Marital Romantic Relational Aggression and Adolescent Child Outcomes

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**Measures**
- Marital Romantic Relational Aggression: Love Withdrawal and Social Sabotage subscales from Self-Report of Aggression and Victimization in Marriage Scale
- Self-Regulation: 12-item version of the Novak and Clayton self-regulation measure
- School Engagement: 9-item modified version of Fredericks, Blumenfeld, and Paris’ School Engagement Measure
- Internalizing: combination of Internalizing Behaviors, Spence Anxiety Scale, and Child Depression Inventory
- Adolescent Relational Aggression: 6-item measure modified from other relational aggression assessments, 2 specifically measuring romantic relational aggression

**Purpose**
To explore the relationship between marital relational aggression on adolescent child romantic and peer relational aggression, internalizing behaviors, and school engagement with self-regulation as a potential mediator.

**Sample**
- 496 families from waves 4 and 5 of the Flourishing Families Project
- Adolescents were ages 13-17 at wave 4
- Representative community sample with 97% retention rate between waves 4 and 5

**Results**
- Mother’s Relational Aggression predicts lower self-regulation in boys and girls; this relationship is stronger for girls.
- Father’s Relational Aggression predicts lower self-regulation for boys, but not for girls.
- Mother’s and father’s relational aggression predict higher romantic relational aggression for girls, but not for boys.
- Greater self-regulation predicts lower peer relational aggression (stronger for girls), lower romantic relational aggression, lower internalizing, and higher school engagement in both boys and girls.

**Conclusion and Clinical Implications**
- Past and current family dynamics should be assessed and used when working with adolescents alone and in families
- It is common for married partners to display relational aggression, especially Love-Withdrawal behaviors (citation); therefore, clinicians should consider these more covert dynamics when working with families and adolescents.
- Even more covert forms of aggression seem to impact adolescent’s self-regulation, especially when that behavior is displayed by the same-gender parent.
- Because self-regulation was a significant predictor of all adolescent outcomes and has shown to be predictive of many other outcomes (citations), clinicians can include marital therapy in working to alleviate adolescent symptoms such as internalizing behaviors, relational aggression, and problems at school.