

Self-esteem Changes in the Transition to Adulthood for Adolescents with Visual Disabilities

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Introduction

Self-esteem is an important factor during adolescent development, a period characterized by thinking about identity and relationships. Low self-esteem can lead to (externalizing) problem behavior and (mental) health problems as depression and delinquency (e.g. Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003). High self-esteem derives from positive outcomes in domains deemed important such as academic success, social inclusion, and likeability. On average, persons with disabilities have a smaller chance to experience those positive outcomes. This study examines the development of self-esteem, the suspected role of gender and type of education over time of adolescents with visual disabilities. Also, changes in loneliness and acceptance of the disability are studied.

Method

In this longitudinal study participants with visual disabilities were interviewed at three different points in time.

Table 1
Characteristics participants

		1996 (T1)	2004 (T2)	2010 (T3)
N		316	205	179
Gender	Male	53%	57%	55%
	Female	47%	43%	45%
Age	Min	14	17	23
	Max	23	32	38
	Mean	18	26	32
Type of education	Ever special	59%	55%	55%
	Always mainstream	41%	45%	45%

Measurements

- ◆ Self-esteem - Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (Van der Linden, 1983)
- ◆ Loneliness - De Jong-Gierveld Scale (De Jong-Gierveld & Kamphuis, 1985)
- ◆ Acceptance of disability - Nottingham Adjustment Scale (Dodds, et. al. 1991)

Results

- **Self-esteem** increased during the transition to adulthood.
- **Acceptance of disability** also increased over time.
- **Loneliness** remained stable during the transition to adulthood.

Table 2
Self-esteem, acceptance of disability, and loneliness of participants with visual disabilities (N=179)

	T1 (1996)	T2 (2004)	T3 (2010)	
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	p
Self-esteem	3.31 (53)	3.41 (.49)	3.43 (.52)	.009
Acceptance	40.82 (6.49)	42.79 (5.56)	42.61 (6.16)	<.001
Loneliness	2.67 (2.63)	2.28 (2.77)	2.61 (1.95)	.098

- There was no gender difference found in acceptance of disability.
- Neither gender nor type of education differences were found in self-esteem and loneliness.
- Acceptance of disability increased more strongly in participants who always attended **mainstream education** compared to participants who ever attended special education.



Discussion

Self-esteem and acceptance of disability show positive patterns in the transition from adolescence to young adulthood for persons with visual disabilities, whereby male and female do not differ from each other. It is interesting that the results show that persons with visual disabilities might benefit from attending mainstream education. Within this ongoing longitudinal research current and new participants will be interviewed in 2016.

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