

Childhood Social Profiles and Adolescent Anti-social behavior:

An 8-year Longitudinal Study of Norwegian Children

An important developmental task for school-aged children is to acquire the relational skills necessary for getting along with other people and to comply with norms and rules in school and at home (Masten & Powell, 2003). Whether children attain such goals has implications for how they will function in adolescence (Kupersmidt & Coie, 1990). Studies suggest that social competence and antisocial behavior should be conceptualized as two separate, but related dimensions under the overarching concept of social functioning (Sørlie, Amlund-Hagen and Ogden, 2008). Empirically, a negative association between social competence and antisocial behavior is well-established, but the association is often only moderate. Thus, there are likely a number of children whose social functioning is characterized by seemingly contradictory combinations of social competence and antisocial behaviour.

Based on the combination of their levels of teacher-rated social competence and antisocial behavior, children were classified into one of 4 profiles: well-adjusted (children who scored above the mean on social competence and below the mean on antisocial behavior, high/low), restrictive (low/low), the domineering (high/high), and disruptive (low/high). This approach to taxonomy is quite different from conventional sociometric techniques. For one, peers' nominations are replaced by teachers' assessments of the children's social behavior. In a structural equation model, we analyzed which social profiles at ages 10 and 13 predicted anti-sociality at age 18. Also, we investigated whether anti-sociality in late adolescence differed among girls and boys with the various profiles they had been classified as, in childhood.

Participants were 461 fourth graders (49.9% girls), recruited from schools in a large Norwegian municipality. The sample represented a middle-to-upper socioeconomic status. At Wave 2 (age 13), 383 children were retained and at Wave 3 (age 18), 212 adolescents

participated. The children's teachers completed questionnaires about the children's social competence and antisocial behavior at both wave 1 and wave 2 (SSRS; Gresham & Elliott, 1990) and the adolescents self-reported on their substance use, police contact and level of deviant behavior in their friends at W3.

When modelling categorical independent variables (with $k > 2$), one of the categories is chosen as a reference group to which the other groups are compared. The well-adjusted profile was chosen as the reference category at waves 1 and 2 (see Figure 1). Path coefficients from the three remaining groups to the latent anti-sociality variable are therefore significance tests of the comparisons with the reference group. Missing data were analyzed using the maximum likelihood procedure in Mplus (Muthen & Muthen, 1998-2004).

Our model fit the data very well, $\chi^2 (N = 461) = 38.30, df = 40, p = .55, CFI = 1.00, RMSEA = .00$. Girls classified as disruptive at age 13 reported significantly higher levels of anti-social behavior at age 18. For boys, greater anti-sociality at age 18 was predicted by having received a domineering profile at age 13, and/or a restrictive *or* disruptive profile at age 10. For boys at age 10 it seemed that the absence of social competence was a greater risk factor than the presence of externalizing behavior. Social profiles at age 10 were unrelated to antisocial behavior at W3 for girls, but having a disruptive profile at age 10 was associated with greater risk for receiving that profile again at age 13.