

Public Abstract

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Title:Social Perspective-Taking in the Friendships of Adolescents: Implications for Friendship Quality and Emotional Adjustment

The current research considered social perspective-taking (i.e., taking the perspective of another person, and putting oneself "in their shoes") in youths' friendships and associations with friendship quality and emotional adjustment. It was hypothesized that social perspective-taking would be associated with adjustment trade-offs, in that social perspective-taking was expected to be related to positive friendship adjustment, but also to negative emotional adjustment (i.e., symptoms of depression and anxiety) through associations with a new construct, empathetic distress. Empathetic distress refers to the experience of shared negative affect in response to a relationship partner's distress (here, a best friend). Adolescent youths in 6th, 7th, and 8th grades responded to questionnaires, including a new measure of empathetic distress. Gender differences in social perspective-taking, empathetic distress, and in the relations with adjustment outcomes also were examined. Results provided support for study hypotheses and indicated that girls reported higher social perspective-taking and empathetic distress in their friendships compared to boys. Future research should include longitudinal assessments to address the direction of the effects. Applied implications regarding interventions for youth who experience empathetic distress are discussed.