

Sibling Dyads' Perceptions of Their Relationship in Adolescence and Early Adulthood

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Abstract

As part of an ongoing longitudinal study of sibling and friend relationships, we examined siblings' perceptions of their relationship in adolescence and early adulthood. Thirty-five sibling dyads completed questionnaires about their relationship during adolescence and early adulthood. Correlations among the scales on the adolescent and adulthood questionnaires reveal considerable coherence in the sibling relationships at both ages and some continuity between adolescence and early adulthood.

Introduction

For most people, sibling relationships endure longer than parent-child relationships, friendships, or romantic relationships, and there is evidence that they continue to be important throughout the lifespan. However, research on sibling relationships has been concentrated in childhood and adolescence; we know relatively little about sibling relationships in early adulthood or about the extent to which they show continuity from earlier phases of development. As part of a longitudinal study of sibling and friend relationships, we are examining siblings' perceptions of their relationship in adolescence and early adulthood. This poster presents preliminary findings; data collection is ongoing.

Method

- Thirty-five sibling dyads in a longitudinal study of sibling and friend relationships completed questionnaires about a relationship with a sibling during late adolescence and early adulthood.
- The adolescent questionnaire was an age-adjusted questionnaire developed for use in the longitudinal study; it included five scales (Asymmetry, Intimacy, Prosocial/Harmony, Relational Aggression, and Conflict).
- The questionnaire used during the early adulthood phase of the study was the Adult Sibling Relationship Questionnaire (Stocker et al., 1997); it included 12 scales (Similarity, Intimacy, Quarreling, Affection, Antagonism, Admiration, Emotional Support, Competition, Instrumental Support, Domination, Acceptance, and Knowledge).
- Participants received movie tickets as compensation during the adolescent phase of the study and 10-dollar Amazon gift cards during the adulthood phase.

Results

- For both siblings at both ages, many of the more positive dimensions were positively intercorrelated and the more negative dimensions were positively intercorrelated.
- At both ages, the positive scales and the negative scales were negatively intercorrelated.
- On the adolescent questionnaire the siblings showed strong agreement on their ratings of the amount of prosocial behavior/harmony and conflict in their relationship.
- Adolescents disagreed in their ratings of the asymmetry, intimacy, and relational aggression in their relationship.
- In early adulthood, the siblings agreed on their ratings of similarity, intimacy, quarreling, antagonism, domination, and acceptance; they differed in their ratings of affection, admiration, emotional support, competition, instrumental support, and knowledge.
- The adult scales of Instrumental Support and Competition were not consistently correlated with either positive or negative dimensions; we suspect that this may suggest a difference for brothers and sisters.

Table 1. Correlations between Target Adolescent and Target Adulthood Questionnaires

| Subscale | Target Child Similarity | Target Child Intimacy | Target Child Quarrelling | Target Child Affection | Target Child Antagonism | Target Child Admiration | Target Child Emotional Support | Target Child Competition | Target Child Instrumental Support | Target Child Domination | Target Child Acceptance | Target Child Knowledge |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Target Child Symmetry | -.293 | -.301 | .056 | -.102 | .194 | -.271 | -.343 | -.331 | -.218 | -.010 | -.288 | -.209 |
| Target Child Intimacy | .486* | .647** | -.242 | .658** | -.140 | .582** | .643** | .247 | .486* | -.030 | .443* | .576** |
| Target Child Relational Aggression | -.194 | .056 | .325 | .122 | .364 | -.117 | .027 | -.124 | .110 | .520** | -.247 | .094 |
| Target Child Prosocial/Harmony | .371 | .416* | -.437* | .484* | -.468* | .515** | .448* | .150 | .372 | -.302 | .539** | .366 |
| Target Child Conflict | .086 | -.132 | .254 | -.065 | .375 | .007 | .019 | .171 | -.126 | .301 | .003 | -.052 |

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 2. Correlations between Sibling Adolescent and Sibling Adulthood Questionnaires

| Subscale | Sibling Similarity | Sibling Intimacy | Sibling Quarrelling | Sibling Affection | Sibling Antagonism | Sibling Admiration | Sibling Emotional Support | Sibling Competition | Sibling Instrumental Support | Sibling Domination | Sibling Acceptance | Sibling Knowledge |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Sibling Symmetry | .212 | .370 | .314 | .402* | .180 | .167 | .392 | .100 | .448* | .153 | .124 | .203 |
| Sibling Intimacy | -.197 | .008 | .093 | .003 | .217 | .173 | .139 | -.106 | .365 | .141 | -.026 | -.047 |
| Sibling Relational Aggression | -.003 | .217 | -.055 | -.004 | -.011 | .142 | .052 | .126 | .052 | -.023 | .090 | .122 |
| Sibling Prosocial/Harmony | -.094 | -.149 | .153 | -.108 | .187 | .083 | -.127 | .021 | .203 | .196 | -.173 | -.148 |
| Sibling Conflict | .004 | .069 | .170 | -.005 | .119 | .162 | .108 | .295 | -.002 | -.046 | -.075 | -.020 |

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 3. Correlations between Target and Sibling Adolescent Questionnaires

| Subscale | Sibling Symmetry | Sibling Intimacy | Sibling Relational Aggression | Sibling Prosocial/Harmony | Sibling Conflict |
|------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------|
| Target Child Symmetry | .424** | -.095 | .073 | -.012 | .061 |
| Target Child Intimacy | -.223 | .597** | -.211 | .472** | -.269 |
| Target Child Relational Aggression | .006 | -.360** | .630** | -.406** | .375** |
| Target Child Prosocial/Harmony | -.139 | .461** | -.372** | .541** | -.436** |
| Target Child Conflict | -.029 | -.305* | .352* | -.357* | .527** |

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 4. Correlations between Target and Sibling Adulthood Questionnaires

| Subscale | Sibling Similarity | Sibling Intimacy | Sibling Quarrelling | Sibling Affection | Sibling Antagonism | Sibling Admiration | Sibling Emotional Support | Sibling Competition | Sibling Instrumental Support | Sibling Domination | Sibling Acceptance | Sibling Knowledge |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Target Child Similarity | .600** | .313 | .023 | .500** | .090 | .352 | .279 | .100 | -.036 | -.220 | .409* | .393* |
| Target Child Intimacy | .495* | .783** | .003 | .674** | -.019 | .549** | .671** | -.196 | .422* | -.075 | .572** | .722** |
| Target Child Quarrelling | -.475* | -.322 | .660** | -.285 | .576** | -.287 | -.147 | .466* | .094 | .622** | -.567** | -.309 |
| Target Child Affection | .408* | .682** | -.038 | .672** | .002 | .588** | .605** | -.180 | .306 | -.110 | .532** | .624** |
| Target Child Antagonism | -.475* | -.346 | .546** | -.360 | .496** | -.271 | -.160 | .328 | .051 | .524** | -.539** | -.374 |
| Target Child Admiration | .233 | .503** | .116 | .534** | .041 | .663** | .475* | -.100 | .297 | .007 | .475* | .434* |
| Target Child Emotional Support | .475* | .747** | .017 | .650** | -.089 | .558** | .633** | -.079 | .399* | -.169 | .593** | .729** |
| Target Child Competition | -.049 | -.178 | .412* | .025 | .426* | .151 | -.004 | .689** | -.095 | .211 | -.143 | -.021 |
| Target Child Instrumental Support | .142 | .602** | .175 | .425* | .050 | .376 | .448* | -.087 | .522** | -.116 | .384* | .530** |
| Target Child Domination | -.353 | -.012 | .650** | .030 | .560** | .097 | .105 | .468* | .307 | .578** | -.183 | -.015 |
| Target Child Acceptance | .364 | .457* | -.202 | .419* | -.296 | .577** | .388* | -.197 | .124 | -.376 | .508** | .440* |
| Target Child Knowledge | .491* | .716** | .089 | .610** | .068 | .516** | .565** | -.140 | .367 | -.032 | .521** | .670** |

*Correlations significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**Correlations significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Discussion

Correlations among the scales on the adolescent and adulthood questionnaires reveal considerable coherence in the sibling relationships at both ages and some continuity between adolescence and early adulthood.

Both the adolescent and the early adulthood questionnaires were internally consistent. There was also considerable continuity in the positive dimensions (similarity, intimacy, affection, emotional/ instrumental support, etc.), but less continuity in the negative dimensions (antagonism, domination, conflict, relational aggression).