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Children's Perceived Agency in the Context of Marital Conflict: Relations With Marital Conflict Over Time

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Consistent with the bidirectional perspective on parent-child relations, the current study examined children's perceptions of agency in the context of marital conflict. A storytelling task was completed by 115 five-year-old children, tapping perceived agency. These children and their mothers and fathers completed measures of marital conflict at two time points. Consistent with clinical theory and research (e.g., Emery, 1989, 1999) and with theory about negative emotionality as related to children's motivation for agency (e.g., Davies & Cummings, 1994), destructive marital conflict predicted more negative child emotional reactivity, which predicted greater child perceived agency. By contrast, children's perceived agency at Time 1 was negatively related to marital conflict at Time 2. The results supported the hypothesis that children's perceived agency about marital conflict relates to reduced marital conflict over time, controlling for initial level of marital conflict. Implications for dynamic conceptualizations of children's agency from a family-wide perspective are discussed.

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The Association of Childhood Personality Type With Volunteering During Adolescence

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Using a longitudinal design, we investigated the relation of childhood personality type to volunteering during adolescence. We hypothesized that participants with more adaptive personality functioning during childhood would be more likely to volunteer during adolescence and that membership in social organizations would mediate the relation of personality to volunteering during adolescence. Participants from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY) with complete data measures for the four time periods of study were categorized into one of three personality types during early childhood. Children assigned to the *resilient* personality type were more likely than children characterized by the *overcontrolled* and *undercontrolled* personality types to volunteer 8 and 10 years later in adolescence. Analyses demonstrated that the association of childhood personality to adolescent volunteering is not mediated by late-childhood membership in social institutions that may facilitate entry into volunteering. The findings are interpreted in terms of their implications for understanding personality and prosocial behavior.

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Cultural and Gender Differences in the Implications of Competition for Early Adolescent Friendship

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Harry Stack Sullivan maintained that competition between friends in early adolescence would generally destroy their friendship. Working with early adolescent samples in Canada, Costa Rica, and Cuba, we found that hypercompetitiveness—a form of competition involving the need to prove one's own superiority—was linked with conflict between friends, with termination of friendship, and, in general, with less closeness. However, simple enjoyment of competition with a friend was unrelated to friendship continuation. There were important gender and cultural differences in both the levels of competitive behavior and in the mediators between competition and friendship continuation. In general, girls were less competitive with their friends than were boys. Path analysis revealed that both closeness and conflict mediated the link between hypercompetitiveness and the continuation of friendship. Several dimensions of competition were associated with greater companionship in the friendships of boys, especially in the Canadian sample, but were negative correlates of companionship between female friends.

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A Two-Dimensional Ratings-Based Procedure for Sociometric Status Determination as an Alternative to the Asher and Dodge System

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The present study compares the results of three two-dimensional procedures for sociometric status determination: the Asher and Dodge (1986) system, the rating scale method SSrat of Maassen, Akkermans, and Van der Linden (1996), and the nomination procedure of Coie and Dodge (1983). The study followed 170 children from third grade through sixth grade. Children were asked (a) to nominate the classmates with whom they most liked and least liked to play, and (b) to rate how much they liked to play with each of their classmates. The SSrat method determines sociometric status with higher validity and stability than do the other two methods. SSrat's methodological strengths and practical advantages as compared to the Asher and Dodge system demonstrate that it is a valuable, if not preferable, alternative for determining children's sociometric status in situations where the use of a rating scale is appropriate.

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The Relevance of the Social Information Processing Model for Understanding Relational Aggression in Girls

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Two studies examined whether social information-processing variables predict relational aggression in girls. In Study 1, fourth- through sixth-grade girls reported their intent attributions, social goals, outcome expectancies for relational aggression, and the likelihood that they would choose a relationally aggressive response in response to vignettes depicting ambiguous relational provocation situations. In Study 2, girls reported their intent attributions, evaluations of relational aggression, and likelihood of choosing a relationally aggressive response in response to ambiguous relational provocation vignettes. Social-cognitive variables failed to relate significantly to peer nominations of relational aggression in predicted ways in either study, challenging the relevance of the social information-processing model for girls.

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The two studies in this article are based on doctoral dissertations conducted by the first two authors under the direction of Sharon Foster. Marcelle M. Crain and Cambra L. Finch played equal roles in the preparation of this article. Order of the first two authors was determined by coin toss. Thanks are due to Colette Lord, Irene Laverty, Carole Alexander, Janay Osantowski, and Lynda Brooks, who assisted with conducting the studies. Constance Dalenberg, Joanne Callan, Carren Stikka, and Joe Price offered valuable feedback on the dissertation studies, and Darin Arsenault critically evaluated an earlier draft of the manuscript. We also thank the principals, teachers, and students who participated in this research.

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