

Rural Chinese Adolescents' Self-Concept: The Role of Reflected  
Appraisals of and Relationship Qualities with Parents, Friends, and  
Teachers

HOU, Yang

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## **Abstract**

This study aims to explore three aspects of adolescents' self-concept development. The first and primary aspect concerns the potential influential factors of self-concept. Previous research built on symbolic interactionism or attachment theory suggests the effect of reflected appraisal and relationship quality on self-concept respectively. However, usually either reflected appraisal or relationship quality alone was examined in single context (e.g., parent), thus, leaving their potential interactive effect and the relative importance of different contexts underexplored. This study, therefore, mainly focused on the concurrent relationship between reflected appraisal, relationship quality and the multi-domain self-concept (i.e., academic, social, athletic, appearance and behavioral) in multiple contexts (i.e., parents, teachers and peers). Specifically, relative importance of different contexts and the interactive effects of reflected appraisal and relationship quality in different domains were investigated. The second aspect considered the relationship between domain-specific self-concept and self-esteem. Previous studies suggested the effect of domain-specific self-concept, but the relative importance of different domains may vary across cultures. Thus, this study explored their relative importance in an underexplored culture, rural China. The third aspect concerned potential effect of left-behind status (left-behind children vs. children living with parents) on self-concept development. Since limited existing works provided inconsistent findings, I, specifically, tested the potential effects on mean-level self-concept and related factors (i.e., reflected appraisal and relationship quality) as well as their relationship.

A cross-sectional survey was conducted in rural areas of Si Chuan, China. Participants are 799 adolescents ranging from grade 7 to 12 (175 left-behind

children). Major findings of this study were as follows: (1) The relative importance of parents, friends and teachers differed across domains of self-concept and theoretical perspectives. From the interactionism perspective, parents', friends' and teachers' appraisals all could explain unique variance of self-concept in most domains but friends' appraisals tended to be most important in all domains. From the attachment perspective, relationship quality with friends was most important in social domain but could not explain unique variance of self-concept in academic and athletic domain, where teachers are most influential. Significant interactive effect of reflected appraisal and relationship quality was found in peers' context (in behavioral conduct) and teachers' context (in physical appearance) but not in parents' context. (2) Physical appearance and behavioral conduct domain were most predictive of self-esteem. (3) Left-behind children were similar to children living with parents except that left-behind girls had lower relationship quality with parents and left-behind children's self-evaluation of physical appearance was more associated with parents' appraisals than teachers' appraisals.

Theoretically, this study contributes to our understanding of adolescents' self-concept development by demonstrating (1) the relative importance of parents, friends and teachers in different domains of self-concept and the interactive effect of reflected appraisal and relationship quality; (2) relationship between domain-specific self-concept and self-esteem in a underexplored population, rural China; (3) left-behind status variation on self-concept development. It also underscores the merit of multi-context study and taking different theoretical perspectives. Practically, it provides evidence and advice for self-esteem enhancement programs and policies regarding left-behind children.

## Chinese Abstract (中文摘要)

本研究旨在探讨与青少年自我概念有关的三方面问题。首先是关于青少年自我概念的来源。在符号互动理论和依恋理论的指导下，已有研究揭示了他人的评价以及个体与他人的关系质量对自我概念的影响。但这些研究通常只关注父母、老师或者同伴之一对被试的评价或者与被试的关系质量对被试自我概念的影响。这使得父母、老师和同伴在自我概念形成过程中的相对重要性，以及他人评价与关系质量之间可能存在的交互作用没有得到充分的研究。因此，本研究调查了父母、老师和朋友对青少年的评价及与青少年的关系对青少年多维度自我概念（学业、社会、体育、外貌、行为）的影响。具体来说，我比较了父母、老师和朋友在各维度的自我概念形成过程中的相对重要性，并探索了他人评价与关系质量之间可能存在的交互作用。其二，鉴于以往研究显示了多维度自我概念与总体自我价值感之间的紧密联系，以及这种联系可能存在的文化差异，我在一个尚未得到充分研究的群体，即，中国农村青少年，中探索了它们之间的关系。其三，鉴于以往研究对留守儿童自我概念发展的争论，我探索了留守儿童和与父母生活在一起的儿童在自我概念平均水平上及他人对自我概念的影响作用上可能存在的差异。

本研究调查了中国四川农村地区的 799 个 7 到 12 年级的中学生（其中包括 175 个留守儿童）。主要的研究结果如下：（1）在不同的理论视角下，父母、老师和朋友在自我概念的不同维度上所起作用不同。从符号互动理论来看，朋友的评价对各个维度的自我概念几乎都有着最重要的影响。从依恋理论来看，朋友关系质量对社会自我的影响最大，但对学业自我和体育自我没有特别的影响。师生关系质量对学业自我和体育自我的影响最大。他人评价与关系质量之

间的交互作用具体有：与老师的关系越好，自己对外貌的评价便与老师的评价越相近；与朋友的关系越好，自己对行为的评价便与朋友的评价越接近。（2）对本研究中的中国农村青少年而言，在外貌和行为方面的自我概念与总体自我价值感之间的关系最紧密。（3）留守儿童与和父母生活在一起的儿童在自我概念的形成方面基本相似。不同之处在于：留守女孩与父母关系更差；留守儿童对自己外貌的评价与老师的评价联系更紧密，而与父母的评价联系更小。

本研究对于帮助我们更好的理解青少年自我概念的形成有一定的贡献。首先，它揭示了父母、老师和朋友在自我概念不同维度的形成过程中的相对重要性，并且揭示了他人评价与关系质量之间可能存在的交互作用。其次，它揭示了在中国农村青少年中多维度自我概念与总体价值感之间的关系。再次，它在一定程度上澄清了前人关于留守儿童自我概念发展的争论。此外，它展示了同时从不同理论视角，研究多种社会情境对儿童发展的影响的优势。最后，它为提升自我价值感的项目和留守儿童相关政策的制定提供了理论依据和建议。

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## Appendix A: Self-Perception Profile for Children

In my view, I ...	我觉得自己.....
Academic competence domain	
am good at school work	作业做得好
am as smart as other kids my age	与其他同龄人一样聪明
am slow in finishing my school work	作业完成得慢
often forget what I learn	经常忘记学过的东西
do well at my class work	课堂作业做得好
have trouble figuring out the answers in school	难以解决学习中的问题
Social competence domain	
found it easy to make friends	容易结交朋友
have a lot of friends	有很多朋友
wish I could have more friends	希望有更多的朋友
usually do things by myself	通常都是独自一人做事情
feel that most people my age do like me	很多同龄人喜欢我
am not popular with others my age	不受其他同龄人欢迎
Athletic competence domain	
am well at all kinds of sports	各项体育好
am good enough at sports	足够擅长体育活动
am afraid I might not do well at sports I haven't ever tried	害怕做不好新的运动
don't feel I can play as well as others at sports	不如其他人擅长运动
in games and sports, usually play rather than just watch	通常参与游戏和运动, 而不只是观看
don't do well at new outdoor games	在新的户外活动中表现不好
Physical appearance domain	
am happy with the way I look	对自己的长相满意
am happy with my height and weight	对自己的身高体重满意
wish my body was different	希望自己的身体和现在不一样



wish my physical appearance was different	希望自己的外貌和现在不一样
like my face	喜欢自己的面貌
am not very good looking	长得不太好看
Behavioral conduct domain	
like the way I behave	对自己的行为满意
usually do the right thing	经常做恰当的事
usually act the way I know I am supposed to	通常做自己应该做的事
usually get in trouble because the things I do	通常做些给自己惹麻烦的事
do things I know I shouldn't do	做些自己知道不该做的事
often found it hard to behave myself	经常很难循规蹈矩
Global self-worth	
like myself	喜欢自己
like the way I am leading my life	喜欢自己目前的生活
am often not happy with myself as a person	经常对自己不满意
wish I was someone else	希望自己是其他人
very happy being the way I am	喜欢自己的个性
am not very happy with the way I do a lot of things	对自己很多做事的方式不太满意

## Appendix B: Reflected appraisal scales

In my friends'/teachers'/parents' view, I ...	朋友 / 老师 / 父母认为我 .....
Academic competence domain	
am good at school work	功课做得好
have good academic performance	取得好的成绩
Social competence domain	
have a lot of friends	有很多朋友
very popular	很受欢迎
Athletic competence domain	
am well at sports	擅长运动
have good athletic ability	体育好
Physical appearance domain	
have good looking	长得好看
have good appearance	外表好
Behavioral conduct domain	
act the way I am supposed to	做应该做的事
have good behavioral conduct	行为表现好

### Appendix C: Relationship quality scales

#### a) Parent-child relationship quality questionnaire

1	My parents respect my feelings.	父母尊重我的感受。
2	I feel my parents do a good job as my parents.	我觉得我的父母是称职的。
3	My parents accept me as I am.	父母接纳我现在这个样子。
4	I like to get my parents' point of view on things I'm concerned about.	我喜欢就我所关心的事情，征求父母的意见。
5	I feel it's no use letting my feelings show around my parents.	我觉得在父母面前表露我的感受是没有用的。
6	My parents can tell when I'm upset about something.	当我心烦的时候，父母能看出来。
7	Talking over my problems with my parents makes me feel ashamed or foolish.	跟父母谈论我遇到的问题，让我觉得羞愧或愚蠢。
8	My parents expect too much from me.	父母对我期望太多。
9	I get upset easily around my parents.	当我和父母在一起的时候，我容易变得烦躁。
10	I get upset a lot more than my parents know about.	我比父母所知道的要心烦得多。
11	When we discuss things, my parents care about my point of view.	当我和父母讨论事情的时候，他们在意我的观点。
12	My parents trust my judgment.	父母相信我的判断。
13	I wish I had different parents.	我希望我的父母是另一个样子。
14	My parents have their own problems, so I don't bother them with mine.	父母有他们自己的难处，所以我不拿我的问题去烦他们。
15	My parents help me to understand myself better.	父母帮助我更好地了解我自己。
16	I tell my parents about my problems and troubles.	我告诉父母我的问题和麻烦。
17	I feel angry with my parents.	我对父母感到生气。
18	I do not get much attention from my parents.	我没有从父母那里得到很多关注。
19	I feel comfortable talking about my difficulties with my parents	我感到我可以自如地向父母讲出我的困难。
20	My parents understand me.	父母理解我。

21	When I am angry about something, my parents try to be understanding.	当我为某件事生气的时候，父母会尽力理解我。
22	I trust my parents.	我信任我的父母。
23	My parents do not understand what I'm going through these days.	父母不理解我这些日子以来所经历的事。
24	I can count on my parents when I need to get something off my chest.	当我觉得心里有事想说的时候，我可以依靠我的父母。
25	If my parents know something is bothering me, they ask me about it.	如果父母觉察到我有心事，他们会询问我。

b) Relationship quality with friends

1	When we discuss things, these friends care about my point of view.	当我和这几个朋友讨论事情的时候，他们在意我的观点。
2	These friends can tell when I'm upset about something.	当我心烦的时候，这几个朋友能看出来。
3	I like to get these friends' point of view on things I'm concerned about.	我喜欢就我所关心的事情，征求这几个朋友的意见。
4	Talking over my problems with these friends makes me feel ashamed or foolish.	跟这几个朋友谈论我遇到的问题，让我觉得羞愧或愚蠢。
5	I wish I had different friends.	我希望这几个朋友是另一个样子。
6	These friends understand me.	这几个朋友理解我。
7	These friends encourage me to talk about my difficulties.	这几个朋友鼓励我讲出我的困难。
8	These friends accept me as I am.	这几个朋友接纳我现在这个样子。
9	I feel the need to be in touch with these friends more often.	我觉得我需要跟这几个朋友更加经常地联系。
10	These friends don't understand what I'm going through these days.	这几个朋友不理解我这些日子以来所经历的事。
11	I feel alone or apart when I am with these friends.	当我和这几个朋友在一起的时候，我感到孤单或孤立。
12	These friends listen to what I have to	这几个朋友倾听我要说的话。

	say.	
13	I feel these friends are good friends.	我觉得这几个朋友是好朋友。
14	These friends are fairly easy to talk to.	我觉得和这几个朋友交谈挺容易。
15	When I am angry about something, these friends try to be understanding.	当我为某件事生气的时候，这几个朋友会尽力理解我。
16	These friends help me to understand myself better.	这几个朋友帮助我更好地了解我自己。
17	These friends care about how I am.	这几个朋友在意我过得怎么样。
18	I feel angry with these friends.	我对这几个朋友感到生气。
19	I can count on these friends when I need to get something off my chest.	当我觉得心里有事想说的时候，我可以依靠这几个朋友。
20	I trust these friends.	我信任这几个朋友。
21	These friends respect my feelings.	这几个朋友尊重我的感受。
22	I get upset a lot more than these friends know about.	我比这几个朋友所知道的要心烦得多。
23	It seems as if these friends are irritated with me for no reason.	好像这几个朋友无缘无故地对我感到恼火。
24	I can tell these friends about my problems and troubles.	我可以告诉这几个朋友我的问题和麻烦。
25	If my friends know something is bothering me, they ask me about it.	如果这几个朋友觉察到我有心事，他们会询问我。

c) Teacher-child relationship quality questionnaire

1	My teachers respect my feelings.	老师尊重我的感受。
2	I feel my teachers do a good job as my teachers.	我觉得我的老师是称职的。
3	My teachers accept me as I am.	老师接纳我现在这个样子。
4	I like to get my teachers' point of view on things I'm concerned about.	我喜欢就我所关心的事情，征求老师的意见。
5	I feel it's no use letting my feelings show around my teachers.	我觉得在老师面前表露我的感受是没有用的。
6	My teachers can tell when I'm upset about	当我心烦的时候，老师能看出

	something.	来。
7	Talking over my problems with my teachers makes me feel ashamed or foolish.	跟老师谈论我遇到的问题，让我觉得羞愧或愚蠢。
8	My teachers expect too much from me.	老师对我期望太多。
9	I get upset easily around my teachers.	当我和老师在一起的时候，我容易变得紧张不安。
10	I get upset a lot more than my teachers know about.	我比老师所知道的要心烦得多。
11	When we discuss things, my teachers care about my point of view.	当我和老师讨论事情的时候，他们在意我的观点。
12	My teachers trust my judgment.	老师相信我的判断。
13	I wish I had different teachers.	我希望我的老师是另一个样子。
14	My teachers have their own problems, so I don't bother them with mine.	老师有他们自己的难处，所以我不拿我的问题去烦他们。
15	My teachers help me to understand myself better.	老师帮助我更好地了解我自己。
16	I tell my teachers about my problems and troubles.	我告诉老师我的问题和麻烦。
17	I feel angry with my teachers.	我对老师感到生气。
18	I do not get much attention from my teachers.	我没有从老师那里得到很多关注。
19	I feel comfortable talking about my difficulties with my teachers	我感到我可以自如地向老师讲出我的困难。
20	My teachers understand me.	老师理解我。
21	When I am angry about something, my teachers try to be understanding.	当我为某件事生气的时候，老师会尽力理解我。
22	I trust my teachers.	我信任我的老师。
23	My teachers do not understand what I'm going through these days.	老师不理解我这些日子以来的行为。
24	I can count on my teachers when I need to get something off my chest.	当我觉得心里有事想说的时候，我可以依靠我的老师。
25	If my teachers know something is bothering me, they ask me about it.	如果老师觉察到我有心事，他们会询问我。