

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PROBLEM BEHAVIORS, ROLE CHANGES IN AREAS OF WORK, LOVE, AND ACHIEVEMENT OF ADULT CHARACTER QUALITIES AMONG EMERGING ADULTS

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The goal of the current study is to evaluate the relationships between externalizing and internalizing problems, partner and work commitment, and the achievement of adult character qualities. A sample of 241 Lithuanian emerging adults participated in the study (mean age 22.22, SD = 2.91, 198 women and 43 men). Participants filled an internet-based questionnaire which consisted of Arnett's questionnaire on adulthood criteria, additional questions on achieving these criteria, and the Adult Self-report questionnaire which measures internalizing and externalizing problems. Both partner and work commitments were found to be negatively related to anxiety / depression problems, and commitment to work was positively related to intrusive behavior. Achievement of independence was negatively related with anxiety / depression and withdrawal problems. The effect of commitment to work and to partner on anxiety / depression and the effect of commitment to partner on withdrawal was suppressed when it was controlled for achieving independence. Commitment to work positively predicts a more intrusive behavior even when achieving adult character qualities is taken into account.

Keywords: *problem behavior, emerging adulthood, role changes, achievement of adulthood criteria*

Introduction

Numerous studies support the claim that most Western industrialized societies have witnessed various social, demographic, technological, political, and economic

changes during the last decades. Also, these changes have altered the way adolescents become adults (e. g., Aassve et al., 2007a; Avdeev et al., 2011; Elzinga and Liefbroer, 2007). Around the middle of the twentieth

century, transitions to adulthood were rather brief and well-structured, but in more recent times they have become more complex, de-standardized, and more protracted (Aassve et al., 2007b). Nowadays, emerging adults stay in the parental home and education longer (e.g., Wyn and Dwyer, 2000), postpone marriage and parenthood (e.g., Elzinga and Liefbroer, 2007), and enter full-time jobs at an older age (e.g., Settersten, 2007). It is not just the timing of these events that has changed. As various authors note, transition to adulthood became more diversified and complex as some demographic phenomena (e.g., cohabitation without being married, staying childless, or living alone) have become more widespread and accepted (e.g., Elzinga and Liefbroer, 2007).

Due to this increasing complexity and diversification, the period between adolescence and adulthood has attracted a considerable amount of attention and has been studied in social sciences as an extended transitional phase to adulthood. The term 'transition(s) to adulthood' refers to the early part of the life path when one leaves behind adolescence and gradually adopts a series of adult roles (Gauthier, 2007). Transitions to adulthood, in sociological research, were usually assessed as experiencing five main transitional events: finishing education, leaving parental home, starting a career, marriage, and becoming parents (e.g., Kraniauskienė, 2011; Settersten, 2007; Shanahan, 2000; Shanahan et al., 2005). During the last several decades, a new line of research on transitions to adulthood has emerged, suggesting that, from the perspective of youth going through these transitions, these markers of adulthood are not as important as they previously were considered. In

a series of papers, J.J. Arnett (1994, 1997, 2001) has shown that the transition to adulthood, as perceived by 18–25-year olds, is marked mainly by the acquisition of individualistic character qualities rather than by role changes, such as marriage or starting a long-time career. These individualistic qualities are accepting responsibility for one's self, making independent decisions, and becoming financially independent. Some of these qualities seem to be in line with various emotional, behavioral, and cognitive changes that are related to an adult person in psychological research (Arnett, 1994).

So, the debate whether sociological markers of adulthood (e.g., getting married) are not important anymore is now open, and evidence is contradictory. For example, M.J. Shanahan and colleagues (2005) found that family transition markers (e.g. marriage) were most consistent predictors of self-perceived adulthood. J.E. Benson and F.F. Furstenberg (2006) have also found that adult identity is not fixed or stable, but changes as one enters or exits adult roles like establishing an independent household, becoming a parent, or experiencing a reversal (e.g., goes back living with parents). Yet, research also shows that achievement of adult character qualities, such as independence, is also associated with self-perceived adulthood, a better sense of one's identity, and fewer internalizing and externalizing problems (Nelson and Barry, 2005).

One limitation to the line of J.J. Arnett's research is that most of it has been conducted using Western student samples. Similar research employing the same instruments, but conducted in different cultures or ethnic groups, has shown that criteria for adulthood can be somewhat different. For

instance, a study conducted in China has shown that Chinese young people include many criteria that appear to be reflective of a collectivistic culture, such as to become less self-oriented (Nelson et al., 2004). This evidence suggests that cross-cultural generalizations regarding the criteria of adulthood may be limited. It is important to evaluate which criteria are favored by youth in a particular cultural context before defining adulthood.

This transitional period, which is also now being referred to as emerging adulthood, is also interesting because of changes in the mental health. It is well known that externalizing and internalizing behavior problems are found to be elevated from childhood to adolescence (e.g., Dulmen et al., 2008). Yet, in emerging adulthood, the picture becomes more complex. As J.E. Schulenberg and N.R. Zarrett (2006) state in an overview of various USA representative studies on emerging adulthood period: a) well-being during emerging adulthood tends to increase; b) externalizing problems, like binge drinking and marijuana use, increases, but only for a few years after leaving school; c) risk taking, depressive affect, theft and property damage, and physical aggression decrease; d) yet, psychopathology, e.g., major depressive disorders, schizophrenia, bipolar disorders, and borderline personality disorders, tends to manifest itself for the first time (Schulenberg and Zarrett, 2006). The fact that these changes are taking place during the transition to adulthood (e.g., when a person becomes more independent) makes studying the relationships between problem behaviors and achievement of adult character qualities an important topic. Despite that, such studies are relatively scarce.

Role changes are also important predictors of problem behaviors during emerging adulthood as they are also related to changes in these behaviors. For example, leaving home and going to college are related to an increased alcohol use (e.g., White, 2006), while transition to parenthood is linked to fewer problems with alcohol use (e.g., Chilcoat and Breslau, 1996). Two other areas that are of specific importance during emerging adulthood, which are also related to changes in externalizing and internalizing problems, are role transitions in the areas of work and love, as to move towards work and partner commitments and to make them enduring is recognized as a central task for emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2004; 2011).

When it comes to relationship involvement, findings from various studies suggest that it is also negatively associated with internalizing and externalizing problems. For example, research conducted with an emerging adult sample by L.J. Nelson et al. (2008) showed that young people who experienced higher levels of depression and anxiety also tended to perceive themselves more negatively in social acceptance, physical appearance, and romantic relationships. Findings from M. Dulmen et al. (2008) study showed that romantic relationship security was negatively associated with externalizing behaviors (Dulmen et al., 2008). W. Meeus, S. Branje, and G.J. Overbeek (2004) found that partner support was negatively related to delinquency and criminality. It is also worth noting that in some cases this relationship can be positive. For example, R.W. Simon and A.E. Barrett (2010) also found that romantic involvements and recent breakups were associated with mental health problems.

These relationships between partner involvement and mental health changes can be summarized by the findings in research on effects of marriage on health. As R.G. Wood, S. Avellar, and B. Goesling (2009) state from an overview of several large-scale family studies in the USA, marital entry decreases depressive symptoms, while marital dissolution increases them. The same applies to drinking behaviors (Lee et al., 2010). Despite that, these results come from a longitudinal research that has a strong support for this causal direction; these authors note that the opposite direction can also be possible: e.g., persons with fewer depressive symptoms may be more likely to get married, because they may be viewed as more attractive to marriage partners (Wood et al., 2009). Nevertheless, they also state that this opposite effect (that those with fewer depressive symptoms are more likely to marry) has little evidence (Wood et al., 2009).

Findings in the field of identity research show that commitment to occupational path is related to fewer problem behaviors (e.g., Lillevoll et al., 2013), although when it comes to actual early transitions, evidence suggests a different direction. For example, E.M. Z. Farmer (1993) found that, for boys, faster transitions from school to work were related with higher behavior problems, family difficulties, and other variables. As J.T. Mortimer and J. Staff (2004) note, one possibility is that part-time work places youth at risk because it limits participation in more developmentally beneficial activities. This also makes them vulnerable to stressors for which they are not ready and interferes with an adequate preparation for adulthood. On the other hand, employment

can make the transition to adulthood easier as it promotes adaptation to the future work environment (Mortimer and Staff, 2004).

To date, only a few researchers attempted to explore the relationships between problem behaviors, role transitions in the areas of work and partner and achievement of adult character qualities. C.M. Barry, S.D. Madsen, L.J. Nelson, J.S. Carroll, and S. Badger (2009) found that achievement of adulthood criteria (like independence and interdependence) was associated with more positive romantic relationships. Findings from L.J. Nelson's and C.M. Barry's (2005) study revealed that emerging adults, who classified themselves as adults, believed they achieved more adulthood criteria and also had a better sense of what type of person they wanted as a romantic partner. They were also less depressed and engaged in fewer risk behaviors. These results indicate that all these variables are linked, however, none of the studies (to the authors' knowledge) have analyzed the relationships between these variables all taken together and employing statistical analyses that allow evaluating relationships after controlling for other variables.

The goal of the current study is to evaluate the relationships between externalizing and internalizing problems, partner commitment and work transitions, and the achievement of adult character qualities.

It was hypothesized that: (H1) partner commitment and work transitions are related to problem behaviors; (H2) achievement of adult character qualities is related to problem behaviors; (H3) achievements of adult character qualities predict problem behaviors better than commitment to partner and work transitions.

Method

Participants. The data reported in this article were gathered during autumn 2012 via an online questionnaire, which consisted of scales on achievement of adulthood criteria, externalizing and internalizing symptoms, and partner commitment as well as work transitions. Initially, researchers attempted to contact participants from a now finished longitudinal study, which was conducted in schools of the administrative region of Klaipėda in Lithuania, with a goal to invite them to participate in a follow-up study. At the time when these participants were contacted, they had already finished schools and were studying in various institutions of post-secondary education and / or working in Lithuania or abroad. Despite the efforts, only about 158 of them, from over 1000 that had been contacted, completed the questionnaire. To increase sample size, additional invitations were sent to students studying various disciplines at the Mykolas Romeris University, after an introduction to this study during seminars. A total sample consisted of 241 emerging adults (198 women and 43 men).

The mean age of the participants was 22.22 ($SD = 2.91$). A total of 62 (25.7%) of the participants were not involved in any relationships, 35 (14.5%) were dating someone, 70 (29.0%) had a boyfriend or a girlfriend, (20.7%) were living with a partner, 18 (7.5%) were married, and 4 (< 3%) were in some other situation. 177 (73.4%) were employed during the last 6 months, 197 (84.9%) were studying at a university or college.

Measures. Achievement of Adult Character Qualities. The questionnaire for achievement of adult character qualities

was constructed using the adulthood criteria proposed by J.J. Arnett and S. Taber (1994). The actual number of criteria varies by a fraction from research to research (e.g., Arnett, 1994; 1997; 2001; 2003), but these criteria are usually combined into seven groups. For this study a set of criteria reported in Arnett (2003) was used. Additionally, based on review of J.J. Arnett's research, a few more criteria were included, which were considered as possibly important for Lithuanian youth: two more criteria for chronological transitions ("reached age 25" and "reached age 30") and two that did not belong to any group ("if a man, to perform military service" and "to support parents financially"). Also, two adulthood criteria from J.J. Arnett's (2003) questionnaire, namely "grow to full height" and "avoid illegal drugs" were not included into the questionnaire. The list of adulthood criteria reported in J.J. Arnett (2003) was translated by one of the authors of this publication and a professional translator. After reviewing by co-authors, the list of adulthood criteria was translated back into English by another independent translator. The final questionnaire consisted of 41 adulthood criteria that were grouped into eight scales. Six items on independence criteria (e.g., "financially independent from parents"), four on interdependence criteria (e.g., "make life-long commitments to others"), six on role transition criteria (e.g., "become employed full-time"), seven on norm compliance criteria (e.g., "avoid drunk driving"), three on biological transition criteria (e.g., "if a woman, become biologically capable of bearing children"), five on chronological transition criteria (e.g., "reached age 18"), eight on family capacities criteria (e.g., "ca-

Table 1. The top 10 adulthood criteria that are indicated as necessary for adulthood by the largest number of the study participants

	Adulthood criteria	%	Subscale
1	Accept responsibility for the consequences of your actions	98.5	Independence
2	Avoid drunk driving	98.2	Norm compliance
3	If a woman, become capable of caring for children	97.8	Family capacities
4	Financially independent from parents	97.4	Independence
5	Avoid committing petty crimes like vandalism and shoplifting	96.3	Norm compliance
6	Decide on personal beliefs and values independently of parents or other influences	93.4	Independence
7	If a woman, become capable of running a household	93.4	Family capacities
8	Drive safely and close to speed limit	93.4	Norm compliance
9	If a man, become capable of caring for children	92.6	Family capacities
10	If a man, become capable of running a household	90.4	Family capacities

Note. The percentage indicates how many participants in the study indicated these criteria as necessary for adulthood.

pable of running a household”), and two that belonged to a group named “other” (e.g., “to support parents financially”).

After each listed criteria, participants were asked two questions. The first was to indicate if the criteria listed are necessary for adulthood (coded as 1) or not (coded as 0). This was done to evaluate what adulthood criteria are endorsed as necessary for adulthood by the study participants. The percentage indicating how much participants in the study indicated specific criteria as necessary for adulthood are presented in Table 1. In this sample, family capacity, independence, and norm compliance criteria were indicated as important for the largest number of participants.

The second question, after each criteria, was asked to indicate to what degree they think they have achieved these criteria. This double-question strategy was previously used by C.M. Barry et al. (2009), as well as

E. Kins and W. Beyers (2010). For most of the items, participants could respond on a three-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (not true) to 3 (very true). For some items (e.g., have purchased a house) they could respond with either *no* (1) or *yes* (2).

The scales that measure the achievement of adult character qualities were constructed using answers indicating the achievement of family capacity, independence, and norm compliance criteria. The family capacities scale (four items, $\alpha = 0.81$) represents a person’s abilities to maintain a family. In this case, the family capacities scale had only four items, because in the Arnett’s questionnaire half of the items in this subscale are relevant only for men and half only for women. The items that were sex-specific had also an option of the third answer “does not apply to me” which was coded as a missing value. A separate variable was then created that merged answers about achieving

a specific criteria for both male and female participants. The independence scale (six items, $\alpha = 0.65$) represents self-sufficiency and the cognitive, emotional, and financial autonomy from parents. The norm compliance scale (seven items, $\alpha = 0.63$) represents a person's attainment of self-control and compliance with social conventions.

Partner commitment and work transitions. Two more variables measuring work transitions and partner commitment were also constructed using answers indicating the achievement of role transitions from Arnett's Adulthood Criteria Questionnaire. Items indicating work transitions were "employed full-time" and "settled into a long-term career" ($\alpha = 0.50$). The items indicating commitment to partner were "make lifelong

commitment to others" and "committed to a long-term relationship" ($\alpha = 0.55$). The sum of item scores was used to form these two subscales.

Externalizing and internalizing symptoms. To measure the externalizing and internalizing problems, participants completed the Adult Self-report Form (ASR) (Achenbach and Rescorla, 2003). The internalizing problems include subscales for anxiety / depression (16 items, $\alpha = 0.85$), somatic complaints (12 items, $\alpha = 0.76$), and withdrawal (nine items, $\alpha = 0.71$); externalizing problems include subscales for aggressive (14 items, $\alpha = 0.74$), intrusive (six items, $\alpha = 0.65$), and rule-breaking behavior (14 items, $\alpha = 0.69$). The mean item scores were used to form these six subscales.

Table 2. *Descriptives and zero-order correlations of variables used in the study (N = 241)*

		Age	Internalizing problems				Externalizing problems			Commitment		Achievement of adult character qualities		
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
1	Age													
2	Anxious / depressed	-0.01												
3	Somatic complaints	-0.14*	0.50**											
4	Withdrawn	0.05	0.59**	0.32**										
5	Aggressive behavior	-0.13*	0.44**	0.51**	0.35**									
6	Intrusive behavior	0.02	0.10	0.14*	0.09	0.44**								
7	Rule-breaking behavior	0.00	0.17**	0.19**	0.27**	0.39**	0.46**							
8	Work transitions	0.53**	-0.17*	-0.17*	-0.03	-0.03	0.16*	0.12						
9	Commitment to partner	0.37**	-0.16*	-0.03	-0.12	-0.01	0.04	0.07	0.34**					
10	Family capacities	0.41**	-0.22**	-0.12	-0.03	-0.14*	-0.01	0.03	0.49**	0.39**				
11	Norm compliance	0.27**	-0.10	-0.07	0.00	-0.16*	-0.16*	-0.29**	0.07	0.17**	0.20**			
12	Independence	0.46**	-0.32**	-0.09	-0.16*	-0.10	0.08	0.07	0.48**	0.48**	0.55**	0.23**		
	Mean	22.22	1.55	1.36	1.35	1.52	1.49	1.23	1.64	1.81	1.47	2.61	2.19	
	St. dev.	2.91	0.31	0.27	0.28	0.25	0.34	0.19	0.68	0.69	0.59	0.35	0.43	

Note. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

Results

The data were analyzed in two major steps: first, the zero-order correlations among all study variables were evaluated, and then the hierarchical multiple linear regression (HMR) was used to examine how work transitions as well as partner commitment and the achievement of adult character qualities predict internalizing problems, while also considering the potential variance overlap between these variables. A total of six hierarchical regression analyses were performed predicting three subscales measuring the internalizing and three ones measuring

the externalizing problems. Each HMR was conducted in three identical steps. In step 1, age was entered as a predictor variable, in step 2 variables indicating role change and in step 3 those showing the achievement of adult character qualities were entered. Results for these analyses are presented in tables 3 and 4.

Correlations among study variables

As depicted in Table 2, age was negatively related with somatic complaints and aggressive behavior and positively with the scores of scales measuring work

Table 3. Hierarchical multiple regression predicting internalizing problems from age, partner and work commitment, and achievement of adult character qualities (N = 241)

		Outcome variables					
		Anxiety / depression		Somatic complaints		Withdrawn	
Model 1	Predictor variables	B	β	B	β	B	β
		Age	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01*	-0.14	< 0.01
	$\Delta R^2 =$	0.00		0.02*		< 0.01	
Model 2	Age	0.02*	0.15	-0.01	-0.08	0.01	0.12
	Work transitions	-0.09*	-0.19	-0.06	-0.14	-0.02	-0.04
	Commitment to partner	-0.07*	-0.16	0.02	0.05	-0.06*	-0.15
	$\Delta R^2 =$	0.06**		0.01		0.02	
Model 3	Age	0.02*	0.25	-0.01	-0.06	0.02	0.15
	Work transitions	-0.04	-0.09	-0.05	-0.13	< 0.01	0.01
	Commitment to partner	-0.02	-0.03	0.02	0.06	-0.04	-0.09
	Family capacities	-0.05	-0.09	-0.02	-0.05	0.03	-0.06
	Norm compliance	-0.06	-0.07	-0.03	-0.04	0.01	-0.01
	Independence	-0.22**	-0.31	0.01	0.02	-0.15**	-0.23
	$\Delta R^2 =$	0.09***		< 0.01		0.03	
		Total R ² = 0.14, adj. R ² = 0.12, Total F (3, 237) = 6.40***		Total R ² = 0.04, adj. R ² = 0.01, Total F (6, 234) = 1.65		Total R ² = 0.05, adj. R ² = 0.03, Total F (6, 234) = 2.18*	

Note. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

transitions, partner commitment, and the achievement of adult character, with effect sizes (r) from 0.13 to 0.62. Scales measuring internalizing problems were also negatively related to role change variables and the achievement of adult character qualities, but not consistently. Scores for anxiety / depression were negatively correlated with both work transitions and commitment to partner, as well as with the achievement of family capacities and independence. Somatic complaints were negatively correlated with work transitions, while withdrawal with commitment to partner and independence. Externalizing problems were not related to role change variables, except for a positive relationship between work transitions and intrusive behavior. However, externalizing problems negatively correlated with achievement of adult character qualities: aggression was correlated with family capacities and norm compliance, while intrusive and rule-breaking behavior was correlated only with norm compliance.

Relationships between internalizing problems, partner commitment and work transitions and achievement of adult character qualities

As was previously found in a correlational analysis, age was not related to scores for the anxiety/ depression subscale. In Step 2, for anxiety / depression scores, both, work transitions and commitment to partner were significant predictors and together accounted for another six percent of variance. More work transitions and a higher partner commitment were related with fewer anxi-

ety and depression problems. Interestingly, after controlling these two variables, their effect on age appeared to be significant, although predicting more anxiety / depression problems. As to somatic complaints, none of the role change variables were significant predictors. For withdrawal, commitment to partner was a significant predictor of fewer problems.

In the last step, the HMR step for anxiety / depression scores, achievement of independence emerged as a significant predictor. Higher independence predicted less anxiety and depression problems. After controlling for these variables, the effect of role change variables was insignificant, which again suggest that all these variables are interrelated and interact with each other when it comes to the prediction of internalizing symptoms. Independence accounted for about 12% of variance in the anxiety / depression score, which is considered as a medium effect (Kline, 2004). The possible reasons for these results are discussed in more detail in the Discussion section. For withdrawal, similarly to anxiety / depression, after adding the achievement of adult character qualities, the effect for partner commitment was no longer significant, indicating that commitment to partner does not predict any withdrawal problems when controlled for achievement of independence. Although achievement of independence significantly predicted fewer withdrawal symptoms, it accounted only for about three percent of its variance, which is considered as a small effect size (Kline, 2004). As for somatic complaints, neither of the variables emerged as significant predictors.

Table 4. Hierarchical multiple regression predicting externalizing problems from age, partner and work commitment and achievement of adult character qualities (N = 241)

		Outcome variables					
		Aggression		Intrusive behavior		Rule-breaking behavior	
Model 1	Predictor variables	B	β	B	β	B	β
		Age	-0.01*	-0.13	< 0.01	0.02	< 0.01
	$\Delta R^2 =$	0.02*		< 0.01		< 0.01	
Model 2	Age	-0.01*	-0.16	-0.01	-0.09	-0.01	-0.11
	Work transitions	0.02	0.04	0.10**	0.20	0.04*	0.16
	Commitment to partner	0.01	0.04	< 0.01	-0.01	0.02	0.06
	$\Delta R^2 =$	< 0.01		0.03*		0.02	
Model 3	Age	-0.01	-0.10	< 0.01	-0.04	< 0.01	-0.02
	Work transitions	0.03	0.08	0.10*	0.19	0.03	0.10
	Commitment to partner	0.03	0.09	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.07
	Family capacities	-0.06	-0.13	0.07	-0.12	-0.01	-0.02
	Norm compliance	-0.09	-0.12	-0.16*	0.17	-0.17***	-0.32
	Independence	-0.02	-0.03	0.08	0.10	0.04	0.08
	$\Delta R^2 =$	0.03		0.04*		0.09***	
		Total $R^2 = 0.09$, adj. $R^2 = 0.07$, Total F (6, 234) = 2.03		Total $R^2 = 0.07$, adj. $R^2 = 0.04$, Total F (6, 234) = 2.76*		Total $R^2 = 0.12$, adj. $R^2 = 0.09$, Total F (6, 234) = 8.13***	

Note. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Relationships between externalizing problems, partner commitment, work transitions, and achievement of adult character qualities

As was already found in the correlational analysis, age was significantly related only to the aggression subscale scores, accounting for about four percents of its variance.

In Step 2 for aggression, when the role change variables were entered into the equation, neither of them emerged to be significant predictors. As for intrusive and disruptive behaviors, more work transitions predicted more of these behaviors. Despite

the fact that work transitions significantly predicted the rule-breaking behavior, the overall significance test of R^2 showed that the increase of explained variance was not greater than zero.

In the last step for aggression, again, neither of achievement variables emerged as significant predictors. Achievement of norm compliance was a significant predictor of fewer intrusive and rule-breaking behaviors. Work transitions remained a significant predictor of more intrusive problems, while for rule-breaking they did not. For intrusive behavior, work transitions and achievement

of norm compliance accounted for about four percent of variance of intrusive behavior. Norm compliance alone accounted for about nine percent of variance of rule-breaking behavior, which is considered as a medium effect size (Kline, 2004).

Discussion

The goal of the current study was to evaluate the relationships between externalizing and internalizing problems, partner commitment and work transitions, and achievement of adult character qualities, controlling for age. Three criteria (family capacities, independence, and norm compliance), ranked as the most important for achieving adulthood, were used to measure achieved adulthood capacities. Correlational analysis was used first to evaluate relationships among the study variables. As expected, age was negatively correlated with the scores for aggressive behavior and somatic complaints, and unexpectedly was not correlated with anxiety / depression scores. This tells that older participants in the study reported fewer somatic symptoms and aggression problems. Importantly, age was positively correlated with variables marking achievement of adult character qualities. This supported the expectations that older participants would have developed more adult character qualities (would be more independent, live in compliance with social norms, and would be more capable of having a family) and would have made more work transitions and commitments to partner relationships. Further relationships among the study variables had been explored in order to evaluate how they were related when controlling for one another.

The HMR analysis, predicting anxiety / depression, revealed that both work transitions and commitment to partner predicted fewer of these difficulties, but only before the achievement variables were entered into equation. A higher commitment to partner also significantly predicted fewer withdrawal symptoms (also before adding achievement into the equation). Interestingly, after adding the achievement of adult character qualities into the equation, the role change variables were no longer significant predictors for any of internalizing problems. Out of the three adult character variables, only the achievement of independence significantly predicted these problems. This suggests the possibility that independence acts as a mediator between the commitment making and anxiety / depression problems. One interpretation of how this mediation could occur in real life would be that work transitions and commitment to partner actually predict fewer behavior problems, but only if they assist in achieving a higher independence.

The HMR analysis, predicting somatic complaints, did not reveal any significant relationships, and this generally shows that role changes and the achievement of adult character qualities do not contribute to differences in somatic complaints.

Another important finding with anxiety / depression problems is that after controlling for each of the achievement of adulthood criteria variables, age became a significant predictor of more anxiety / depression problems. One possible interpretation is that if a person does not make any partner commitments and work transitions and does not develop adult character qualities,

with age he / she starts developing anxiety / depression problems.

Three variables were significant predictors of externalizing problems. Age was a significant predictor of aggression, but only before achieving the adult character qualities had been entered into the equation. This seems to suggest that some covariation between age and aggression could be explained by achieving the adult character qualities, but no clear conclusions can be made as in the final equation neither of these variables were significant predictors. The most likely interpretation of this finding is that achieving the adult character qualities is actually a significant predictor of changes in aggression and does covariate with age, but the effect size of this relationship, after all the other variables are taken into account, is very small, which also requires bigger samples for it to be found significant.

Achievement of norm compliance was also a significant predictor of fewer intrusive behavior problems. Interestingly, work transitions predicted more intrusive behavior problems. These results seem to be in line with what was found earlier by other researchers e.g., E.M.Z. Farmer (1993). To be more specific, this suggests that early work transitions can have some negative effects, e.g., increase the externalizing problems, although it only applies to the intrusive behavior. The rule-breaking behavior was negatively predicted by the achievement of norm-compliance.

A few important insights can be made from these findings. Most importantly, the role changes and the achievement of adult character qualities are related to the internalizing and externalizing problems. This simply adds more knowledge on the correlates and

predictors of the internalizing and externalizing problems in the period of emerging adulthood. Another important finding is that achievements of adult character qualities seem to have stronger associations with externalizing and internalizing problems than commitment to partner and work transitions. Moreover, the role change and the problem behavior relationship is suppressed when the achievement variables are controlled. This makes the achievement of adult character qualities a more important predictor of variation in emerging adults' problem behaviors.

Another important finding is that although the achievement of family capacities was correlated to age, anxiety / depression, aggression, achievement of independence and norm compliance, it did not predict any of problem behaviors when other variables were controlled. This gives the achievement of independence and norm compliance a priority over the achievement of family capacities in explaining changes in problem behaviors of emerging adults.

Emergence of the achievement of independence as an important variable in predicting internalizing problems seems to be in line with J.J. Arnett's (2004) theory on emerging adulthood, where he emphasizes the importance of attaining emotional, behavioral and financial autonomy from parents during this period as central to a person's development. J.J. Arnett suggests that achieving independence may be even more important for becoming an adult than age-relevant role transitions (e.g., work transitions and partner commitment), as is also illustrated by our findings. Furthermore, this study has identified the importance of the achievement of norm compliance for reduced externalizing problems. It seems

to be very natural to expect that as one starts to behave in compliance with societal norms, one also tends to be less aggressive, to exhibit less intrusive behaviors and to break fewer rules.

Limitations

Before drawing any conclusions from these results, the limitations of the study should be taken into account. First, the design of this study was correlational, so no firm conclusions about the directionality of relationships among the variables could be drawn. Statistical techniques employed in this study were selected purposefully to evaluate how the variables of interest relate to each other after controlling for another set of variables. Despite the terms used in multiple regression (predictor and outcome variables), the authors did not intend to make strong conclusions on the directionality of the effects. It is feasible that the opposite effect also exists. For example, a person having difficulties with anxiety and depression, or being withdrawn, might have problems when forming independence from parents. Nevertheless, previous literature (e.g., Lee et al., 2010; Nelson and Barry, 2005; Nelson et al., 2008; Wood et al., 2009) suggest that the effect with the direction proposed here is more likely to occur.

The second important limitation of this study is related to the measures of work transitions, partner commitment, and achievement of adult character qualities. These measures were derived from Arnett's questionnaire which had been primarily developed to evaluate people's views on adulthood criteria, but not the achievement of adulthood criteria themselves. Although the double-question strategy applied in this

study was already used in previous research (Barry et al., 2009; Kins and Beyers, 2010), only some evidence on the validity of these measures exist. Also, this could be the reason for effect sizes found in this study, which were only small to medium. Studies using instruments with a higher reliability could potentially find higher relationships between these variables. So, future studies should do an additional investigation on the validity and reliability of these instruments.

The final limitation that needs to be addressed is the sample that was used in this study. Despite a relatively small sample size, the majority of the participants were young females. So, it is possible that the relationships found in this study may be more characteristic of female emerging adults. Future studies should use more representative samples to test these relationships.

Conclusions

Among emerging adults:

- both partner commitment and work transitions are negatively related to anxiety / depression problems;
- work transitions are positively related to the intrusive behavior;
- achievement of independence is negatively related with anxiety / depression and withdrawal problems;
- the effect of work transitions and commitment to partner on anxiety / depression and the effect of the commitment to partner on withdrawal are suppressed when controlled for achieving independence;
- work transitions positively predict a more intrusive behavior, even when the achievement of adult character qualities is taken into account.

Acknowledgment

The authors would like to thank M. Richardson, BASIC, Crawley, England for reading and improving the English of this article.

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BESIFORMUOJANČIŲ SUAUGUSIŲJŲ PROBLEMINIO ELGESIO, VAIDMENŲ KAITOS MELĖS IR DARBO SRITYSE BEI SUAUGUSIAM ASMENIUI BŪDINGŲ SAVYBIŲ ĮGIJIMO RYŠIAI

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S a n t r a u k a

Mokslinėje, ypač raidos psichologijos, spaudoje nemažai diskutuojama apie ilgėjantį laikotarpį, per kurį iš paauglystės pereinama į suaugusiojo gyvenimo tarpsnį. Taip pat diskutuojama apie tai, kad Vakarų šalyse suaugusio asmens statusas, ypač jaunuolių akimis, yra siejamas ne tiek su vaidmenų kaita, pavyzdžiui, mokslų baigimu ar tapimu tėvais, kiek su asmens savybių, kaip antai nepriklausomybė ar savarankiškumas, įgijimu. Šis laiko tarpsnis tarp paauglystės ir jauno suaugusiojo amžiaus taip pat pasižymi nemaža emocinių ir elgesio sunkumų kaita, kuri vyksta kartu su vaidmenų pokyčiais, bei suaugusio asmens savybių įgijimu. Tyrimų, nagrinėjančių, kaip probleminis elgesys, vaidmenų kaita ir suaugusio asmens savybių įgijimas yra susiję, netruksta, tačiau maža tokių, kurie nagrinėtų šių kintamųjų ryšius kartu paėmus. Šiuo tyrimu ir siekta įvertinti besiformuojančių Lietuvos suaugusiųjų emocinių ir elgesio sunkumų, išsipareigojimo partneriui ir darbinei karjerai bei suaugusiojo bruožų įgijimo ryšius.

Tyrimo dalyviai buvo atrinkti patogiosios imties būdu. Tyrime dalyvavo 241 tiriamasis – 198 merginos ir 43 vaikinai. Vidutinis tiriamųjų amžius buvo 22,22 metų (st. nuokr. – 2,91). Tiriamieji atsakė į interneto svetainėje paskelbtą anketą, kurioje buvo pateiktas J. J. Arnett (2003) klausimynas, vertinantis suaugusio asmens kriterijų svarbą, taip pat papildomi klausimai apie tai, kiek asmuo atitinka šiuos kriterijus.

Anketoje taip pat buvo pateiktas ASR (Achenbach and Rescorla, 2003) klausimynas, skirtas įvertinti suaugusiųjų emocinius ir elgesio sunkumus. Remiantis tuo, ką tyrimo dalyviai įvardijo svarbiais suaugusio asmens kriterijais, ir tuo, kaip įvardijo, kiek tuos kriterijus yra įvykdę, buvo sudarytos trys skalės, rodančios suaugusio asmens bruožų įgijimą: pasiektą nepriklausomybę nuo tėvų, pasiektą normų paisymą ir įgytas kompetencijas rūpintis šeima. Taip pat panašiu būdu buvo sudaryti du kintamieji, rodantys išsipareigojimą partneriui ir darbinei karjerai.

Tyrimo metu buvo atskleista, kad jaunuolių tiek išsipareigojimas darbinei karjerai, tiek partneriui yra neigiamai susijęs su nerimo ir depresijos sunkumais, tačiau išsipareigojimas darbinei karjerai yra teigiamai susijęs su erzinančiu elgesiu. Didesnė nepriklausomybė yra neigiamai susijusi su nerimo ir depresijos sunkumais ir užsisklendimu. Prognozuojant nerimo ir depresijos sunkumus, kai yra atsižvelgiama į suaugusio asmens bruožų įgijimą, išsipareigojimo darbinei karjerai bei partneriui efektas išnyksta. Prognozuojant erzinantį elgesį, išsipareigojimas darbinei karjerai išlieka reikšmingas veiksnys net ir tada, kai atsižvelgiama į suaugusiojo savybių įgijimą.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: probleminis elgesys, besiformuojančio suaugusiojo raidos tarpsnis, vaidmenų kaita, suaugusiųjų žyminčių kriterijų atitikimas.

Įteikta 2013 08 23