



Gender Variables in Adolescence as Predictors of Romantic Relationship Existence and Satisfaction in Adulthood

Molly White & Amanda Rose



Introduction

Importance of Relationship Satisfaction (Dyrdal, 2011)

- Relationship satisfaction was found to predict life satisfaction, while life satisfaction did not necessarily predict relationship satisfaction.

Aggression and Social Exclusion Between Genders (Underwood, 2004)

- Results supported the idea that boys are more relationally aggressive than girls because boys were higher in social exclusion in every area except nonverbal. This supports the idea that communication styles affect relationships.

Gender-typed vs. Androgynous Communication Styles (Harter, 1998)

- Shows how communication styles differ across genders and, further, shows how gender-typed vs. androgynous communication styles differ.
- Females reported more voice, defined as being able to express authentic thoughts and feelings as opposed to no expression or expression of false thoughts and feelings, among close friends and female classmates compared to teachers, parents, and male classmates. Males reported low voice among all categories. Androgynous females reported higher voice in public settings than feminine females.

Study Aims

Hypothesis 1 → We hypothesized that gender role orientation as a teenager will not affect romantic relationship existence as an adult.

Hypothesis 2 → We hypothesized that having an opposite-gender sibling will increase likelihood of having a romantic relationship as an adult. Having a same-gender sibling will have no effect on romantic relationship existence as an adult.

Hypothesis 3 → We hypothesized that having a strongly gender-typed communication style will lessen likelihood of having an opposite-gender romantic relationship as an adult. Having an androgynous gender-typed communication style will increase likelihood of having a romantic relationship as an adult.

Hypothesis 4 → We hypothesized that variables will be affected in the same ways as in Hypotheses 1-3 substituting the variable romantic relationship existence with the new variable romantic relationship satisfaction.

Method

Participants	(n=261)
Age	M7th =13.01 years, M10th=16.03
Gender	108 Male, 153 Female
Ethnicity	Caucasian (62.8%) African American (29.2%) American Indian, Pacific Islander, and Asian American (<2%) More than one race (5.8%)

Measures:

Youth

-Gender Role Orientation: Children's Sex Role Inventory – Short Form; Boldizar, 1991).

-Unmitigated Communion: 9-items, each rated on a 5 point scale; Helgeson & Fritz, 1998).

-Co-rumination: 27-items, each rated on a 5 point Likert scale; Rose 2002).

Adult

Relationship Satisfaction: Survey
Previous Study: In a University laboratory, friends were separated and given a series of questionnaires. Then the friends were reunited and asked to plan a party. Then the friends were separated and given a series of questionnaires. They were then reunited once more for the Problem Talk task in which they discussed problems they had generated, taking as much time as necessary, with the option to talk about something else or play with a jigsaw puzzle when finished.

Current study: Participants were contacted 8 years later and asked to take a short online questionnaire to follow up. Participants were contacted using addresses from their old records, and if no response was received, participants were located on Facebook and sent a message from an account created to represent this study. If a Facebook page was unable to be located or received no response, participants' new addresses were located through an online database. If they agreed, they were given the survey to complete. Participants were offered compensation for their participation which was sent after survey completion.

Results

We conducted various t-tests and chi-square analyses in order to analyze relationships between youth and adult variables.

The significant results we found were as follows:

Romantic Partner:

No significant correlations between youth variables and existence of a romantic partner as an adult were found.

Relationship Satisfaction:

Gender Role Orientation:

- For all participants, romantic relationship satisfaction as an adult is positively correlated with femininity in youth, $r = .261$, $p = .002$
- For females, romantic relationship satisfaction as an adult is positively correlated with femininity and masculinity in youth, $r = .276$, $p = .009$; $r = .258$, $p = .014$, respectively.

Self-Reported Social Behavior:

- For females, the correlation between self-disclosure in youth and adult relationship satisfaction was significant, $r = .223$, $p = .035$.
- For males, romantic relationship satisfaction as an adult is positively correlated with self-disclosure in youth, $r = .316$, $p = .019$.
- For all participants, the correlation between self-disclosure in youth and adult romantic relationship satisfaction was significant at the .01 level, $r = .259$, $p = .002$.
- For all participants, the correlation between co-rumination in youth and relationship satisfaction as an adult was significant $r = .183$, $p = .028$.

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Discussion

Hypothesis 1 → Supported

- Gender role orientation in youth did not have a significant relationship with existence of a romantic relationship as an adult.

Hypothesis 2 → Partially Supported

- Having an opposite-sex sibling had no significant correlation with having a romantic relationship as an adult. Having a same-sex sibling also had no significant correlation with having a romantic relationship as an adult.

Hypothesis 3 → Not Supported

- Having a strongly gender-typed communication style in youth, either feminine or masculine, did not have a significant effect on relationship existence as an adult.

Hypothesis 4 → Partially Supported

- Femininity, Masculinity, Self-disclosure, and Co-rumination all had positive correlations with relationship satisfaction overall, in females, and/or in males.

Conclusions

Further research on gender role orientation and self-reported social behavior during youth and how this affects romantic relationship satisfaction in adulthood is necessary.

Future Directions

- Study a specific population in order to find more significant results.
- Use a larger population to include experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals.