Early Adolescents' Social Goals and School Adjustment

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Abstract

What are the common types of social goals endorsed by early adolescents and how are they related to their school adjustment? This article discusses the importance of assessing students' social goals during the early adolescent developmental period when peers become increasingly important and youth experience tremendous changes to the school context as they transition to middle school. Commonly endorsed social goals particularly relevant to this developmental period and to youth's social and academic adjustment at school are discussed, including: social status goals (i.e., the goal for popularity and the goal for peer preference); agentic and communal goals; and social achievement goals (i.e., social development goal, social demonstration-approach goal, and social demonstration-avoidance goal). This conceptual review presents research linking social goals to different markers of school adjustment in both the social domain (e.g., aggressive behavior, social worry) and the academic domain (e.g., effort in the classroom, grade point average). A summary of which social goals are related to indices of positive school adjustment is presented. Implications for educators and recommendations for future research on early adolescents' social goals are discussed.

Keywords: social goals, early adolescence, social and academic behavior, school adjustment

1. Introduction

The notion that successful school adjustment depends on youth's success in the academic as well as the social realm is widely acknowledged (e.g., Dowson and McInerney, 2003; Hinshaw, 1992; Juvonen, Nishina, and Graham, 2000; Juvonen and Wentzel, 1996; Ladd, 1989; Schwartz, Gorman, Nakamoto, and Toblin, 2005; Shim, Cho, and Wang, 2013; Shim, Kiefer, and Wang, 2013; Wentzel, 1991b, 2000). As defined by Ladd (1989), school adjustment is the "child's success at coping with the task/ demands of the school environment" (p. 278). Youth have some control over how they cope with those demands through the thoughts they have and behavior they engage in according to an agentic perspective of development (Bandura, 2001). With that in mind, it is vital that we understand early adolescents' motivations in the school setting in order to promote positive development. Whereas considerable attention has been paid to students' academic motivations and goals during the adolescent period (e.g., Ames, 1992; Ames and Archer, 1988; Dweck, 1986; Dweck and Leggett, 1988; Elliot and Dweck, 1988; Maehr and Nicholls, 1980; Nicholls, 1984; Pintrich, 2003), there is growing awareness of the importance of examining and understanding adolescents' social motivations and goals (e.g., Mansfield, 2012; Ryan, Hicks, and Midgley, 1997; Ryan, Pintrich, and Midgley, 2001; Wentzel, 1993b, 1996, 1999, 2005). This review will focus specifically on prominent social goals endorsed by early adolescents and discuss how these social goals may impact their school adjustment.

The importance of investigating social goals in academic settings is underscored by the perspective that learning does not occur in a social vacuum (Wentzel, 1999, 2000, 2009). Indeed, Dowson and McInerney (2001) assert that social goals "may actually be more salient and predictive of students' global motivation and achievement than either mastery and performance

goals" and may be better able to predict students' achievement in the classroom over more academic focused goals (p. 40). Notable studies and reviews have examined how youth's social motivations may impact academic outcomes (e.g., Ryan et al., 2001; Shim, Cho et al., 2013; Wentzel, 1999) and increasingly, academic researchers have acknowledged the unique and independent contribution that social goals and their related social behavior have on academic adjustment (e.g., Wentzel, 1991a, 1993a). For instance, social goals have been shown to be related to students' academic behavior in terms of following school rules and engaging in on-task classroom behavior (e.g., Kiefer and Wang, 2016; Ryan et al., 1997) as well as their sense of academic self-efficacy (e.g., Kiefer and Shim, 2016). Given these associations, it is perhaps unsurprising that social goals have also been found to be related to students' academic success in terms of their grade point average (GPA; Anderman, 1999; Anderman and Anderman, 1999; Kiefer and Ryan, 2008; Ryan et al., 1997). Thus, it behooves researchers and educators to consider the role that social goals play in students' educational outcomes.

It is important to note that success in the academic domain is only one part of school adjustment; we also need to consider how success in the social domain contributes to youth's overall school adjustment. How well youth navigate and adapt to the peer ecology within the school setting will also influence how well they adjust at school. The peer ecology is a microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) in which youth socialize and influence one another through their interactions, creating their own peer culture and society (Rodkin and Gest, 2011). Research demonstrates that youth's peer relationships at school can have a profound impact on their motivation (e.g., Berndt, Laychak, and Park, 1990; Kindermann, 1993; Nelson and DeBacker, 2008) or their sense of school belonging (Faircloth and Hamm, 2011; Goodenow, 1993; Goodenow and Grady, 1993; Hamm and Faircloth, 2005; Osterman, 2000) which in turn is

associated with academic achievement (e.g., Anderman, 2002; Roeser, Midgley, and Urdan, 1996; Wentzel and Caldwell, 1997). These key relationships with peers at school that are critical for school adjustment may be influenced by youth's social goals according to tenants of social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2001). For instance, what social goals youth endorse will prompt the use of different behavioral strategies that may impact peer relationships and ultimately students' academic effort and performance (Troop-Gordon, Visconti, and Kuntz, 2011; Wentzel, 2005). For example, for some youth, goal-directed aggressive behavior can lead to peer rejection which, in turn, is related to low engagement and achievement at school (Buhs, Ladd, and Herald, 2006; DeRosier, Kupersmidt, and Patterson, 1994; Véronneau, Vitaro, Brendgen, Dishion, and Tremblay, 2010). Research demonstrates that when youth are less engaged at school, they are more likely to drop out of school, a decision that increases the likelihood that they will experience a host of associated negative outcomes such as unemployment or incarceration (e.g., Belfield and Levin, 2007; Li and Lerner, 2011). As such, there is a vital need to understand the social goals that adolescents pursue and how these social goals may influence youth's social and academic adjustment in the school setting. This paper aims to provide a conceptual review of prominent social goals pursued by early adolescents (approximately aged 10-14, corresponding to grades 5th-8th) and present research evidence linking social goals to different markers of school adjustment, both social and academic.

2. Social and Academic Changes During Early Adolescence

During the early adolescent developmental period, youth face numerous changes, challenges, demands, and transitions (e.g., Heckhausen, 1999; Nurmi, 1993, 2004) and how they cope with these various changes may have far reaching consequences on their developmental trajectories. Relevant for this review are the significant changes that occur in peer relationships

and the school environment. Early adolescents interact with and spend more time with a wider range of peers, form distinct peer groups, and generate dominance hierarchies (Berndt, 1982; Blyth, Simmons, and Carlton-Ford, 1983; Brown, Dolcini, and Leventhal, 1997; Csikszentmihalyi and Larson, 1984; Simmons and Blyth, 1987). Not only is there increased contact with peers, but peers become increasingly important to youth and hold a prominent position in their lives (e.g., Adler and Adler, 1998). The increased interactions with and importance of peers provide avenues for positive development (e.g., autonomy, self-identity; Steinberg, 2002) but also the potential for negative consequences such as a greater concern with impression management, social self-presentation, and increasing self-consciousness (Berndt, 1979; Parker and Gottman, 1989; Ruble and Frey, 1987; Simmons and Blyth, 1987). These changes in peer relationships often occur within the school context and may profoundly impact youth's social and academic adjustment.

In conjunction with changes to the peer landscape are changes to the school environment. A vast majority of early adolescents experience school transitions, particularly the transition to middle school, which typically occurs between the 5th and 6th grades. Transitions usually involve changes to the physical environment such as larger school sizes and different classroom organization (Simmons and Blyth, 1987; Simmons, Carlton-Ford, and Blyth, 1987). Middle schools tend to have different instructional practices and management or discipline strategies as well as increased academic competition among students (Eccles and Midgley, 1989; Eccles, Wigfield, and Schiefele, 1998; Simmons and Blyth, 1987). Youth's experiences with teachers also undergo changes following the transition to middle school including: less positive student-teacher relationships; perceptions of less support or caring from teachers; and a growing mistrust of teachers (e.g., Barber and Olsen, 2004; Eccles and Midgley, 1989; Midgley, Feldlaufer, and

Eccles, 1989). The school day is often structured so that students change classrooms for each course, exposing them to a larger number of peers than they typically encountered during elementary school where they tended to stay with one set of peers and one primary teacher for the majority of the day (Karweit and Hansell, 1983). This exposure to and interaction with a larger network of peers in different classroom contexts may trigger the need to reshuffle the social status hierarchy (e.g., Farmer, Hamm, Leung, Lambert, and Gravelle, 2011) and renegotiate peer group memberships (Eccles, 2004). Thus, youth are simultaneously dealingwith changes to the peer and school landscape. How they manage these changes can profoundly impact their school adjustment.

Educators face a particular set of challenges given these changes in the peer and school landscape. If the goal of education is to promote positive outcomes for youth, it is vital that researchers and educators are aware of which social goals may undermine adolescents' optimal functioning and which social goals may promote positive school adjustment. This conceptual review will provide an overview of the prominent and salient social goals studied in early adolescence and present research linking each social goal to markers of school adjustment including social (e.g., social behavior, peer relationships) and academic factors (e.g., academic behavior, measures of achievement).

3. Social Goals in Early Adolescence

First, what are goals? Numerous terms have been used to describe personal goals including: strivings (Emmons, 1986); personal projects (Little, 1983); future goals (Nurmi, 1989); developmental goals (Heckhausen, 1999); possible selves (Markus and Nurius, 1986); and life tasks (Cantor, Norem, Niedenthal, Langston, and Brower, 1987; Havighurst, 1953; for a similar review of these terms, see Nurmi and Salmela-Aro, 2002, and Massey, Gebhardt, and

Garnefski, 2008). Goals, as defined by Austin and Vancouver (1996) are "internal representations of desired states, where states are broadly constructed as outcomes, events or processes" (p. 338). The internalized representation of a desired state is compared to the internalized representation of one's current state and that difference, between the desired and current state, is what drives the organism toward reducing any gap and provides the basis for behavior motivation (i.e., achieving the goal; Austin and Vancouver, 1996; Nurmi, 1993). Applying this to the social realm, social goals are generally defined as the social outcomes that individuals want to either achieve or avoid (Jarvinen and Nicholls, 1996; Miller and Read, 1991). Within the adolescent social goal literature, social goals are measured as outcomes that individuals want to pursue (e.g., Wentzel, 1999), as orientations toward social competence (e.g., Kiefer and Ryan, 2008; Ryan and Shim, 2006, 2008), or as social reasons for wanting to achieve academically (e.g., Dowson and McInerney, 2001, 2003; Urdan and Maehr, 1995). Across the various definitions used by researchers, there is a general understanding that goals represent a desired state the individual hopes to achieve.

Other reviews have looked at the multitude of social motivations and social goals endorsed by adolescents (see Nurmi, 1991 and Massey et al., 2008). Given this review's focus on understanding links between social goals and markers of school adjustment, providing a thorough review of all possible social goals endorsed by youth and their associated social and academic correlates was beyond the scope of this paper. Rather, this review focused on three different goal domains that either have particular significance or have received considerable attention during the early adolescent developmental period including: social status goals; agentic and communal goals; and social achievement goals. The importance of understanding early adolescents' goals for social status is underscored by research evidence showing that youth are

increasingly concerned with their status in the peer social hierarchy during this developmental period (e.g., Adler and Adler, 1998; Dawes and Xie, 2016; LaFontana and Cillessen, 2010). Thus, it is critical that we understand how these particularly salient status goals may be impacting youth's development at school. The second set of social goals discussed in this review are agentic and communal goals which have a long history of study in the research literature (Bakan, 1966, Wiggins, 1991) and provide a useful framework for understanding what are considered to be two universal social motives: the need for agency and the need for communality (Buhrmester, 1996). The third and final set of social goals discussed in this review are social achievement goals which capture one's orientation towards social competence, be it developing competence, displaying competence, or avoiding negative judgements about one's competence (e.g., Ryan and Shim, 2006, 2008). Given the aforementioned changes to the peer landscape during early adolescence which may induce more concern with impression management and social self-presentation (e.g., Berndt, 1979; Parker and Gottman, 1989; Ruble and Frey, 1987), it seems pertinent to understand how youth's goals for social competence may be related to their social and academic adjustment at social. The following sections will provide an overview of each of these three goal domains and present available research on associated social and academic markers of adjustment (see Table 1 for overview).

3.1 Social Status Goals

Numerous studies report that during this developmental period as youth are more preoccupied with their position on the status hierarchy (Adler and Adler, 1998), they begin to endorse pursuit of social status goals (e.g., Dawes and Xie, 2014, Dawes and Xie, 2016; Kiefer and Ryan, 2008; Li and Wright, 2014; Wright, Li, and Shi, 2012). There are two types of social status goals frequently studied in adolescent research: one, the goal for popularity; and two, the

goal for peer preference. Popularity in the literature has also been termed perceived popularity and other terms for peer preference include sociometric popularity or acceptance (see Cillessen and Marks, 2011 for a discussion on terminology). Though both forms of status are correlated, researchers have identified different behavioral markers associated with each type of status, necessitating their treatment as separate and not equal constructs (e.g., Cillessen and Marks, 2011; Cillessen and Mayeux, 2004; Cillessen and Rose, 2005; Parkhurst and Hopmeyer, 1998; Prinstein and Cillessen, 2003). Both forms of social status are social reputations that are collectively decided upon by the peer network (e.g., Bukowski, 2011). Popularity, or being *popular*, is a type of social status indicating social power, social prestige, social dominance, and social prominence (Cillessen and Marks, 2011; Parkhurst and Hopmeyer, 1998; Rodkin, Farmer, Pearl, and Van Acker, 2000). These individuals are highly visible, central members of the peer network who are well connected and can have tremendous influence on their peers (Adler, Kless, and Adler, 1992; Rodkin et al., 2000). Thus, having the goal for popularity indicates the desire for power or impact among peers. This type of status is often considered more controversial because individuals who are popular are not necessarily liked by peers (e.g., Cillessen and Rose, 2005; Parkhurst and Hopmeyer, 1998). Peer preference, on the other hand, is a type of social status indicating who is liked-most or who is socially preferred among peers (e.g., Bukowski, 2011; LaFontana and Cillessen, 2002; Lease, Kennedy, and Axelrod, 2002; Sandstrom and Cillessen, 2006; Parkhurst and Hopmeyer, 1998). These well-liked individuals may also be socially central among their peers but are not suggested to have the same social impact as popular youth. The difference between these two types of status is further pronounced when examining their different adjustment correlates.

3.1.1 Social Adjustment. The *goal for popularity* in early adolescence is positively associated with physical and social aggression (Dawes and Xie, 2014; Kiefer and Wang, 2016) and with relational aggression (Li and Wright, 2014; Wright et al., 2012) and negatively related to prosocial behavior (Wright et al., 2012). Adolescents with higher levels of popularity goal also indicate higher levels of social status insecurity, such as worrying that peers do not like them or worrying that their status among their peers is not high (Li and Wright, 2014). Kiefer and Shim (2016) found that popularity goal was positively related to students' sense of social self-efficacy, meaning that youth endorsing high popularity goals were more likely to have greater confidence in their ability to engage in peer interactions (e.g., "I can get along with most of the students in my class"; Patrick, Hicks, and Ryan, 1997; Ryan and Shin, 2011). Though it seems contradictory for youth endorsing popularity goal to be both insecure in their status and confident in their peer interactions, it is important to consider the distinction between confidence in one's status in the popularity hierarchy versus confidence in one's ability to engage with peers. It seems reasonable that a student could feel efficacious in his or her ability to interact well with peers but also worry that his or her social status among peers is threatened (Li and Wright, 2014)

Aside from social behavior and perceptions, the goal for popularity is also linked with other social goals pursued by adolescents. Some studies report that popularity goal is negatively associated with intimacy goals, indicating that youth who pursue popularity are less concerned with knowing others' feelings, making others happy, or going out of their way to help others (Kiefer, Matthews, Montesino, Arango, and Preece, 2013; Kiefer and Ryan, 2008). The same studies also found positive links between popularity and dominance goals (i.e., the desire for people to do what they want and to be afraid of them; Kiefer et al., 2013; Kiefer and Ryan, 2008; Kiefer and Shim, 2016). Taken together, research suggests that youth with a popularity goal are

more likely to engage in physical and social aggression, to feel insecure about their social status, to pursue a dominance goal, and be less likely to pursue an intimacy goal.

In contrast to the desire for popularity, the *goal for peer preference* is negatively associated with relational aggression and overt aggression but positively associated with prosocial behavior as reported by self, peers, and teachers (Wright et al., 2012). Thus, early adolescents who want to be well-liked by others are more likely to engage in prosocial behavior and less likely to engage in aggressive behavior. This positive outlook is tempered by research findings indicating that endorsement of a peer preference goal is also related to social status insecurity, suggesting that youth with this goal are similarly concerned with their social status as those youth with a popularity goal (Li and Wright, 2014). Yet, the impetus for endorsing any goal related to one’s social status, by necessity, means that the individual is dissatisfied with their current level of status, so perhaps some degree of insecurity is understandable. As a whole, research on early adolescents’ goal for peer preference is limited and more work is needed in order to fully understand the social implications for wanting to be liked. Though the available research does find links with markers of positive adjustment (e.g., prosocial behavior), the desire to be well-liked by others in certain social contexts may put youth at risk for engaging in behavior that could potentially undermine their positive development (i.e., letting peers copy their homework). However, at this time, more research is needed to clarify these effects.

3.1.2 Academic Adjustment. Similar to the outlook for social adjustment, the goal for popularity in the academic realm suggests that pursuing popularity may put youth at risk for academic maladjustment. Ryan and colleagues (1997) studied popularity goal by assessing students’ desire to be members of the popular group in order to gain status and found popularity goal to be positively related to relative ability goals in the classroom (e.g., “Doing betterthan

other students in this class is important to me"), avoiding help-seeking (e.g., "I don't ask questions in class, even when I don't understand the lesson"), and perceived threat associated with help-seeking (e.g., "I worry about what the other kids might think when I ask for help with my schoolwork"; Ryan et al., 1997). Not only are students who endorse popularity goal more likely to avoid help-seeking, they are also more likely to use expedient help-seeking which is defined as a type of help-seeking that does not focus on learning but rather expedites task completion (Kiefer and Shim, 2016). Additionally, popularity goal is negatively associated with students' GPAs and task-focused goals (Ryan et al., 1997). Kiefer and Shim (2016) also found a negative association between popularity goal and academic self-efficacy, meaning the more students endorsed a popularity goal, the less confident students were in academic tasks (e.g., "I'm certain I can figure out how to do even the most difficult school work"; Midgley et al., 2000). Further, youth who endorse higher popularity goal are less likely to self-report engaging in on-task classroom behavior (i.e., involved behavior; Kiefer and Wang, 2016). This research suggests that youth who are concerned with being popular are also concerned with how they appear to others in terms of their academic competence. Yet, the desire to do better than their peers does not translate into higher grades, as evidenced by the negative association with GPA.

Popularity goal is also positively associated with self-reported disruptive behavior in the classroom and with not following rules according to peer nominations (Kiefer and Ryan, 2008) and negatively associated with self-reported effort in the classroom (Kiefer and Ryan, 2008). These findings may be explained by reports that social standing among peers may be jeopardized if they are academically engaged, given that academic engagement and success come to be devalued by some peers during adolescence (Graham, Taylor, and Hudley, 1998; Ishiyama and Chabassol, 1985). Meanwhile, behavior that is contrary to academic success, such as low effort

or having poor attendance, may be admired because such behavior shows a rebelliousness and defiance of adult authority (Sandstrom, 2011). Therefore, an adolescent who wants to be popular may engage in behavior that puts their academic success at risk.

Another measure of popularity goal, used by Anderman and colleagues, emphasizes students' desire to belong to and conform to the values of "the popular group" at school. This social status goal is positively related to perceiving an ability goal orientation from teachers (teachers emphasize demonstrating ability and outperforming others; Anderman, 1999) and negatively related to GPA (Anderman, 1999; Anderman and Anderman, 1999). Taken together, this paints a somewhat dismal picture that youth who want to belong to "the popular group," are more likely to have lower GPAs and to perceive an academic climate that stresses competition and social comparison (Anderman, 1999) which may be detrimental to their long-term academic adjustment (Roeser et al., 1996).

There is a lack of research evidence of associations between the *goal for peer preference* and academic adjustment. However, examination of the literature linking peer preference itself can provide some clues into the academic adjustment of youth who endorse this goal. Studies show that well-liked students report frequent pursuit of learning goals and are more satisfied with school (Wentzel, 1991a, 1994; Wentzel and Asher, 1995) compared to students who are not well-liked (i.e., rejected students). Youth with a peer preference goal may earn higher grades given the positive links between peer preference and GPA (Wentzel, 1991a; Wentzel and Caldwell, 1997). Given these links, it is reasonable to expect that youth pursuing the goal for peer preference would also pursue learning goals, feel satisfied with school, and have high grades. This is a hopeful message, but more research is needed to clarify whether the goal for peer preference is similarly linked with such positive academic markers.

3.2 Agentic and Communal Goals

There is a long history of research dedicated to the study of agentic and communal motives (Bakan, 1966). An individual with an agentic goal is focused on gaining status, influence, or power in social relationships. In contrast, communal goals involve the individual's desire to attain and maintain positive relationships, including the motives for intimacy, solidarity, connection, and cooperation with others (Bakan, 1966, Wiggins, 1991). Recently, researchers have used the interpersonal circumplex model (IPC) to study the agentic/ communal goal framework in adolescence (e.g., Locke, 2000; Ojanen, Grönroos, and Salmivalli, 2005). Within the circumplex model, the vertical axis represents agency (i.e., power) and the horizontal axis represents communion (i.e., solidarity). Having high agentic goals (A+) is associated with independence and dominance whereas having low agentic goals (A-) is associated with avoiding conflict. A high communal goal (C+) is related to the desire to develop close relationships whereas a low communal goal (C-) is related to feelings of detachment. Presenting agency and communion in the circumplex model allows for all possible combinations of the two dimensions; for example an individual with submissive and communal goals (-A +C) is accepted by the group, but he or she agrees with others (e.g., your peers like you, you let the others decide, Ojanen et al., 2005). Several research studies have employed the interpersonal circumplex model to study adolescents' social goals (Ojanen et al, 2005; Salmivalli, Ojanen, Haanpää, and Peets, 2005; Salmivalli and Peets, 2009; Sijtsema, Veenstra, Lindenberg, and Salmivalli, 2009).

Under the umbrella of agentic motives studied in adolescence are dominance goals and instrumental goals. Dominance goals represent the desire to have control over others (e.g., "When I'm with people my own age, I like it when I make them do what I want"; Kiefer and Ryan, 2008; "When with my peers, it is important to me that the group does as I say"; Ojanen et

al., 2005). Instrumental goals also focus on the desire to have control over social situations (e.g., "When you are with your friends, how important is it for you that the group does what you say?" Lenzi et al., 2014). Specific communal goals studied in adolescence include: intimacy goals (e.g., "I really know someone's feelings," "I go out of my way to help them," "I can make them happy"; Kiefer and Ryan, 2008); prosocial and social responsibility goals (e.g., Wentzel, 1996, 2000); relationship goals (e.g., Anderman, 1999); and social affiliation goals (e.g., King, Ganotice, and Watkins, 2012b; Watkins, McInerney, and Boholst, 2003).

3.2.1 Social Adjustment. Given that *agentic goals* represent the desire to gain power in social relationships, it is unsurprising that numerous studies have found agentic goals to be positively linked with aggression (both proactive and relational; Ojanen et al., 2005; Ojanen and Findley-Van Nostrand, 2014; Salmivalli et al., 2005; Sijtsema et al., 2009) and with bullying degree (i.e., number of times a participant was nominated as the bully in a bully-victim same-sex dyad; Sijtsema et al., 2009). Adolescents endorsing agentic goals are also less likely to engage in prosocial behavior (Ojanen et al., 2005) and less likely to withdraw from others (Salmivalli et al., 2005). Despite the negative association with prosocial behavior, Caravita and Cillessen (2011) found a positive association between agentic goals and popularity, meaning that youth with higher agentic goals tend to be highly popular. The authors suggested that "youth who are motived toward influence and visibility are expected to engage in status-enhancing behaviors. Agentic motives to be influential and visible may even be required to become popular" (Caravita and Cillessen, 2011; p. 378). Another study examined how agentic goals may relate to adolescents' intentions to engage in risk behaviors, namely alcohol and cigarette usage (Trucco, Colder, Bowker, and Wieczorek, 2011). The authors found a positive link between agentic goals and perceptions of peer approval and peer usage for alcohol and cigarette use (Trucco et al.,

2011). Additionally, the association between perceptions of peer approval for cigarette use and adolescents' own intention to smoke cigarettes was stronger for those youth with higher levels of agentic goals (Trucco et al., 2011). The authors reason that engaging in these risk behaviors (e.g., cigarette use) may allow adolescents to present the image of being dominant or cool, thus satisfying their agentic goal (Trucco et al., 2011).

The specific *goal for dominance* in adolescents is positively related to narcissism (e.g., "I insist upon getting the respect that is due to me"), temperamental frustrations, (e.g., "It frustrates me if people interrupt me when I'm talking"), overt aggression (i.e., peer nominations for fights with others, pushes, kicks, or punches others), and negatively related to temperamental affiliation (e.g., "It is important to me to have close relationships with others"; Ojanen, Findley, and Fuller, 2012). An *instrumental goal*, assessed as a combination of agentic and separate goals (i.e., tendency to be in control without interest in other people's opinions; Ojanen et al., 2005) is associated with bullying behavior such as hitting, saying hurtful things, or spreading false rumors (Lenzi et al., 2014). Altogether, the pursuit of agentic motives (i.e., agentic, instrumental, or dominance goals) may lead to engagement in behavior which put adolescents at risk for maladjustment in the school context. Aggressive and bullying behavior may jeopardize adolescents' relationships with peers and engagement in risk behaviors may lead to physical, mental, and emotional harm beyond the adolescent period. The challenge with these goals is that despite associations with arguably maladaptive behaviors, youth pursuing agentic goals may enjoy the social benefits of being popular. Being popular comes with certain social rewards and resources (e.g., Fiske, 1993; Hawley, 1999, 2003b) and having access to these social resources likely reinforces youth's desire to remain popular through the use of the above-mentioned behavioral strategies.

In contrast to agentic goals, *communal goals* tend to be associated with positive markers of social adjustment. For example, communal goals are negatively related to physical aggression (Ojanen and Findley-Van Nostrand, 2014; Ojanen et al., 2012) and narcissism, but positively related to temperamental affiliation (Ojanen et al., 2012). Given the association with positive qualities, it is unsurprising that studies also find communal goals to be positively related to peer preference (Caravita and Cillessen, 2011; Ojanen, Aunola, and Salmivalli, 2007; Ojanen et al., 2005; Ojanen and Findley-Van Nostrand, 2014). Additionally, Ojanen and Findley-Van Nostrand (2014) found a positive association between communal goals and popularity both concurrently and over time. This is an encouraging finding that youth who are focused on maintaining positive relationships will also enjoy the compelling benefits of popularity. Such well-liked popular youth may help set peer norms for positive behaviors given their social power within the peer network (e.g., Brown, Bakken, Ameringer, and Mahon, 2008; Hogg, 1996a, 2005b). More specific communal goals, such as *relationships goals* (e.g., wish to form positive peer relationships in school), are positively related to positive affect, such as feeling happiness, contentment, and excitement at school (Anderman, 1999). In general, adolescents with communal motives seek to engage in behaviors associated with maintaining positive friendships and are rewarded by being considered well-liked by their peers.

3.2.2 Academic Adjustment. The available research on *agentic goals* suggests that pursuing the motives of power or dominance over others have potentially negative consequences for youth's academic adjustment. For example, *dominance goals* are positively related to self-reported disruptive behavior and not following school rules according to peers (Kiefer and Ryan, 2008; Kiefer and Wang, 2016). Dominance goals are also negatively related to effort in the classroom (according to both self- and peer-report), self-reported engagement in on-task

classroom behaviors, and GPA (Kiefer and Ryan, 2008; Kiefer and Wang, 2016). Many of these associations hold over time: higher dominance goals predict more disruptive behavior, lower GPA, and more peer nominations for not following the rules (Kiefer and Ryan, 2008). This suggests that adolescents who pursue agentic goals, specifically dominance goals, may be at particular risk for negative academic adjustment.

In contrast to agentic goals, wanting to achieve *communal goals* is linked with more favorable academic outcomes. For instance, *intimacy goals* are positively related to effort, GPA, and engagement in on-task classroom behavior but negatively related to disruptive behavior (Kiefer and Ryan, 2008; Kiefer and Wang, 2016). Youth who endorse intimacy goals are also less likely to receive nominations for not following classroom rules (Kiefer and Ryan, 2008). Thus, in the context of academic adjustment, having an intimacy goal as one's social goal seems to be associated with positive academic behavior (i.e., effort) and may make the adolescent less likely to engage in maladaptive academic behavior (i.e., being disruptive, not following rules). Pursing *prosocial and social responsibility goals* is also related to more adaptive learning outcomes (Wentzel, 1996, 2000). Prosocial goals have also been shown to be related to desirable forms of classroom behavior, better academic performance, and the pursuit of academic goals for learning and getting good grades (Wentzel, 1991a, 1993b). *Relationship goals* are likewise positively related to students' GPA and their sense of school belonging (e.g., feelings of being respected and feelings of comfort in their school; Anderman, 1999). McInerney and colleagues investigated another form of communal goals that assessed youth's desire to enhance their sense of belongingness with peers and to help others. This *social affiliation goal* is positively associated with deep learning strategies (Dowson and McInerney, 2001, 2003, 2004; King, McInerney, and Watkins, 2013; Watkins et al., 2003), greater self-reliance in the classroom, and

positive self-concepts pertaining to academics (King, Ganotice, and McInerney, 2012b; King and McInerney, 2012). Overall, the academic outlook for youth pursuing communal goals is promising; they are more likely to be engaged students who show signs of positive academic adjustment.

3.3 Social Achievement Goals

The achievement goal framework has its roots in learning contexts. Within the learning context, researchers assume that individuals strive for *academic* competence; they either want to demonstrate their competence, develop their competence, or strive for both (Ryan and Shim, 2008). There are two classes of goals used to study achievement motivation: (a) *learning goals* and (b) *performance goals* (Dweck, 1986; Dweck and Leggett, 1988; Elliot and Dweck, 1988). Learning goals (also termed task goals or mastery goals; see Ames and Archer, 1988; Maehr and Nicholls, 1980; Nicholls, 1984) describe student's motivation to "increase their competence, to understand or master something new" whereas performance goals involve students seeking to "gain favorable judgments of their competence or avoid negative judgments of their competence" (Dweck, 1986; p. 1040; see also Nicholls, 1984). Performance goals indicate an individual's concern with extrinsic variables such as pleasing others or gaining recognition and are further divided into approach and avoidance dimensions (Ames, 1992). Performance-approach goals focus on demonstrating competence whereas performance-avoidance goals involve the individual striving not to demonstrate incompetence (Elliot and Church, 1997; Elliot and Harackiewicz, 1996).

Within the social domain, researchers assume that individuals strive for social competence, which is defined as the social abilities or skills needed to promote the development of friendships and overall peer acceptance (Dweck and Leggett, 1988; Harter, 1982; Rubin,

Coplan, Nelson, Cheah, and Lagace-Seguin, 1999; Ryan and Shim, 2006). Individuals are assumed to have different approaches to displaying social competence that parallel those used to achieve goals for displaying academic competence (Pintrich, 2000; Ryan and Shim, 2006). Learning or mastery orientations within a social context have been termed *social developmental goals* which focus on positive outcomes such as improving social skills and relationships and growing as a person based on intrapersonal standards of competence (e.g., “I like it when I learn better ways to get along with friends”; Ryan and Shim, 2008). Performance goals in the social context have been referred to as *social demonstration goals* where individuals are comparing their own self-worth to that of others (Dweck and Leggett, 1988; Ryan and Shim, 2006). In keeping with the two dimensions of performance goals, social demonstration goals are likewise separated between approach forms (i.e., prove) and avoidance forms (VandeWalle, 1997). Individuals with a *social demonstration-approach goal* desire positive feedback and judgments from peers and focus on demonstrating their competence (e.g., “It is important to me to have ‘cool’ friends”; Ryan and Shim, 2008). Individuals with a *social demonstration-avoidance goal* hope to avoid negative appraisals of competence from peers (e.g., “I try not to do anything that might make other kids tease me”; Ryan and Shim, 2008; see also Horst, Finney, and Barron, 2007).[1, 2]

3.3.1 Social Adjustment. Given that *social development goals* focus on growing as an individual, it is unsurprising that researchers have found this type of social goal to be linked with positive markers of social adjustment. Social development goals are positively related to perceived social competence (e.g., “Compared to most sixth-grade students, how would you rate your social skills?”), prosocial behavior, best friend quality (e.g., “We can talk about how to get over being mad at each other”), popularity (e.g., “popular with boys,” “popular with girls,” “has

a lot of friends") and negatively related to aggressive behaviors (Ryan and Shim, 2008; Shin and Ryan, 2012). Ryan and Shim (2008) also tested associations over time and found that social development goals positively predict prosocial behavior and best-friend quality and negatively predict aggressive behavior. Other studies found that social development goals are positively related to social satisfaction (i.e., how socially satisfied students are and whether they feel lonely in class; Shim, Cho, et al., 2013) and to social self-efficacy (e.g., adolescents' judgments of their ability to relate effectively with their peers; Shim and Finch, 2014; Shin and Ryan, 2012). Taken together, research suggests that youth who endorse a social development goal are more likely to feel confident in their social skills and satisfied with their relationships with peers and are more likely to engage in prosocial, but not aggressive, behavior.

Adolescents who focus on developing their social competence are also more likely to employ mastery coping strategies when faced with conflicts in friendship (Shin and Ryan, 2012). For example, Shin and Ryan (2012) found that adolescents with social development goals are more likely to talk to friends about how to solve problems when there is a friendship conflict. Interestingly, Ryan, Shim, and colleagues also found a positive link between social development goals and social worry, (e.g., "I worry about what my friends think about me"; Ryan and Shim, 2008; Shim, Cho et al., 2013; Shim and Finch, 2014), but this may be explained by the notion that individuals who are intent on improving their interpersonal skills will, by necessity, consider their perceptions of friends' evaluations of their interpersonal skills as they gauge their social development success. As the authors outlined, having a social development goal seems to be "a positive orientation toward the social world that sets in motion adaptive beliefs and behaviors" (Ryan and Shim, 2008, p. 684). Extending into the realm of psychopathology, Kuroda and Sakurai (2001, 2003) found that *social learning goals* (similar to social development goals; e.g.,

"I want to develop myself by interactions with my friends"; Kuroda and Sakurai, 2001) are negatively related to depressive symptoms. In sum, the pursuit of a social development goal is associated with several markers of positive social adjustment. As the above outlined research suggests, pursuing the motive to grow as an individual through interpersonal experiences may lead to adaptive thoughts and behaviors that may continue to serve the adolescent well into the future.

An adolescent who wants to demonstrate their social competence will likely endorse a *social demonstration-approach* goal. Social demonstration-approach goal is negatively associated with prosocial behavior and solitary anxious behavior (i.e., worries, shy and timid; Gazelle and Rudolph, 2004; Ryan and Shim, 2008) but is positively associated with aggression and a lack of close and mutually satisfying relationships (Mouratidis and Sideridis, 2009; Ryan and Shim, 2008; Shim, Cho et al., 2013; Shim, Kiefer et al., 2013; Shin and Ryan, 2012). Social demonstration-approach goal is also associated with higher levels of social worry (i.e., worrying about social behaviors and relationships; Ryan and Shim, 2008; Shim and Finch, 2014), with avoidance coping (e.g., "I try to hide the problem from my friends"), and with nonchalance coping (e.g., "I tell my friends it is no big deal") when they have a problem with another student at school (Shin and Ryan, 2012). Both types of coping strategies may hinder the opportunity to develop intimacy and trust in friendships; thus, youth who endorse a social demonstration-approach goal and who employ such strategies are likely at risk of negative social adjustment. It is perhaps unsurprising that this type of social goal is positively associated with depressive symptoms (Kuroda and Sakurai, 2001, 2003). Clearly, there are some risks to the social adjustment of youth who pursue a social demonstration-approach goal. However, there are also some benefits. Even though youth who endorse this goal are more likely to be aggressive and

less likely to be prosocial, they have higher perceptions of their social competence (Ryan and Shim, 2008) and social self-efficacy (i.e., confidence in one's social skills; Shin and Ryan, 2012). Additionally, they still enjoy high social status. Youth pursing a social demonstration-approach goal are more likely to have high popularity status (Ryan and Shim, 2008). As Ryan and Shim (2008) noted, findings on social demonstration-approach goals reveal a troubling "pattern that suggests that 'nice' behavior is incompatible with the climb to the top of the social pyramid in middle school" (p. 684). Taken together, the available research suggests that the endorsement of social demonstration-approach goal may yield positive short-term benefits in terms of popularity, but may lead to maladjustment in terms of youth's usage of aggressive behavior and the quality of their friendships.

According to research on *social demonstration-avoidance* goals, youth who endorse this goal are more likely to engage in prosocial behavior and have high perceptions of their social competence, but they are also more likely to experience social worry and engage in solitary anxious behavior (Ryan and Shim, 2008; Shim, Cho et al., 2013; Shim and Finch, 2014). The positive association with social worry is a similar finding for both types of social demonstration goals, suggesting that the focus on others' opinions of one's social competence may prompt individuals to be worried about their social relationships and behavior, whether or not they were trying to avoid negative judgments or earn positive ones. Interestingly, Shin and Ryan (2012) found that endorsement of this type of goal is positively related to mastery, avoidance, and nonchalance forms of coping. Though the use of avoidance and nonchalance coping are suggested to be maladaptive, the positive association between mastery coping and social demonstration-avoidance goal endorsement is promising. Given that youth who endorse this avoidance goal are hoping to avoid negative appraisals, it is reasonable to expect that they are

less likely to engage in behavior designed to draw attention to oneself, namely the use of overt aggression (Ryan and Shim, 2008). Perhaps because these youth approach social situations with more reserve, it is also understandable why there are negative links between an avoidance goal and popularity over time (Ryan and Shim, 2008). Further, research suggests that youth who endorse a social demonstration-avoidance goal are at risk for the development of depressive symptoms. Kuroda and Sakurai (2011) tested associations between a social performance-avoidance goal (similar to social demonstration-avoidance goal; e.g., "I just want to avoid making a bad impression on my friends") and found positive associations with depression over time. The authors suggest that the constant focus on negative appraisals from others may lead to behavior that undermines social adjustment such as withdrawing from future peer relationships (Kuroda and Sakurai, 2011). In sum, adolescents pursuing a social demonstration-avoidance goal may be at risk for social maladjustment.

Researchers assessing social achievement goals have found interesting patterns when examining how these goals work together when youth endorse multiple goals. For example, Ryan and Shim (2008) found that social development goals predict later popularity, but only when adolescents endorsement for a social demonstration-avoidance goal is low. This suggests that when students are focused on both goals, the disadvantages associated with pursuing a social demonstration-avoidance goal counteract the benefits of pursing a social development goal (Ryan and Shim, 2008). Likewise, there is a positive association between social demonstration-approach goal and aggressive behavior, but if the adolescent simultaneously pursues a social development goal, the strength of that association is diminished (Ryan and Shim, 2008). Thus, even when adolescents endorse a social demonstration-approach goal, the additional focus on

developing oneself as a person (i.e., pursuing a social development goal) may discourage the use of maladaptive behavior.

3.3.2 Academic Adjustment. As outlined above, *social development goals* are related to positive markers of social adjustment and this trend continues in the academic domain. Social development goals are positively related to engagement in the classroom, both behavioral engagement (e.g., extent to which students pay attention and participate in class; Shim andFinch, 2014; Wang, Shim, and Cassady, 2012) and emotional engagement (e.g., extent to which students are interested in and enjoy learning; Shim, Cho et al., 2013; Shim and Finch, 2014). Given the positive association with engagement, it is unsurprising that researchers find a negative association between a social development goal and disruptive behavior (e.g., "I sometimes disturb the lesson that is going on in math class"; Shim, Cho et al., 2013; Shim and Finch, 2014). Youth who endorse this goal are also more likely to engage in adaptive help-seeking (e.g., bids for help that would further learning and promote independent problem solving in the future), adaptive learning strategies (e.g., extent to which students use cognitive and metacognitive strategies), have higher academic self-efficacy (e.g., students' perceptions of their competence in doing class work), and place higher intrinsic value on schoolwork (Shim and Finch, 2014). Not only do these youth show signs of positive academic adjustment, they perceive a more supportive peer environment for academic effort (Shim and Finch, 2014). Altogether, when youth pursue a social development goal, they tend to engage in positive academic behavior.

In contrast, adolescents endorsing a *social demonstration-approach goal* who are concerned with garnering positive judgments about their social competence from others, tend to avoid academic behavior that may jeopardize their social image. For example, youth who

endorse a social demonstration-approach goal are more likely to avoid help-seeking (Ryan and Shin, 2011; Shim and Finch, 2014) and more likely to engage in disruptive behavior in the classroom (Shim, Cho et al., 2013; Shim and Finch, 2014). In terms of learning behaviors, a social demonstration-approach goal is associated with maladaptive learning strategies (e.g., “Some students put off doing their class work until the last minute”) and avoiding novelty (e.g., “I don’t like to learn a lot of new concepts in class”; Wang et al., 2012). Youth with this goal are also more likely to experience school stress, have academic worry (e.g., students’ negative feelings or concern regarding their academic performance) and exhibit skepticism about the value of school work (Shim and Finch, 2014). Based on this research, the academic prognosis for adolescents who endorse a social demonstration-approach goal is grim: to them, maintaining a positive social image means they may abandon productive academic behavior which will likely negatively impact their long-term academic trajectory.

Adolescents who endorse a *social demonstration-avoidance goal* are more likely to avoid behavior that draws attention to themselves, which may explain why this goal is negatively related to disruptive behavior (Shim, Cho et al., 2013; Shim and Finch, 2014). However, the lack of disruptive behavior does not mean these youth fare better in terms of other academic markers. For example, a social demonstration-avoidance goal is positively related to school stress, maladaptive learning strategies, avoiding novelty, and academic worry (Shim and Finch, 2014; Wang et al., 2012). Taken together, the research suggests that youth who are fearful of negative judgments (Horst et al., 2007) and preoccupied with avoiding those negative judgments are less likely to be engaged in school and more likely to experience negative academic adjustment.

4. Summary

So, what social goals do we want early adolescents to pursue? In general, social goals for peer preference, communal goals, and social development goals seem to be consistently linked with markers of positive school adjustment, both social and academic. For example, the research reviewed here suggests that youth who pursue these goals are more likely to engage in prosocial behavior, less likely to engage in aggressive behavior, more likely to experience positive affect (i.e., happiness), more likely to feel socially satisfied at school, more likely to put forth effort in the classroom, more likely to show positive academic performance (i.e., higher GPA), and more likely to experience higher feelings of school belonging. This does not mean that youth who pursue other social goals are necessarily doomed to experience poor school adjustment. Rather than thinking in terms of either/ or, a more nuanced perspective may be warranted, one that takes into account the adaptive purpose of pursuing different goals. Such a perspective entered the discussion on aggressive behavior which was once thought to be a marker of poor social skills for all youth (i.e., the deficit model; see Sutton, Smith, and Swettenham, 1999 for discussion). Recent theorists and researchers (e.g., Hawley, 1999, Sutton et al., 1999) have introduced the notion of the adaptive benefits of aggression. This same line of reasoning may be applied to the pursuit of different social goals. For example, despite the negative behavior often associated with pursuit of a dominance goal, there may be certain situations in which pursuing dominance may be beneficial to the student. One such scenario is if a student is being bullied, he or she may pursue a dominance goal in an attempt to stop the bullying from continuing. Or a student may briefly pursue a social demonstration-avoidance goal when he or she moves to a new school mid-year in an effort to refrain from making a poor first impression among his or her new peers. If we think of school adjustment in terms of the child's ability to cope with the demands of the school

environment (Ladd, 1989), we can acknowledge that the adaptation of youth to their changing school ecology may require them to endorse a variety of social goals. Thus, whereas it is certainly reasonable to encourage adolescents to pursue social goals associated with positive markers of school adjustment, we must also recognize that there is no 'one size fits all' rule for which social goals students' should endorse without taking into account the specifics of the context and the situation.

4.1 Implications for Educators

The school environment is a critical social context for individual development and is suggested to be one of the most significant cultural institutions (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Meece and Schaefer, 2010). There are tremendous opportunities, as well as challenges, inherent in the creation of and management of a school and classroom ecology that fosters positive social and academic development. The role of teachers in creating such a supportive classroom context, particularly in regards to peer social dynamics, is increasingly acknowledged by researchers and educators (e.g. Farmer, Lines, and Hamm, 2011; Hamm, Farmer, Dadisman, Gravelle, and Murray, 2011; Wentzel, 2005). To aid teachers in this endeavor, we need to equip them with information about their students' motivations, both academic and social, as they attempt to positively influence their students' peer relationships and experiences through management of classroom social dynamics (Farmer et al., 2016; Gest, Madill, Zadzora, Miller, and Rodkin, 2014; Gest and Rodkin, 2011). As Wentzel (2005) argued, "a full appreciation of how and why students thrive or fail to thrive at school requires an understanding of a student's social goals, including both those that are personally valued and those that contribute to the stability and smooth functioning of interactions and relationships with others" (p. 282). When teachers are attuned to the social goals driving students' behavior, teacher can structure students' peer

experiences in the classroom, perhaps through small group assignments or seating arrangements (Gremmen, van den Berg, Segers, and Cillesen, 2016), that support more productive goals or prompt the use of behavioral strategies associated with positive social and academic adjustment. For example, if a student has a social demonstration-avoidance goal and thus has higher levels of social and academic worry, seating that student next to a prosocial, supportive peer may increase liking among the pair (van den Berg, Segers, and Cillessen, 2012) which in turn may help decrease the student's worry. More research is needed in this direction to fully understand the intervention implications of being attuned to students' social goals but this review can serve as a foundation for educators' knowledge about how their students' social goals may be impacting their social and academic adjustment at school.

5. Limitations and Future Directions

This conceptual review bridges together different domains of early adolescent social goal research and underscores the importance of considering youth's social goals in order to fully understand their adjustment in the school context. Yet, a few of the review's limitations warrant discussion. First, this review was limited in focus to three goal domains: social status goals; agentic and communal goals; and social achievement goals. As such, this review does not address how other social goals are related to social and academic adjustment at school. These three goal domains were chosen given their particular salience during early adolescence or prominence in the early adolescent social goal literature and it was the not the intent of this review to suggest that these are the only social goals early adolescents endorse (see Nurmi, 1991 and Massey et al., 2008 for reviews). A second limitation of this review is that the discussion of research was limited to the early adolescent developmental period which limits the generalizability of the discussion to other developmental periods. However, given the significant

changes that occur during early adolescence in both the peer and academic landscapes, there was a critical need to consolidate information on youth's social goals during this time period in order to provide a richer understanding of how social goals may be implicated in youth's school adjustment. Lastly, a third limitation of this review is that it does not discuss the potential mediation and moderation effects of other factors (personal or contextual) on the association between these social goal domains and adjustment markers. For example, Caravita and Cillessen (2012) found an interaction between agentic goals and popularity status on bullying behavior, meaning that youth with higher agentic goals engaged in more bullying behavior when they also had high levels of popularity. A similar result was found by Dawes and Xie (2014) that the strength of the association between popularity goal and social aggression was moderated by youth's popularity. Other studies have examined the role of gender in early adolescents' social goals. Cillessen, Mayeux, Ha, de Bruyn, and LaFontana (2014) found a negative association between priority for popularity (similar to a popularity goal) and prosocial behavior, but only for boys and not girls. We also know from research that contextual factors uniquely relate to youth's endorsement of different social goals (e.g., Kiefer et al., 2013). It will be important for future reviews to incorporate information on how personal factors, such as popularity status or gender, and contextual factors, such as classroom climate, impact the endorsement of different social goals and either moderate or mediate the association between social goals and different behavioral strategies used in pursuit of those goals.

Despite these limitations, this conceptual review provides a solid foundation for our understanding of links between these three socials goal domains and youth's social and academic adjustment at school during the early adolescent developmental period. Further, this review helped identify several future directions for research. First, aside from a few notable exceptions

(Li and Wright, 2014; Wright et al., 2012), there is limited research on the goal for peer preference, particularly in the academic domain. Future research should address this gap in our understanding of links between peer preference goal and academic behavior and achievement. A second future direction identified from this review is the need to understand how these goals work in combination with one another. Youth likely pursue multiple goals at the same time and more research is needed to understand how multiple goals may either be in conflict with one another or may complement one another (Dowson and McInerney, 2003; Urdan and Maehr, 1995). Some research presented in this review examined how the pursuit of multiple goals simultaneously are related to adjustment (see Ryan and Shim, 2008), but this work is limited in scope to the social achievement goal domain and does not encompass other salient social goals that youth may be juggling at the same time. Here, it will be important for researchers pursing this direction to consider the context in which goal pursuit occurs. It may be that around one group of peers youth actively pursue a popularity goal but around another group of peers they pursue the goal for peer preference. To be sure, this research direction includes methodological and measurement challenges, but the potential to provide fruitful and critical information about person-in-context development should not be overlooked. A third future direction with intervention implications is whether or not educators in the school setting can encourage pursuit of specific social goals that are associated with more positive social and academic outcomes. For instance, if a student endorses a popularity goal, what other behavior or activities can he or she be encouraged to engage in that will satisfy the desire for popularity without the use of aggression? This is a fruitful research direction with the potential to inform intervention efforts that may reduce the use of maladaptive social and academic behavior and promote positive school outcomes.

6. Conclusion

To successful adjust to school, early adolescents must cope with a changing peer and academic landscape and how they adjust to the school context will be influenced by the social goals they pursue. This conceptual review discussed three salient and prominent social goal domains and their associated social and academic correlates including: social status goals, agentic and communal goals; and social achievement goals. Social goals for peer preference, communality, and social development were associated with more positive and productive social and academic markers of adjustment whereas the goal for popularity, agentic goals, social demonstration-approach goal, and social demonstration-avoidance goal were associated with social and academic markers that may undermine students' positive adjustment at school. Knowledge of these associations may be particularly helpful to educators as they attempt to manage their students' social and academic experiences and create a classroom ecology that promotes positive school adjustment.

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Footnotes

[1] An additional definition of social goals stemming from achievement goal theory may be found in the work of King, McInerney, and Watkins (King and McInerney, 2012; King, McInerney, and Watkins, 2013). These researchers define social goals as "perceived social purposes of trying to achieve academically" which taps into the social reasons why youth study, including motives for affiliating with others doing schoolwork and showing concern for other students (Urdan & Maehr, 1995, p. 232). It is important to note here that social goals, according to King, McInerney, and Watkins, are distinct from social achievement goals.

[2] A similar trichotomous achievement goal framework employed by Kuroda and Sakurai (2001, 2003) parallels the social achievement goal framework used by Ryan, Shim and colleagues. These researchers assessed social learning goals (i.e., to grow through interpersonal experiences), social performance-approach goals (i.e., to obtain positive evaluations of one's social attributes), and social performance-avoidance goals (to avoid negative evaluations of one's social attributes; Kuroda & Sakurai, 2011).

Table 1
Goal Domains in Early Adolescence, Definitions, and Example Social and Academic Adjustment Correlates

	Social Status Goals		Agentic and Communal Goals	
	Goal for Popularity	Goal for Peer Preference	Agentic Goals	Communal Goals
Definition	goal to be popular among peers/ part of the popular group	goal to be well-liked by peers	goal to gain status, influence, or power in social relationships (e.g., dominance goal, instrumental goal)	goal to maintain positive relationships, intimate connections with others (e.g., intimacy goals, relationships goals, prosocial and social responsibility goals, social affiliation goals)
Social Adjustment Correlates	*Positively associated with*: • Physical, social, relational aggression • Social self-efficacy • Social status insecurity *Negatively associated with*: • Prosocial behavior	*Positively associated with*: • Prosocial behavior • Social status insecurity *Negatively associated with*: • Overt & relational aggression	*Positively associated with*: • Aggression and bullying behavior • Perceived approval for alcohol/ cigarette use • Narcissism *Negatively associated with*: • Prosocial behavior	*Positively associated with*: • Positive affect (e.g., contentment at school) *Negatively associated with*: • Physical aggression • Narcissism
Academic Adjustment Correlates	*Positively associated with*: • Avoiding help-seeking • Disruptive behavior / not following rules *Negatively associated with*: • GPA • Academic self-efficacy • Engagement in on-task classroom behavior • Effort in the classroom	**Lack of research*	*Positively associated with*: • Disruptive behavior/ not following rules *Negatively associated with*: • Engagement in on-task classroom behavior • Effort in the classroom • GPA	*Positively associated with*: • GPA • Engagement in on-task classroom behavior • Effort in the classroom • Positive academic self-concept *Negatively associated with*: • Disruptive behavior/ not following rules

Note. GPA = grade point average. Example correlates included in the table. Full discussion of correlates in text.

Table 1 (cont.)

Goal Domains in Early Adolescence, Definitions, and Example Social and Academic Adjustment Correlates

	Social Achievement Goals		
	Social Development Goal	Social Demonstration-Approach Goal	Social Demonstration-Avoidance Goal
Definition	goal to improve social skills and relationships	goal to demonstrate social competence, gain positive judgments about social competence	goal to avoid negative appraisals of social competence
Social Adjustment Correlates	*Positively associated with*: • Prosocial behavior • Best friend quality • Social self-efficacy • Social worry *Negatively associated with*: • Aggressive behavior	*Positively associated with*: • Aggression • Lack of close/ mutually satisfying relationships • Perceive social competence • Social self-efficacy • Social worry • Depressive symptoms *Negatively associated with*: • Prosocial behavior • Solitary anxious behavior	*Positively associated with*: • Prosocial behavior • Perceived social competence • Solitary anxious behavior • Social worry • Depressive symptoms *Negatively associated with*: • Aggressive behavior
Academic Adjustment Correlates	*Positively associated with*: • Engagement in the classroom • Adaptive help-seeking • Academic self-efficacy *Negatively associated with*: • Disruptive behavior in class	*Positively associated with*: • Avoiding help-seeking • Disruptive behavior in class • Maladaptive learning strategies • School stress • Academic worry	*Positively associated with*: • Maladaptive learning strategies • School stress • Academic worry *Negatively associated with*: • Disruptive behavior in class

Note. GPA = grade point average. Example correlates included in the table. Full discussion of correlates in text.

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