

Association of Adolescents' Social Cognitive Orientations and Young Adult Well Being and Adjustment

Lindsay M. Durdle, Allie M. Spiekerman, and Amanda J. Rose



INTRODUCTION

- Research suggests that youth's social-cognitive processes have important implications for their well-being and development (Crick & Dodge, 1994).
- Children's Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire score outcomes can be related to maladaptive behaviors like low self-esteem, depressive symptoms, physical and verbal aggression, and victimization (Downey et al., 1998).
- Positive social goals and strategy setting can influence maintaining relationships, compromising skills, and conflict resolution.
- Research suggests that personal control in successful problem solvers can also create positive strategies for regulating their own behavior (Heffernan & Richards, 1981).
- Present study:** This study aims to expand the research on how adaptive or maladaptive social-cognitive orientations in adolescence can impact transitioning into adulthood.

Relations were examined between adolescent rejection sensitivity, social goals, and problem solving; and adult educational attainment romantic satisfaction, partner conflict and decision talk, and emotional adjustment.

HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis 1: High levels of anxious or angry rejection sensitivity will be associated with low romantic satisfaction and high internalizing symptoms.

Hypothesis 2: Positive social goals and strategies will be associated with positive conflict resolution and decision making in relationships and higher educational attainment.

Hypothesis 3: Adaptive problem-solving skills will be associated with higher educational attainment and positive conflict resolution and decision making in relationships.

METHODS

Participants and Procedure

- Data from adolescents who had recently completed 7th or 10th grade had been collected over three summers between 2007-2009. Participants were randomly selected from public school rosters in a mid-size university town.
- Participants completed the adult assessment eight to ten years later.

Participants:	270 adult participants	
Mean age:	In adolescence: 14.66	In adulthood: 22.97
Ethnicity:	EA: 62.8% AA: 29.2% Other: 7.8%	

Measures

Goals and Strategies Scale (Based on Rose & Asher, 2004). Youth were given 15 items assessing their goals and strategies when discussing problems. Each item was rated on a 5-point scale ranging from Not at all true of me (1) to Very true of me (5).

Children's Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire (Downey & Feldman, 1996). Youth were given 6 scenarios examining how they handle rejection. Each scenario included 3 items assessing expectation of rejection, anxious rejection, and angry rejection.

Problem Solving Inventory (Perez et al., 1997). Youth were given 34 items assessing problem-solving styles when dealing with everyday problems. They rated each item on a 6-point scale ranging from Really disagree (0) to really agree (6).

Educational Attainment.

Relationship Satisfaction. If participants had a romantic partner, they were prompted to rate how satisfied they are in their relationship using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Not at all true (1) to Really true (5).

Partner Conflict and Decision Talk (Rose, 2020). Items assessing comfort and influence during decision making and conflict resolution with a romantic partner were developed for the present study.

Center for Epidemiologic Studies–Depression Scale (CES–D; Radloff, 1977). The young adult assessment included three items from CES-D gauging internalizing symptoms.

RESULTS

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11.
1. Romantic Satisfaction	--										
2. Partner Decision Talk	.37**	--									
3. Partner Conflict Talk	.40**	.73**	--								
4. Educational Attainment	.00	.18*	.01	--							
5. Adult Depressive Symptoms	-.25**	-.12	-.07	-.02	--						
6. Problem-solving Conflict	.14	.11	.07	.23**	-.01	--					
7. Problem-solving Goal	.11	.01	-.03	.15*	-.01	.42**	--				
8. Feel Better Goal	.18*	-.02	-.08	.10	.05	.35**	.61**	--			
9. Supportive Bond Goal	.23**	.04	.04	-.24**	.03	.02	.25**	.36**	--		
10. Angry Rejection Sensitivity	-.06	-.16	-.16*	-.18**	.11	-.31	-.17**	-.15**	.00	--	
11. Anxious Rejection Sensitivity	-.22**	-.15	-.20*	-.21**	.09	-.31	-.15**	-.05	.05	.73**	--

** - Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

* - Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

Hypothesis 1: Partially supported - Angry rejection sensitivity was significantly associated with lower levels of romantic satisfaction, however there were no associations between rejection sensitivity and internalizing symptoms.

Hypothesis 2: Supported - Positive social goals were associated with romantic satisfaction and high educational attainment. Negative goals are associated with conflict resolution in relationships.

Hypothesis 3: Partially supported - The underlying dimension of problem-solving conflict is related to higher educational attainment. No other significant correlations were found.

DISCUSSION

Conclusion

- As indicated in the data, certain social-cognitive processes in adolescence could impact future adult outcomes like educational attainment, relationship satisfaction and conflict resolution. These findings highlight the importance of developing adaptive social and cognitive skills in adolescence as there are potential long-term effects on adult well-being.
- Ran correlations between every variable, associations not stated in hypotheses were considered exploratory.
- Gender differences were found when comparing adolescent variables.

Limitations

- Adolescent and adult data collection occurred over two different three-year periods, so the time period between the adolescent and young adult data collections varied for different individuals
- In the current study, the time period was not considered; however, future analyses may indicate that associations between adolescent and young adult data are stronger when the time between assessment periods are shorter.

Future directions

- Future directions for this study could be research into the importance of intervention on developing adaptive social-cognitive skills in adolescence to set up for future success in adulthood.
- Further research could also examine other behavioral skills in adolescence (i.e. competence, aggression) and their relation to adult well-being and adjustment.

REFERENCES

- Crick NR, Dodge KA. A review and reformulation of social information-processing mechanisms in children's social adjustment. *Psychological Bulletin*. 1994;115:74–101.
- Downey, G., Lebolt, A., Rincon, C, & Freitas, A. L. (1998). Rejection sensitivity and children's interpersonal difficulties. *Child Development*, 69, 1072-1089.
- Rose AJ, Asher SR. Children's strategies and goals in response to help-giving and help-seeking tasks within a friendship. *Child Dev*. 2004 May-Jun;75(3):749-63. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8624.2004.00704.x. PMID: 15144484.
- Heffernan, T., & Richards, C.S. Self-control of study behavior: Identification and evaluation of natural methods. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 1981, 28, 361-364
- Radloff, L.S. (1977) 'The CES-D scale: A self report depression scale for research in the general population'. *Applied Psychological Measurement* 1: 385-401.