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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

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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 et al. 2000; Juvonen and Wentzel 1996; Ladd 1989; Schwartz et al. 2005; Shim et al. 2013a, b; 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; Elliott 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 et al. 1997, 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 et al. 2013a; 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 et al. 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 et al. 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 et al. 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 et al. 2006; DeRosier et al. 1994; Véronneau et al. 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 et al. 1983; Brown et al. 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 size and different classroom organization (Simmons and Blyth 1987; Simmons et al. 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 et al. 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 et al. 1989). The school day is often structured so that students change classrooms for each course and are exposed 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 et al. 2011a) and renegotiate peer group memberships (Eccles 2004). Thus, youth are simultaneously dealing with 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 et al. 1987; Havighurst 1953; for a similar review of these terms, see Nurmi and Salmela-Aro 2002; Massey et al. 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; 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. 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, 2016; Kiefer and Ryan 2008; Li and Wright 2014; Wright et al. 2012). There are two types

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

Table 1 continued

	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

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

of social status goals frequently studied in adolescent research: the goal for popularity; and 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 et al. 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 et al. 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 et al. 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 et al. 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, research on 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 better than 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 et al. 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 association 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 higher 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 et al. 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 et al. 2005; Salmivalli and Peets 2009; Sijtsema et al. 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 et al. 2012; Watkins et al. 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 (2012) 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 2012; p. 378). Another study examined how agentic goals may relate to adolescents' intentions to engage in risk behaviors, namely alcohol and cigarette usage (Trucco et al. 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 et al. 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, 2003) 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 2012; Ojanen et al. 2005, 2007; 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 et al. 2008; Hogg 1996, 2005). 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 tend to engage in behaviors associated with maintaining positive friendships and may be 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). Pursuit of *prosocial and social responsibility goals* is also related to more adaptive learning outcomes (Wentzel 1996, 2000). *Prosocial goals* have 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 et al. 2013; Watkins et al. 2003), greater self-reliance in the classroom, and positive self-concepts pertaining to academics (King et al. 2012; 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; Elliott 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 et al. 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 et al. 2007).[1,2]

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[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 et al. 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 and 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

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 et al. 2013a) 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 et al. 2013a; 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.

Footnote 2 continued

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 and Sakurai 2011).

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., worried, 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 et al. 2013a, b; 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 et al. 2013a; 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

over time (according to teacher-report; 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 and Finch 2014; Wang et al. 2012) and emotional engagement (e.g., extent to which students are interested in and enjoy learning; Shim et al. 2013a; 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 et al. 2013a; 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 et al. 2013a; 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 et al. 2013a; 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 et al. 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 et al. 2011b; Hamm et al. 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 et al. 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 et al. 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 not the intent of this review to suggest that these are the only social goals early adolescents endorse (see Nurmi 1991; 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 et al. (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 successfully 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.

Compliance with ethical standards

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