



Emerging-adults' adjustment to university: Role of attachment and family functioning

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► To cite this version:

Basilie Chevrier, Philippe Compagnone, Lyda Lannegrand. Emerging-adults' adjustment to university: Role of attachment and family functioning. 18th European Conference on Developmental Psychology, Aug 2017, Utrecht, Netherlands. hal-03827459

HAL Id: hal-03827459

<https://hal.science/hal-03827459>

Submitted on 24 Oct 2022

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Entering university is a time of transition: contextual transition (high-school to university), developmental transition (issue of being adult) and modification in the family relations. To succeed at university, psychosocial adjustment is required. Indeed, these transitions create deconstruction of the living conditions (Boyer, Coridian & Erlich, 2001). This is a time when young people become more independent and self-sufficient (Tanner, 2006), they are no longer adolescent but not yet adult, they are emerging-adults (Arnett, 2004). Consequently, relations between them and their family change, which can be analyzed from the attachment theory.

The **aims of the study** were to identify emerging-adults' **attachment profiles** and **family functioning profiles** in their first year at university and determine if these profiles brought to **specific psychosocial adjustment**.

Population

First-year students of the University of Bordeaux ($N = 218$; 89.4% of women; $M_{age} = 18.7$; $SD_{age} = 1.2$).

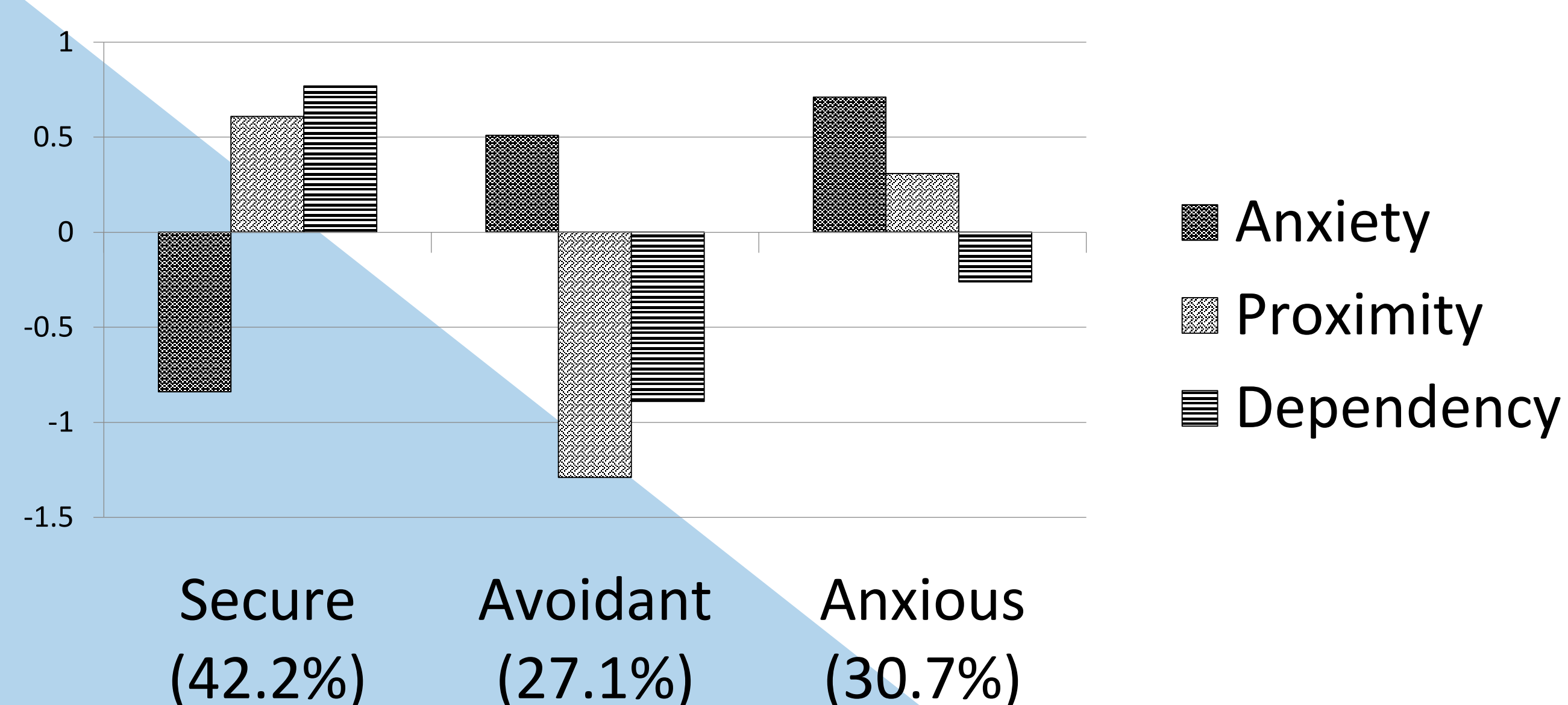
Measures

Attachment: Adult Attachment Scale (AAS; Collins & Read, 1990; Brisset, 2009, for French version).

Family functioning: Family Assessment Device (FAD; Epstein et al., 1978; Sperenza et al., 2012, for French version).

Psychosocial adjustment: self-esteem (Self-Perception Profile for College Student, SPPCS; Neeman & Harter, 2012; French translation made for the study) and depression (Beck Depression Inventory, BDI; Beck & Beamesderfer, 1974; Reynolds & Gould, 1981, for French version).

Results

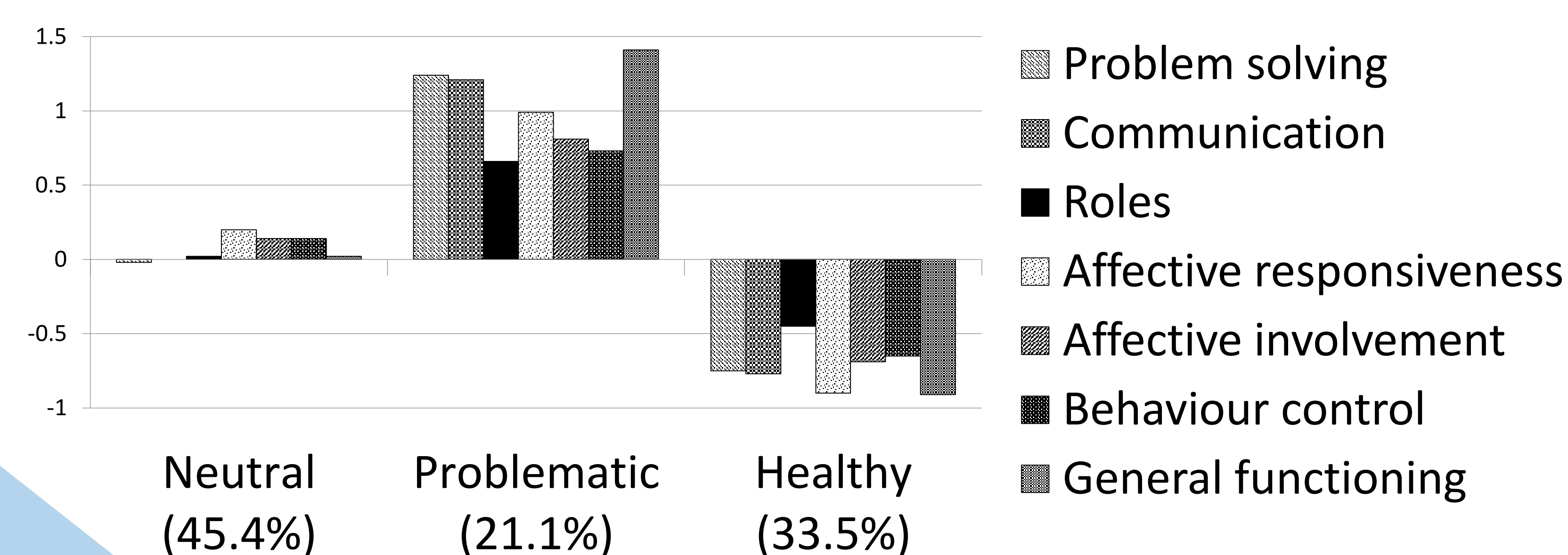


Attachment profiles

Three-cluster solution in line with the literature: **secure**, **avoidant** and **anxious** (Wilks' lambda = .14; $\chi^2(6) = 410.27$; $p < .0001$; 97.7% of cross-validated grouped cases correctly classified).

Family functioning profiles

Three-cluster solution: **neutral** (neither problematic nor healthy), **problematic** and **healthy** (Wilks' lambda = .16; $\chi^2(14) = 383.60$; $p < .0001$; 97.7% of cross-validated grouped cases correctly classified).



Psychosocial adjustment

MANOVA analysis indicated that psychosocial adjustment was associated with attachment profiles ($F(32,346) = 3.63$; $p < .0001$; Wilks' lambda = .56; $\eta^2 = .25$) and family functioning profiles ($F(32,346) = 2.85$; $p < .0001$; Wilks' lambda = .62; $\eta^2 = .20$). None effect of the interaction between attachment profiles and family functioning profiles ($F(64,679.54) = 1.17$; $p = .09$; Wilks' lambda = .66; $\eta^2 = .09$).

Tukey post-hoc tests showed that:

Secure attachment profile = ↑ self-esteem and ↓ depression.

Avoidant attachment profile = ↓ self-esteem and ↑ depression.

Healthy family functioning profile = ↑ self-esteem and ↓ depression.

Problematic family functioning profile = ↓ self-esteem and ↑ depression.

Conclusion

The results showed that attachment and family functioning play a part in emerging adults' psychosocial adjustment (self-esteem and depression). Future research may take into account and specify family relationships and their influences on emerging adults' adjustment to university and more broadly to transition towards adulthood.