



# CONTROL YOURSELF: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FUNCTIONS OF AGGRESSION AND EMOTION DYSREGULATION

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## Intro

Reactive Aggression (RA) and Proactive Aggression (PA) represent two functions for the engagement in aggressive behavior (Crick & Dodge, 1996; McCreery & Krach, 2018). Reactive Aggression (RA) is a “cold” aggression that is meticulously planned to meet an end goal (Crick & Dodge, 1996; McCreery & Krach, 2018). Proactive Aggression (PA)- “hot” aggression that occurs in response to an external threatening stimuli (Crick & Dodge, 1996; McCreery & Krach, 2018). Emotion regulation is a person’s ability to recognize emotions and employ strategies to control these emotions (Garofalo & Velotti, 2017). Most past research related to aggression and emotion dysregulation focused solely on younger populations (Cohen & Piquero, 2009). Given the developmental nature of emotion regulation, it is appropriate that the current study investigate these same variables but with an adult population (Gillions et al., 2019). Examining aggression in adults is critical for improving adult intervention techniques (Gillions et al., 2019).

## Purpose

The purpose of the current study is to investigate the link between aggression (RA and PA) and emotion dysregulation in adults. Past research on undergraduate students has found that individuals who have difficulties regulating their emotions are at a greater risk of engaging in aggressive behaviors (Holley, Ewing, Stiver, & Bloch, 2017). However, the risk of engaging in RA and PA subtypes have not been examined in relation to emotion dysregulation in adults.

## Research Questions

1. Do adult participants’ scores on an emotion dysregulation scale predict scores on a reactive aggression scale?
2. Do adult participants’ scores on an emotion dysregulation scale predict scores on a proactive aggression scale?

## Methods

### Participants

- Must agree to consent form, have an Internet Protocol (IP) address located in the United States, be above the age of 18, and complete the survey

### Procedures

- Study approved by the IRB
- Participants were redirected from MTurk to a survey that was compiled through Qualtrics
- Participants were compensated \$1.00 through Mturk

### Questionnaires:

- **Demographics:** Age, Sex, Race, Education level of self and biological parents
- **Reactive-Proactive Aggression Questionnaire (RPQ)**
  - 23-item self-report measure (Raine et al., 2006)
  - Items rated from 0 (never), 1 (sometimes), or 2 (often) (Raine et al., 2006)
- **Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS)**
  - 36-item self-report measure (Gratz & Roemer, 2004).
  - Responses rated from 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always)- High scores indicate greater difficulties regulating emotions (Gratz & Roemer, 2004)

## Data Analysis

- 323 Participants total
- Descriptive Statistics
  - Sex:
    - Males= 152 (47.4%)
    - Females= 170 (52.6%)
  - Race:
    - White= 251 (78%)
    - Black/ African American= 58 (18%)
    - Hispanic or Latino= 54 (16.7%)
    - Other= 12 (3.7%)
  - Ages ranged from 20 to 74 years
- Regression Analysis
  - Reactive Aggression:  $R^2 = .32$  ( $p < .001$ )
  - Proactive Aggression:  $R^2 = .38$  ( $p < .001$ )

Figure 1. Correlations

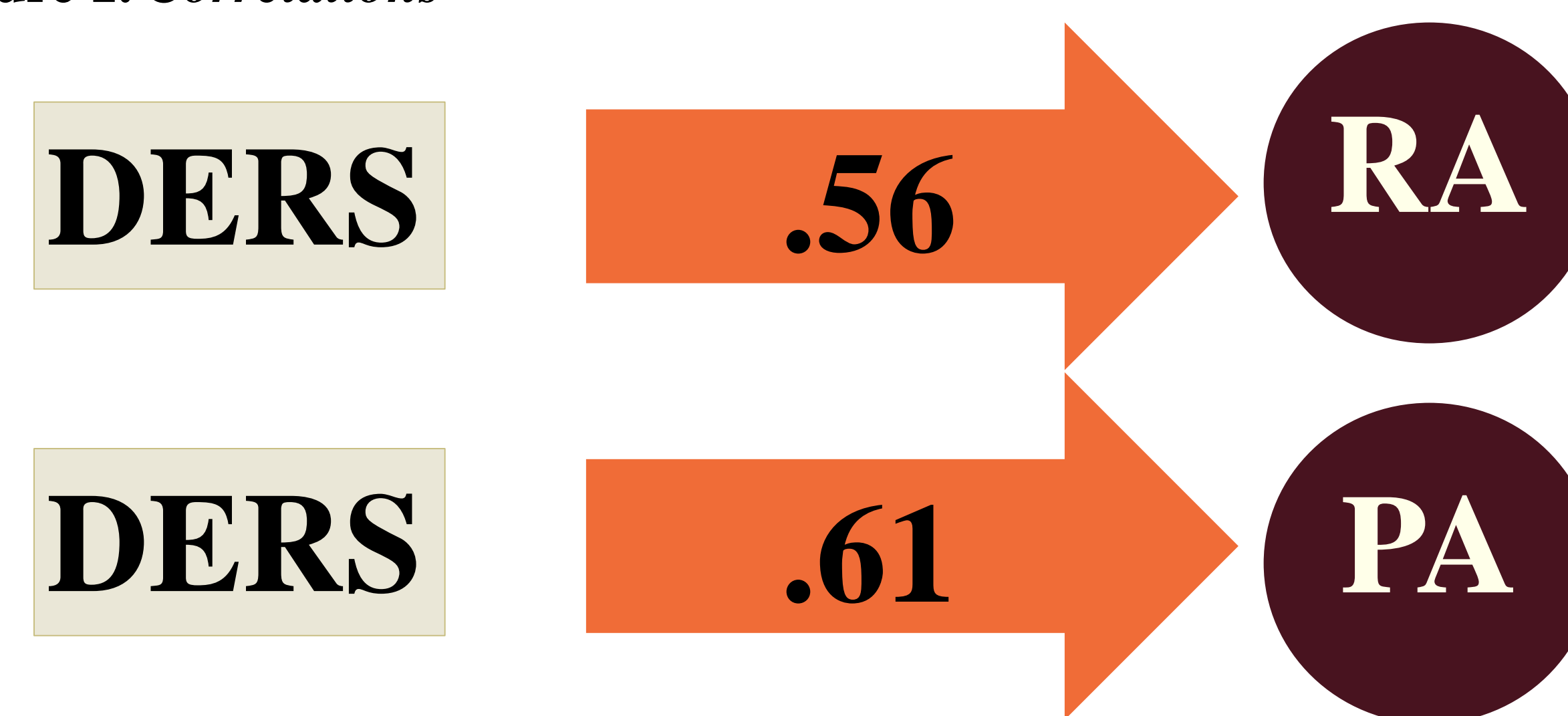


Table 1. Regressions

	B	SE B	$\beta$	t	p
DERS and RA	0.106	0.009	0.564	12.239	<.001
DERS and PA	0.148	0.011	0.614	13.919	<.001

## Conclusions

Findings from the current study indicate that emotion dysregulation plays a role in both RA and PA. Therefore, it may be beneficial to incorporate emotion regulation strategies into adult aggression interventions. There was no evidence based on the current study to support the distinction between RA and PA. It is important to note that these data are based on an incomplete sample and uncleaned data. Further analyses may be useful to determine differences in the variables (e.g., analyzing DERS subscales). However, the current findings support the use of emotion regulation interventions in adults who present with aggression problems.

## Limitations

- Tentative data was used for the poster
  - RPQ needs factor analysis since it was standardized with an adolescent sample
- Linear Regression (Aggarwal & Ranganathan, 2017)
  - All data must be independent - possible to make multiple Mturk accounts
  - Sensitive to outliers
- Self-Reports (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012; Hauser, Paolacci, & Chandler, 2019)
  - Inaccurate responses due to bias, comfort level, or motivation to qualify for the survey
- MTurk (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012; Hauser, Paolacci, & Chandler, 2019)
  - Self-selection
  - Generalizability

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# PURPOSE

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