A Confirmatory Factor Analysis of a Four-Factor Model of Adolescent Concerns

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Based on considerable previous research, a four-factor model of adolescent concerns was proposed. Data on concerns were collected from 439 adolescents together with demographic data. A hierarchy of concerns was established based on mean ratings, and sex and age differences were reported. The data were factor analyzed into four principal components and were tested for the goodness of fit to the proposed model using linear structural relationships (LISREL) techniques by the method of maximum likelihood. The data fit the model very well (goodness of fit index = .958). The implications of these findings for further research and theories of adolescent development are discussed generally.

INTRODUCTION

Some theorists continue to argue that adolescence is inherently a period of "storm and stress" (e.g., Westwood, 1986). Many others (e.g., Adelson, 1979; Offer and Offer, 1975; Siddique and D'Arcy, 1984), however, regard adolescence as a period of relatively smooth transition for most people. Coleman (1978) has analyzed these two apparently contradictory points of view in some detail. The storm and stress, or "classical" view, as Coleman (1978) called it, has its roots in antiquity, but it was formalized and augmented by G. S. Hall (1904) in his description of adolescence as a period...
of *sturm und drang*. The opposing point of view, called the "empirical" perspective, is characterized by the assertion that the teenage years are much more stable and peaceful than the storm and stress theorists would have us believe (Coleman, 1978). Both Coleman (1978), as well as Siddique and D'Arcy (1984), have suggested that the classical and empirical points of view may not be contradictory at all; it depends on one's focus. For some people, adolescence indeed is characterized by storm and stress, while for others, it is relatively peaceful. In any case, while the debate has not yet been concluded, most theorists would agree that adolescents do face a number of adjustment problems.

Considerable research has now been conducted into the type and seriousness of adolescent problems as reported by adolescents themselves. The major purpose of the present study was to propose a four-factor model of adolescent concerns based on the available empirical evidence and to test the goodness of fit of this model based on an empirical study of adolescent concerns. A secondary purpose of the present study was to explore the relative seriousness of adolescent concerns, and to study any sex and age differences that may emerge.

**ADOLESCENT CONCERNS**

One of the most consistent findings in the study of adolescent concerns is that school and educational adjustment problems, and concerns about future schooling and career, rank most highly with adolescents. In their study of adolescent females, for example, Abel and Gingles (1968) found that school and educational problems ranked most highly, with problems related to family and home ranking last. Morgan (1969) found that concern about future educational and vocational plans were prevalent in both male and female adolescents. In their study of 164 Australian high school students, Nicholson and Antill (1981) also found that concerns about grades, future schooling, and career were dominant in their sample. Collins and Harper's (1974) study turned up similar findings, as did Offer's and Offer's (1975) work with American adolescents. Bibby and Posterski's (1985) major study involving a national sample of 3530 Canadian adolescents produced corroborative findings. They found that 68% of their sample indicated that their future school and career plans concerned them "a great deal" or "quite a bit" (p. 60). Rutter (1980) and Rutter *et al.* (1979) have also confirmed that school and career concerns dominate the concerns of adolescents. Quite clearly, the first theme or factor that underlies adolescent's concerns is school and future career considerations.

A second factor or theme that seems to underlie adolescent concerns involves health, physical development, and drug abuse. Offer and Offer (1975)