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A New Social Cognitive Measure of Self and Other Understanding called the Reflective Function Questionnaire for Youth (RFQY)

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BACKGROUND

- Key aspect of treatment response across all therapies is the patient's ability to build and maintain a relationship with a therapist (Shirk & Karver, 2003).
- Patient's social-cognitive capacity
- Secure attachment linked to development of social-cognitive capacities (Sharp & Fonagy, 2008)
- Reflective Function (Fonagy et al., 1991)
- Poverty of social-cognitive measures for this age range.
- The Child Reflective Function Scale (CRFS; Target et al., 2001)
- Disadvantages to existing measures
- GOAL:** Validate a self-report measure of reflective function for use in adolescents (RFQY).
 - Criterion validity by examining the relationship between the RFQY and the gold standard measure of reflective function, the CRFS
 - Convergent validity with existing social-cognitive measures: the Movie for Assessment of Social Cognition (MASC, Dziobek et al., 2006), and the Children's Eyes Task (CET, Baron-Cohen, Wheelwright, Scahill, Lawson, & Spong, 2001). Empathy will also be investigated in relation to the RFQY using the Basic Empathy Scale (BES; Jolliffe & Farrington, 2006).
- HYPOTHESIS:** The RFQY will significantly relate to existing measures of social cognition. In addition, scores on the RFQY will be predicted by existing social-cognitive measures (CRFS, CET, MASC) and empathy (BES).

METHODS

Participants

- Inpatient adolescents ages 12-17
- Consecutive admissions
- N = 100

Measures

MENTALIZATION

- Reflective function coded off the Child Attachment Interview (Target et al., 1998): **Child Reflective Function Scale** (Target, Oandasan, & Ensink, 2001) *CRFS Global*



Reflective Function Questionnaire for Youth (RFQY)

Instructions: On the following pages, please read each statement and select the one response that you feel describes you most clearly. Do not think too much about it – your first responses are usually the best.

SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, DS = Disagree Somewhat, AS = Agree Somewhat, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree

RFQY	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
1. People's thoughts are a secret to me.	1	2	3	3	2	1
2. I worry a lot about what people are thinking and feeling.	1	2	3	3	2	1
3. My picture of my parents change as I change.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. I realize that I can sometimes misunderstand my best friends' reactions.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. I believe that my parents' behavior towards me should not be explained by how they were raised.	1	2	3	3	2	1
6. Other people tell me I'm a good listener.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. I often have to force people to do what I want them to do.	6	5	4	3	2	1
8. I always know what I feel.	1	2	3	3	2	1

A Movie for the Assessment of Social Cognition (MASC; Dziobek, Fleck, Kalbe, Rogers, Hassenstab, et al., 2006)



What is Sandra feeling?

- Her hair does not look that nice
- She is pleased about his compliment
- She is exasperated about Michael coming on too strong
- She is flattered but somewhat taken by surprise

Child Eyes Test (CET; Baron-Cohen et al., 2001)



EMPATHY

Basic Empathy Scale (BES; Jolliffe & Farrington, 2006)

RESULTS

Criterion and Convergent Validity

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. RFQYTOT	--							
2. BESTOT	.267*	--						
3. CRFS GLOBAL	.285*	.090						
4. CET	.018	-.076	.041	--				
5. MASCTOT	.201*	-.127	.339*	.086	--			
6. MASC HYPMZ	-.254*	.095	-.219	-.099	-.809**	--		
7. MASCUNMZ	.092	.102	-.231*	-.010	-.491**	.021	--	
8. MASCNOMZ	-.115	.011	-.187	-.055	-.362**	-.007	.044	--

* p < .05, ** p < .001

CONCLUSION

Together, these findings support the criterion and convergent validity of the RFQY as a self-report measure of social cognition in adolescents. It is important to adequately assess social cognition in adolescents as this is an integral part of establishing therapeutic alliance. Teens with impaired social cognition may benefit from early interventions targeting these areas.

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