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Understanding Adolescent Friendships: An Analysis of the Role of Social Perspective-Taking in Friendship Dissolutions

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Understanding Adolescent Friendships: An Analysis of the Role of Social Perspective- Taking in Friendship Dissolutions

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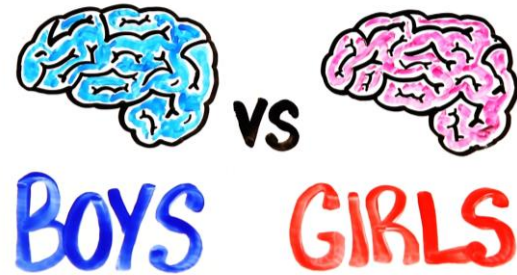
What is Friendship Dissolution and Social-Perspective Taking?

- **Many friendships end or decrease in closeness over time (Fehr, 1996; Poulin & Chan, 2010; Bowker, 2011)**
 - This is especially true of transition periods and adolescent development (Fehr, 1996; Hardy, Bukowski, & Sippola, 2002)
- **For the purpose of these analyses, adolescents' tendency to take the perspective of their peers was studied**



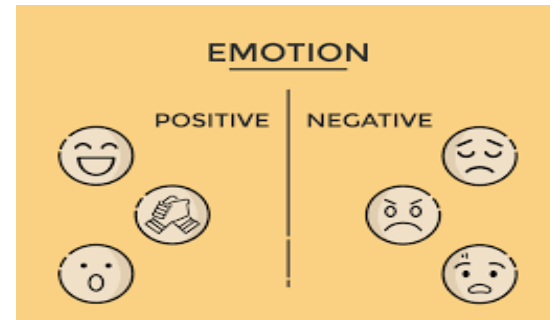
Hypotheses

1. Females would display higher social perspective-taking means than males



2. Participants that were more likely to take the perspective of others would report having higher quality friendships

3. Students with higher social perspective-taking means would report more positive emotions following a dissolution



Method: Participants

- **354 students**
 - Grades 6-8 enrolled in a rural middle school in northeast Connecticut
 - ($M_{\text{age}} = 11.89$ years, $SD = 0.86$; 53.3% girls, 82% white).
- **86.4% of participants reported having at least one dissolved friendship ($n = 306$)**
 - Only students who reported having experienced a friendship dissolution were included in subsequent analyses
- **Consent**
 - Passive parental consent procedures were used
 - Parents were informed of the study and were asked to contact administration or the research team if they did not want their children to participate
 - Students then provided personal assent to participate

Method: Procedure

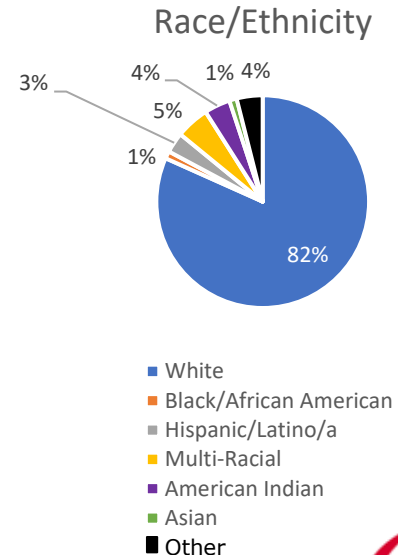
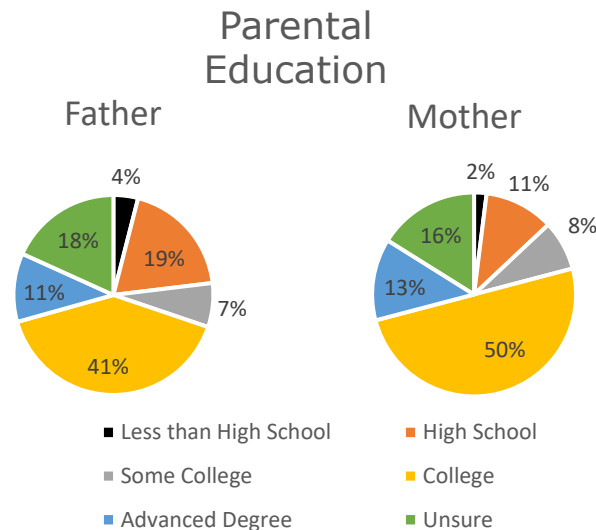
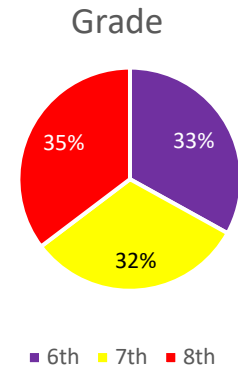
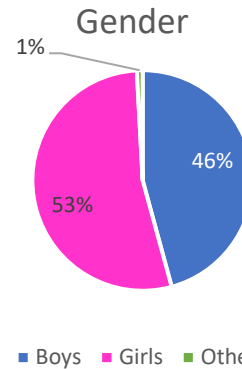
- **Students were asked to fill out surveys using Qualtrics software on school provided tablets and computers**
 - Completion of surveys were held in 40-minute sessions
 - The surveys were administered by trained research assistants
- **All procedures were approved by the University of Connecticut's Institutional Review Board**
- **The school was paid an honorarium for their participation**



Method: Information Sheet

- **Information Sheet**

- Participants provided demographic information including age, grade, gender, parental education, and race/ethnicity



Method: Friendship Dissolution Nomination Form

- **Identifying close friends**
 - Participants were asked to create a list of their current close/best friends
- **Identifying friendship dissolutions**
 - Students were then asked to list as many friends that they could think of that they used to be close to but no longer had a relationship with
 - Participants were asked to exclude romantic partners
- **Choosing one dissolution**
 - Finally, participants were asked to select the friend from the list that they were closest with and whom they stopped being friends with within the last 5 years
 - Questions were answered in regard to this friendship dissolution for the remainder of the study

Method: Social Perspective-Taking Questionnaire

- **Revised version of Smith and Rose's 22-item Social Perspective-Taking Questionnaire** (Smith & Rose, 2011)
 - "Before I criticized my friend, I tried to imagine how I would feel if I were in his/her place"
 - "I could usually appreciate my friend's viewpoint, even if I didn't agree with it"
- **5-point Likert scale was used**
 - (0)"Does not describe me at all"
 - (4)"Describes me very well"
- **Total scores were calculated across items and a mean was taken**
 - A higher score reflected a greater tendency to take the perspective of their former friend



Method: Reactions to Friendship Dissolution

- **Four items from the Friendship Endings Scale** (Owens, 2003) as well as four new items were used to evaluate reactions to dissolution
- **5-Point Likert scale**
 - Assessed intensity of reaction
 - (0)"Does not describe me at all"
 - (4)"Describes me very well"
- **6-Point Likert scale**
 - Assessed duration of reaction
 - (0)"Does not apply"
 - (1)"Less than a week"
 - (5)"For over a year"

Positive

- ❖ Happy
- ❖ Relieved

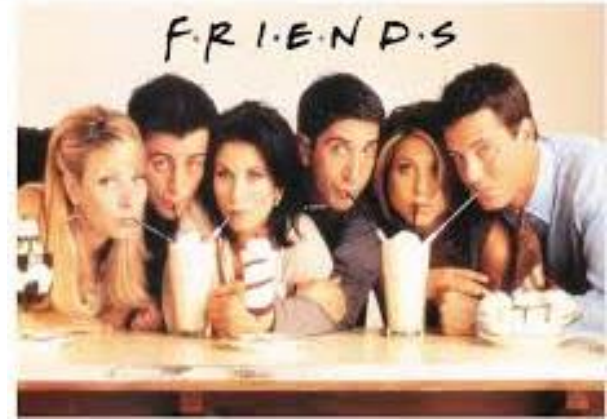
Negative

- ❖ Anger
- ❖ Guilty
- ❖ Loneliness
- ❖ Rumination
- ❖ Sadness
- ❖ Stress

Method: Friendship Quality Questionnaire

- **A revised version of the Friendship Quality Questionnaire (FQQ: Parker & Asher, 1993) was used consisting of seven items**

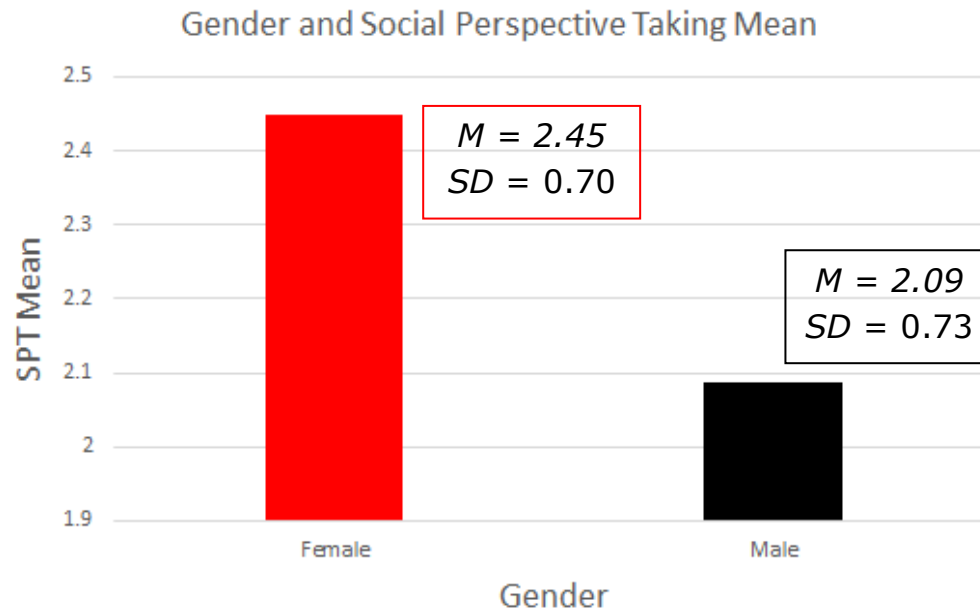
- Validation and Caring, Conflict Resolution, Help and Guidance, Companionship and Recreation, Intimate Exchange, Conflict and Betrayal, and Satisfaction
- "My friend and I did fun things together a lot"
- "I was satisfied with my relationship with my friend"



- **A 5-Point Likert scale was used**
 - (0) "Not true at all"
 - (4) "Really true"
 - The mean was calculated across the items with higher scores indicating higher quality friendships

Results: Gender and SPT

- **Females display greater tendency to take the perspective of their peers than males**



$t(270) = -4.13, p < 0.001, d = 0.51$

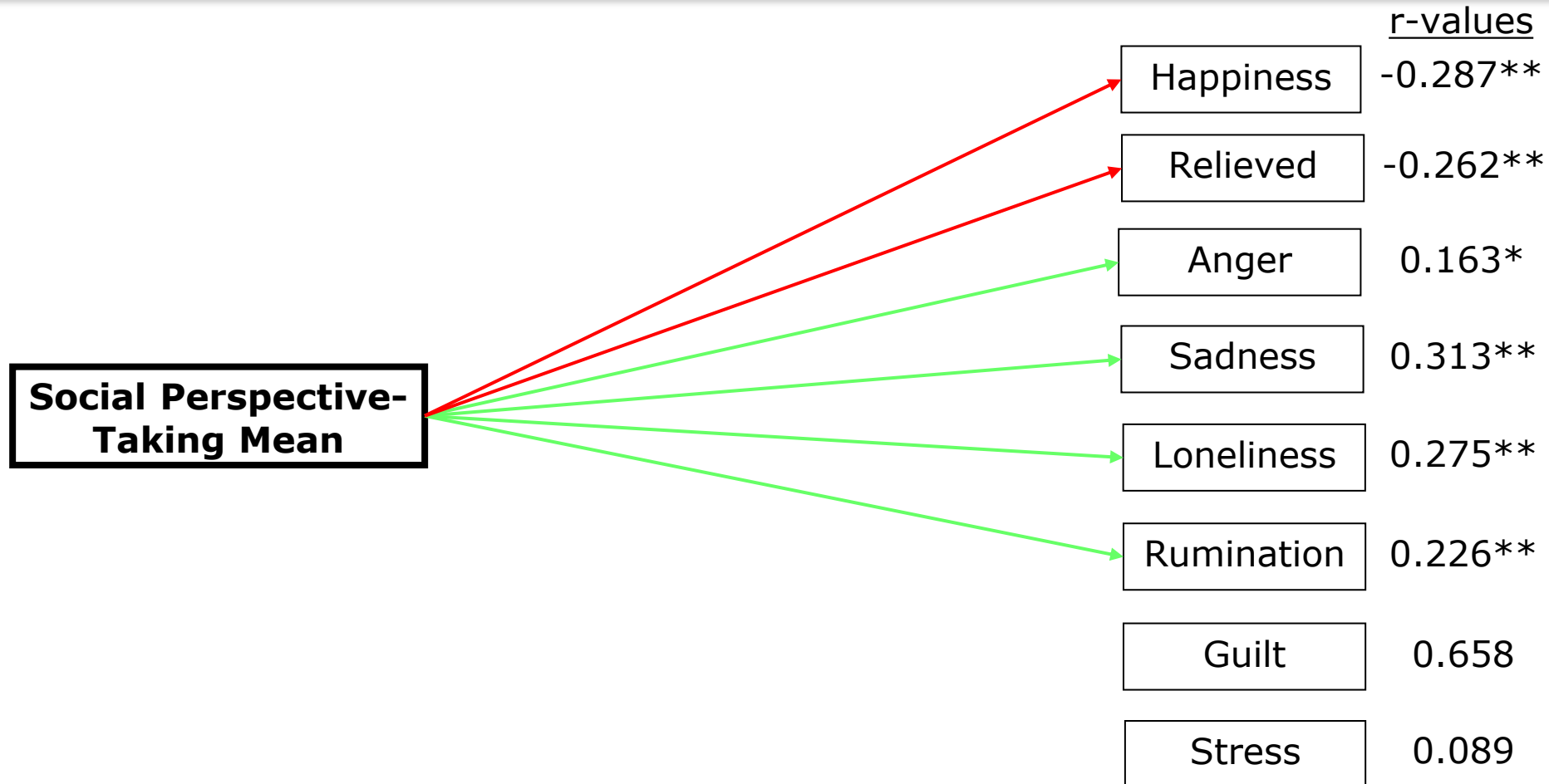
Results: Friendship Quality and SPT

- **Students who were more likely to take the perspective of their peers, also recorded having higher quality friendships**



$$r(273) = 0.593, p < 0.001$$

Results: Correlational Analysis of SPT and Reactions to Dissolution



* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.001$

Results: Correlational Analysis of SPT and Reactions to Dissolution

- Contrary to our hypothesis, students with a greater tendency to take the perspective of their peers felt greater levels of sadness, loneliness, anger and were more likely to ruminate following a friendship dissolution than students with a lower tendency to take the perspective of others



- The correlations that were not significant show that most students, regardless of SPT mean, felt guilty and experienced little stress

Discussion

- **Higher SPT was highly associated with higher FQ which led to students feeling more negative emotions towards the end of a valued relationship**
 - It can be suggested from the data that SPT mean and FQ mean had a positive correlation due to the idea that people who are more socially aware and understanding are more likely to have healthy relationships and develop higher quality friendships
 - The increase in feelings of negative emotions may be:
 1. Due to the pain felt when a high quality, best friend was lost
 2. That adolescents that had a greater tendency to take the perspective of their friends had a better understanding of why the friendship ended and therefore understood that their former close friend felt negatively about them which led to a more negative reaction

Research Suggestions

- **This study and subsequent analyses aids in the development of our understanding of social perspective-taking and its role in adolescent relationships and development**

- Both friendship dissolutions and social perspective-taking are understudied in friendship literature

- **In the future...**

- It would be valuable and interesting to receive the opinions and perspectives of both friends involved in the friendship dissolution
- This study was cross-sectional, but it would be interesting to conduct a longitudinal study across friendship experiences in adolescence



Acknowledgements

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