center of the City University of New York (CUNY) and a School Psychologist for the Department of Education. She is requesting the names and addresses of the 5th grade General Education female students in order to send you information about the program. Although this information can be disclosed to a third party without parental permission, the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), indicates that parents must be informed about the release of directory information (such as student names and addresses) and given the opportunity to request that the school not disclose this information. If you are parent of a 5th grade African American General Education young girl and would like your child's directory information released to the researcher, please return the bottom portion of this letter back to the school psychologist_____. We will ensure that your child's directory information is not disclosed to anyone other than the aforementioned individual.

School Address Attention: School Psychologist If you would like to read more about your FERPA rights, visit the following website

http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Please detach and give to the school psychologist_____ if you and your daughter/guard would like to participate in the study.

I,_____, the parent/ of (Parent/'s name)

_____ (Student's name) would like to participate in the research study being conducted by Ms. Yolanda Slade, Doctoral candidate from the Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York.

……. Date

Appendix B

Script introducing my research at the parent information meeting

Good afternoon (evening) parents. My name is Yolanda Slade and I am a doctoral student in the Ph.D. program in the Educational Psychology at the Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York. I am conducting a study to investigate the influence of parenting styles on children's development of positive relationships.

If you agree, you and your daughter will be asked to complete two surveys each. Your daughter will completed the surveys during her lunch period so no instructional time will be lost. You will also be asked to compete two surveys and postage paid envelops will be provided to you. I made it easy for you to return the surveys and for your identity to be protected.

If you decide to participate, you will be required to complete a consent form. We want the girls to understand that their participation is voluntary, that their input is valuable, and that they are respected. The consent forms also make provisions for you to withdraw your consent at anytime should you wish to do so.

There are no risks involved in this study other than those that are encountered in everyday life. The information that is provided on the questionnaires will be confidential. Only my supervisor and I will see it and will combine all of the information obtained to complete my study. If the study is published, the information will be presented in a way that all persons involved will be kept confidential.

If you would like a summary of the findings of this study, please feel free to contact me. I will mail it to the address you provide.

If you decide to withdraw your consent and discontinue your daughter’s/guard’s participation at any time, there will be no consequences for this action.

Appendix C

CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK, GRADUATE CENTER

PARENTAL PERMISSION FORM

My name is Yolanda Slade and I am a doctoral student in the Educational Psychology Ph.D. Program at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY). I would like to invite you and your daughter to participate in a study to investigate the relationship between parenting styles and children's development of friendships. I hope that the results of my study will provide information about how parents affect the relationships their children form. This will also provide us with information about parent training classes that may be beneficial to parents raising young girls.

If you and your daughter decide to participate, you will both be asked to complete surveys. I would ask that you and your daughter answer all of the questions on the surveys. Your daughter will be asked if she would like to participate in the study. If she does not want to participate, she does not have to participate. All information gathered will be kept strictly confidential, and will be stored in a locked file cabinet, to which only I, and my advisor, will have access. Your daughter will be asked to complete the surveys during her lunch period. A snack will be provided to your daughter after she completes the surveys. At the end of the data collection period, a gift that costs no more than $5. At any time, you and your daughter can choose to end your participation in the study.

The risks involved in this study are no more than encountered in everyday life. The benefit of your and your daughter's participation is that there will be a greater understanding of the effects of parenting styles on the development of positive relationships in young African American girls. Should the research reveal the possibility of any psychologically troubling conditions, I will refer your daughter to a mental healthcare provider in the community. There will be approximately 150 participants taking part in this study.

I may publish results of the study, but names of people, or any identifying characteristics, will not be used in any of the publications. If you would like a copy of the study, please provide me with your address and I will send you a copy in the future should the study be published.

If you have any questions about this research, you can contact me at (917) 407-8326 or yslade@gc.cuny.edu, or my advisor Dr. Georgiana Shick Tryon at (212) 817-8293 or gtryon@gc.cuny.edu. If you

have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact Kay Powell, IRB Administrator, The Graduate Center/City University of New York, (212) 817-7525, kpowell@gc.cuny.edu.

Thank you for considering to participate in this study. I will give you a copy of this form to take with you.

If you sign below, you are stating that you have read the information above and are agreeing to have you daughter/guard participate in the study.

…….....

I agree to let my child_____(name) participate in the study described above.

……. ……..

Parent's Signature Date

……..

(Please PRINT name)

……..

_____ Child's Name

……..…… ……..

Yolanda Slade, Principal Investigator (Date)

Appendix D

PARTICIPANT ASSENT FORM

(Student)

My name is Yolanda Slade and I am a doctoral student the Educational Psychology Ph.D. Program at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY). I would like to invite you and your mother to participate in a study to investigate the relationship between parenting styles and children's development of friendships. I hope that the results of my study will provide information about how mothers affect the relationships their children form. This will also provide us with information to include in parent training classes that may be beneficial to mothers raising young girls.

If you and your mother decide to participate, you will be asked to complete three surveys during your lunch period. A snack will be provided for you after you finish the surveys. I would ask that you and your mother answer all of the questions on the surveys. If you do not want to participate, you do not have to participate. All information gathered will be kept strictly confidential, and will be stored in a locked file cabinet, to which only I, and my advisor, will have access. At the end of the data collection period, a gift that costs no more than $5At any time, you and mother can choose to end your participation in the study.

The risks involved in this study are no more than encountered in everyday life. The benefit of your and your mother's participation is that there will be a greater understanding of the effects of parenting styles on the development of positive relationships in young African American girls. Should the research reveal the possibility of any psychologically troubling conditions, I will refer your daughter to a mental healthcare provider in the community. There will be approximately 150 participants taking part in this study.

I may publish results of the study, but names of people, or any identifying characteristics, will not be used in any of the publications. If you would like a copy of the study, please provide me with your address and I will send you a copy in the future should the study be published.

If you have any questions about this research, you can contact me at (917) 407-8326 or yslade@gc.cuny.edu, or my advisor Dr. Georgiana Shick Tryon at (212) 817-8293 or gtryon@gc.cuny.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact Kay Powell, IRB Administrator, The Graduate Center/City University of New York, (212) 817-7525, kpowell@gc.cuny.edu.

……..**.....**

I,_____ agree to participate in the study described above.

…….. ……

Student's Signature Date

……..

(Please PRINT name)

…….. ……..

Yolanda Slade, Principal Investigator Date

Appendix E

It's a girl thing!

Calling all 5th grade girls 9-11 years old

We need you!

Just for participating, you will receive a gift valued at $5.00!

All you have to do is tell your mom you want to participate.

You'll answer a few questions about how you get along with your mom and your friends.

Your mom will answer a few questions too!

Contact: Yolanda Slade at 917 407 8326

if you or your mom have any questions!

Appendix F

Children's Self Experiences Questionnaire – Self Report

THINGS THAT HAPPEN TO ME

Name _____ Grade _____

Teacher's Name _____

DIRECTIONS: Here is a list of things that sometimes happen to kids your age at school. How often do they happen to you at school?

EXAMPLE:

1. How often do you eat lunch at school?

1	2	3	4	5
NEVER	ALMOST NEVER	SOMETIMES	ALMOST ALL THE TIME	ALL THE TIME

2. How often does your class go outside to play?

1	2	3	4	5
NEVER	ALMOST NEVER	SOMETIMES	ALMOST ALL THE TIME	ALL THE TIME

3. How often does another kid give you help when you need it?

1	2	3	4	5
NEVER	ALMOST NEVER	SOMETIMES	ALMOST ALL THE TIME	ALL THE TIME

DIRECTIONS: Here is a list of things that sometimes happen to kids your age at school. How often do they happen to you at school?

4. How often do you get hit by another kid at school?

1	2	3	4	5
NEVER	ALMOST NEVER	SOMETIMES	ALMOST ALL THE TIME	ALL THE TIME

5. How often do other kids leave you out on purpose when it is time to play or do an activity?

1	2	3	4	5
NEVER	ALMOST NEVER	SOMETIMES	ALMOST ALL THE TIME	ALL THE TIME

6. How often does another kid yell at you and call you mean names?

1	2	3	4	5
NEVER	ALMOST NEVER	SOMETIMES	ALMOST ALL THE TIME	ALL THE TIME

7. How often does another kid try to cheer you up when you feel sad or upset?

1	2	3	4	5
NEVER	ALMOST NEVER	SOMETIMES	ALMOST ALL THE TIME	ALL THE TIME

8. How often does a kid who is mad at you try to get back at you by not letting you be in their group anymore?

1	2	3	4	5
NEVER	ALMOST NEVER	SOMETIMES	ALMOST ALL THE TIME	ALL THE TIME

DIRECTIONS: Here is a list of things that sometimes happen to kids your age at school. How often do they happen to you at school?

9. How often do you get pushed or shoved by another kid at school?

1	2	3	4	5
NEVER	ALMOST NEVER	SOMETIMES	ALMOST ALL THE TIME	ALL THE TIME

10. How often does another kid do something that makes you feel happy?

1	2	3	4	5
NEVER	ALMOST NEVER	SOMETIMES	ALMOST ALL THE TIME	ALL THE TIME

11. How often does a classmate tell lies about you to make other kids not like you anymore?

1	2	3	4	5
NEVER	ALMOST NEVER	SOMETIMES	ALMOST ALL THE TIME	ALL THE TIME

12. How often does another kid kick you or pull your hair?

1	2	3	4	5
NEVER	ALMOST NEVER	SOMETIMES	ALMOST ALL THE TIME	ALL THE TIME

13. How often does another kid say they won't like you unless you do what they want you to do?

1	2	3	4	5
NEVER	ALMOST NEVER	SOMETIMES	ALMOST ALL THE TIME	ALL THE TIME

DIRECTIONS: Here is a list of things that sometimes happen to kids your age at school. How often do they happen to you at school?

14. How often does another kid say something nice to you?

1	2	3	4	5
NEVER	ALMOST NEVER	SOMETIMES	ALMOST ALL THE TIME	ALL THE TIME

15. How often does a kid try to keep others from liking you by saying mean things about you?

1	2	3	4	5
NEVER	ALMOST NEVER	SOMETIMES	ALMOST ALL THE TIME	ALL THE TIME

16. How often does another kid say they will beat you up if you don't do what they want you to do?

1	2	3	4	5
NEVER	ALMOST NEVER	SOMETIMES	ALMOST ALL THE TIME	ALL THE TIME

17. How often do other kids let you know that they care about you?

1	2	3	4	5
NEVER	ALMOST NEVER	SOMETIMES	ALMOST ALL THE TIME	ALL THE TIME

Appendix G

Psychological Control Scale-Youth Self-Report (PCS-YSR)

Name _____ Grade _____

Teacher's Name _____

DIRECTIONS: Here is a list of things that sometimes happen to kids your age when talking to their mothers. How often do they happen to you?

My mother…

1. changes the subject, whenever I have something to say

1	2	3
NOT LIKE HER	SOME WHAT LIKE HER	A LOT LIKE HER

2. finishes my sentences whenever I talk.

1	2	3
NOT LIKE HER	SOME WHAT LIKE HER	A LOT LIKE HER

3.often interrupts me.

1	2	3
NOT LIKE HER	SOME WHAT LIKE HER	A LOT LIKE HER

DIRECTIONS: Here is a list of things that sometimes happen to kids your age when talking to their mothers. How often do they happen to you?

My mother…

4.acts like she knows what I'm thinking or feeling.

1	2	3
NOT LIKE HER	SOME WHAT LIKE HER	A LOT LIKE HER

5.would like to be able to tell me how to feel or think about things all the time.

1	2	3
NOT LIKE HER	SOMEWHAT LIKE HER	A LOT LIKE HER

6. is always trying to change how I feel or think about things.

1	2	3
NOT LIKE HER	SOME WHAT LIKE HER	A LOT LIKE HER

7. blames me for other family member's problems.

1	2	3
NOT LIKE HER	SOMEW HAT LIKE HER	A LOT LIKE HER

DIRECTIONS: Here is a list of things that sometimes happen to kids your age when talking to their mothers. How often do they happen to you?

My mother…

8. brings up my past mistakes when she criticizes me.

1	2	3
NOT LIKE HER	SOME WHAT LIKE HER	A LOT LIKE HER

Appendix H

Children's Social Behavior Scale – Self Report

Name _____ Grade _____

Teacher's Name _____

Things I Do At School

We are interested in how kids get along with one another. Please think about your relationship with other kids and how often you do these things while you're with them.

1. Some kids tell lies about a classmate so that the other kids won't like the classmate anymore. How often do you do this?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All The Time

2. Some kids try to keep certain people from being in their group when it is time to play or do an activity. How often do you do this?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All The Time

3. Some kids try to cheer up other kids who feel upset or sad. How often do you do this?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All The Time

We are interested in how kids get along with one another. Please think about your relationship with other kids and how often you do these things while you're with them.

4. When they are mad at someone, some kids get back at the person by not letting the person be in their group anymore. How often do you do this?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All The Time

5. Some kids hit other kids at school How often do you do this?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All The Time

6. Some kids let others know that they care about them. How often do you do this?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All The Time

7. Some kids help out other kids when they need it. How often do you do this?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All The Time

We are interested in how kids get along with one another. Please think about your relationship with other kids and how often you do these things while you're with them.

8. Some kids yell at others and call them mean names. How often do you do this?

1 Never	2 Almost Never	3 Sometimes	4 Almost All The Time	5 All The Time

9. Some kids push and shove other kids at school. How often do you do this?

1 Never	2 Almost Never	3 Sometimes	4 Almost All The Time	5 All The Time

10. Some kids tell their friends that they will stop liking them unless the friends do what they say. How often do you tell friends this?

1 Never	2 Almost Never	3 Sometimes	4 Almost All The Time	5 All The Time

We are interested in how kids get along with one another. Please think about your relationship with other kids and how often you do these things while you're with them.

11. Some kids have a lot of friends in their class. How often do you have a lot of friends in your class?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All The Time

12. Some kids try to keep others from liking a classmate by saying mean things about the classmate. How often do you do this?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All The Time

13. Some kids wish that they had more friends at school. How often do you feel this way?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost All The Time	All The Time

We are interested in how kids get along with one another. Please think about your relationship with other kids and how often you do these things while you're with them.

14. Some kids say or do nice things for other kids. How often do you do this?

1 Never	2 Almost Never	3 Sometimes	4 Almost All The Time	5 All The Time

15. Some kids have a lot of classmates who like to play with them. How often do the kids in your class like to play with you?

1 Never	2 Almost Never	3 Sometimes	4 Almost All The Time	5 All The Time

Appendix I

Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire

Identification Number:_____

Make a rating for each item as to how often you exhibit this behavior with your child.

Exhibit this Behavior

1=Never

2=About Half of the Time

3=Very Often

4=Always

_____ 1. I am responsive to my child's feelings and needs.

_____ 2. I use physical punishment as a way of disciplining my child.

_____ 3. I take my child's desires into account before asking the child to do something.

_____ 4. When my child asks why she has to conform, I state: because I said so, or I am your parent and I want you to.

_____ 5. I explain to my child how I feel about her good and bad behavior.

_____ 6. I spank when my child is disobedient.

_____ 7. I encourage my child to talk about her troubles.

_____ 8. I find it difficult to discipline my child.

_____ 9. I encourage my child to express herself even when disagreeing with parents.

_____10. I punish by taking privileges away from my child with little if any explanation.

_____11. I emphasize the reason for rules.

_____12. I give comfort and understanding when my child is upset.

Exhibit this Behavior

1=Never

2=About Half of the Time

3=Very Often

4=Always

_____13. I yell or shout when my child misbehaves.

_____14. I give praise when my child is good.

_____15. I give in to my child when she causes a commotion about something.

_____16. I explode in anger toward my child.

_____17. I threaten my child with punishment more often than actually giving it.

_____18. I take into account my child's preferences in making plans for the family.

_____19. I grab my child when being disobedient.

_____20. I state punishments to my child and do not actually do them.

_____21. I show respect for my child's opinions by encouraging my child to express them.

_____22. I allow my child to give input into family rules.

_____23. I scold and criticize to make my child improve.

_____24. I spoil my child.

_____25. I give my child reasons why rules should be obeyed.

_____26. I use threats as punishment with little or no justification.

_____27. I have warm and intimate times together with my child.

_____28. I punish by putting my child off somewhere alone with little if any

explanation.

Exhibit this Behavior

1=Never

2=About Half of the Time

3=Very Often

4=Always

_____29. I help my child to understand the impact of behavior by encouraging my child to talk about the consequences of her actions.

_____30. I scold or criticize when my child's behavior doesn't meet my expectations.

_____31. I explain the consequences of the child's behavior.

_____32. I slap my child when the child misbehaves.

Appendix J

Participant Demographic Questionnaire

Please respond to the following questions by either writing in your answer or circling the one that best reflects your response for each item.

Identification Number:_____

Daughter's Birthday : (MM/DD/YYYY)_____

Please circle the number that goes with your current income level.

1. $0-$20,000
2. $20,001--$30,000
3. $30,001- $40,000
4. $40,001- and over

Marital Status

1. Single parent
2. Married
3. Divorced
4. Widowed

How many children do you have?

1. 1
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4 or more children

Education

1. No high school
2. High school diploma
3. Bachelor's degree
4. Graduate degree

Age

1. 20-29
2. 30-39
3. 40-49
4. 50 and over

Appendix K

Histograms of the Study Variables

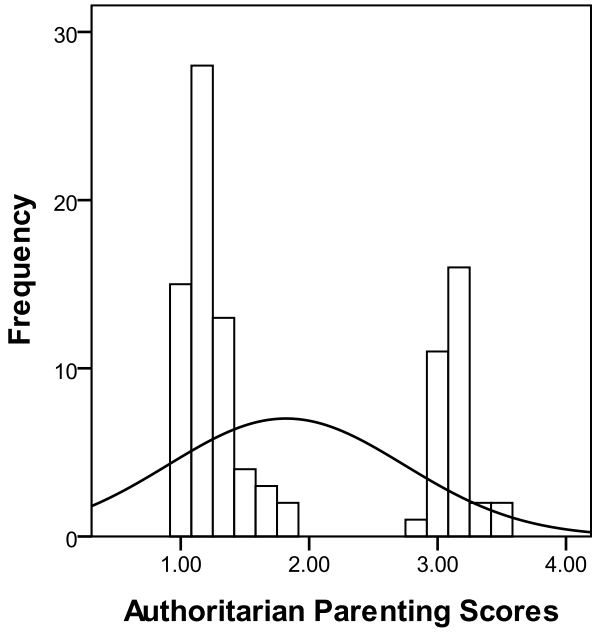

Figure 1. Histogram of mean authoritarian parenting scores.

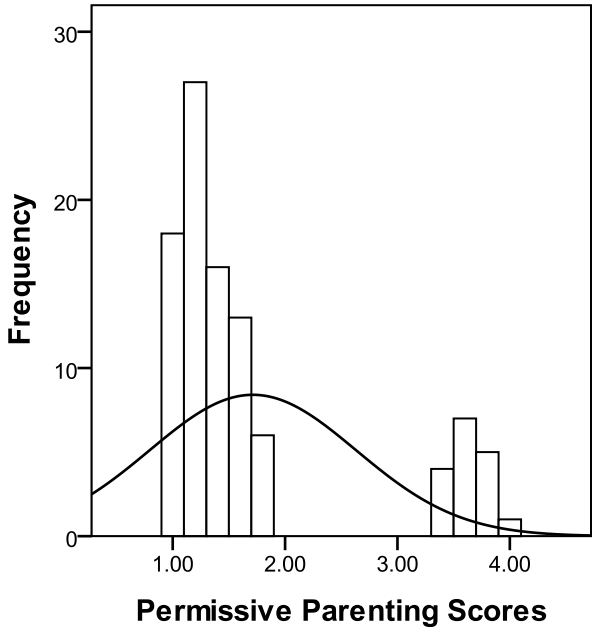

Figure 2. Histogram of mean permissive parenting scores.

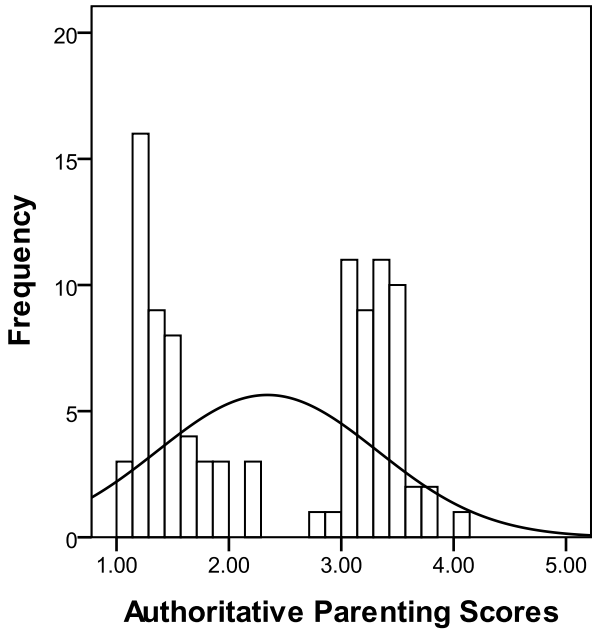

Figure 3. Histogram of mean authoritative parenting scores.

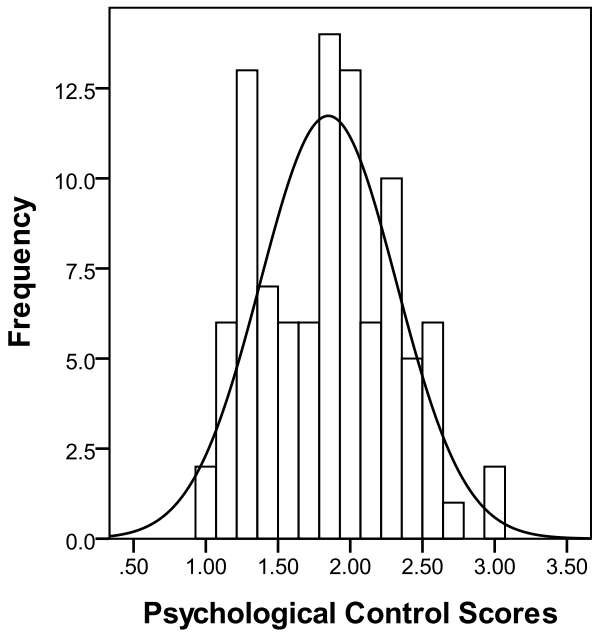

Figure 4. Histogram of mean psychological control scores.

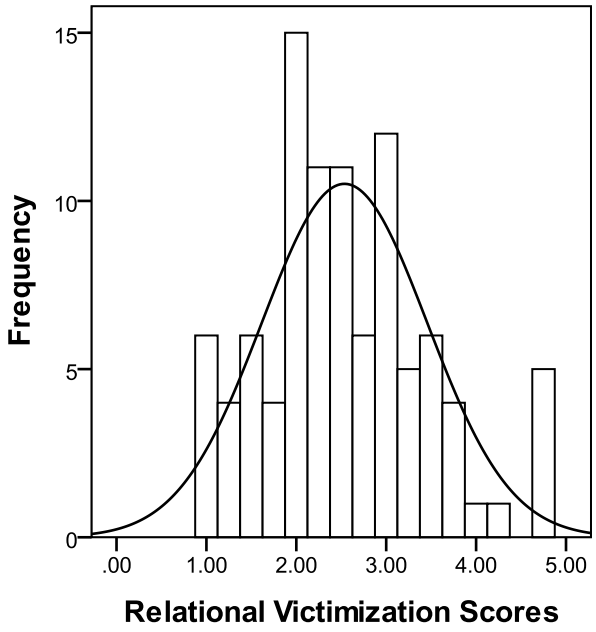

Figure 5. Histogram of mean relational victimization scores.

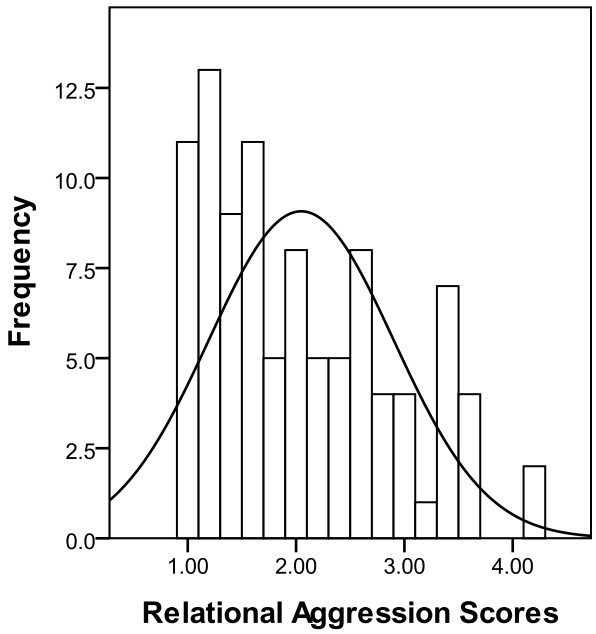

Figure 6. Histogram of mean relational aggression scores.

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