



Adolescent self-concept & Academic decision making

June 29, 2018

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Definitions

Self-Concept

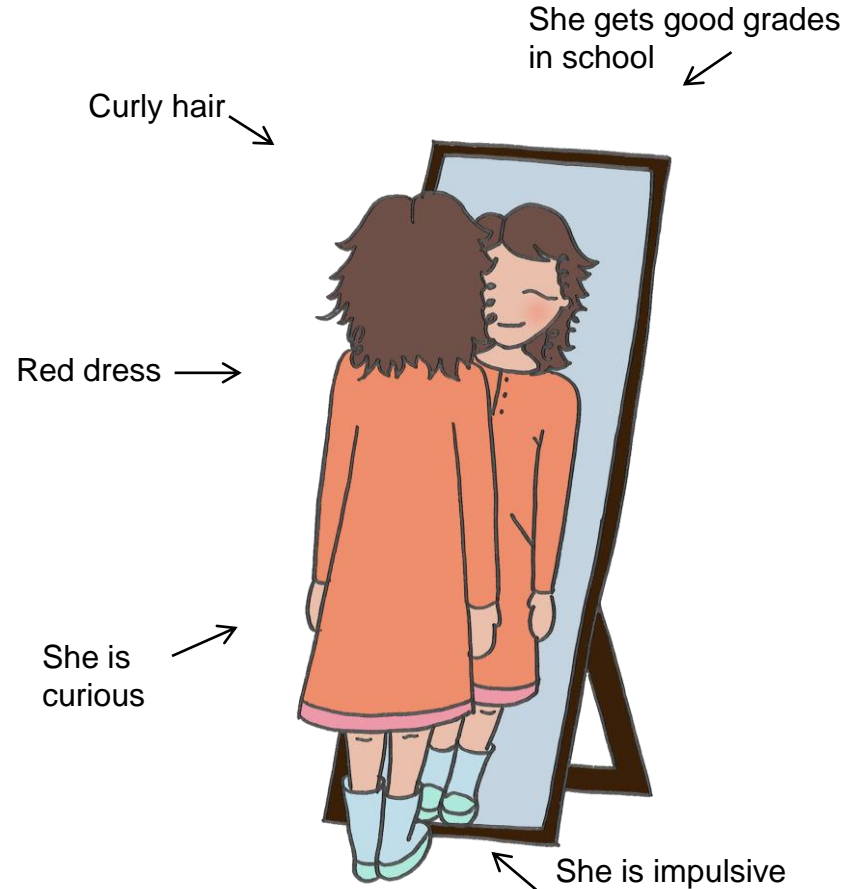
How you think about yourself
Social construct

Self-descriptions

Evaluative in nature
Differ in importance given to them
Can be categorized in domains

Self-esteem

Overall evaluation of your worth as a person





Important?



Defining Adolescence

5

10

15

20

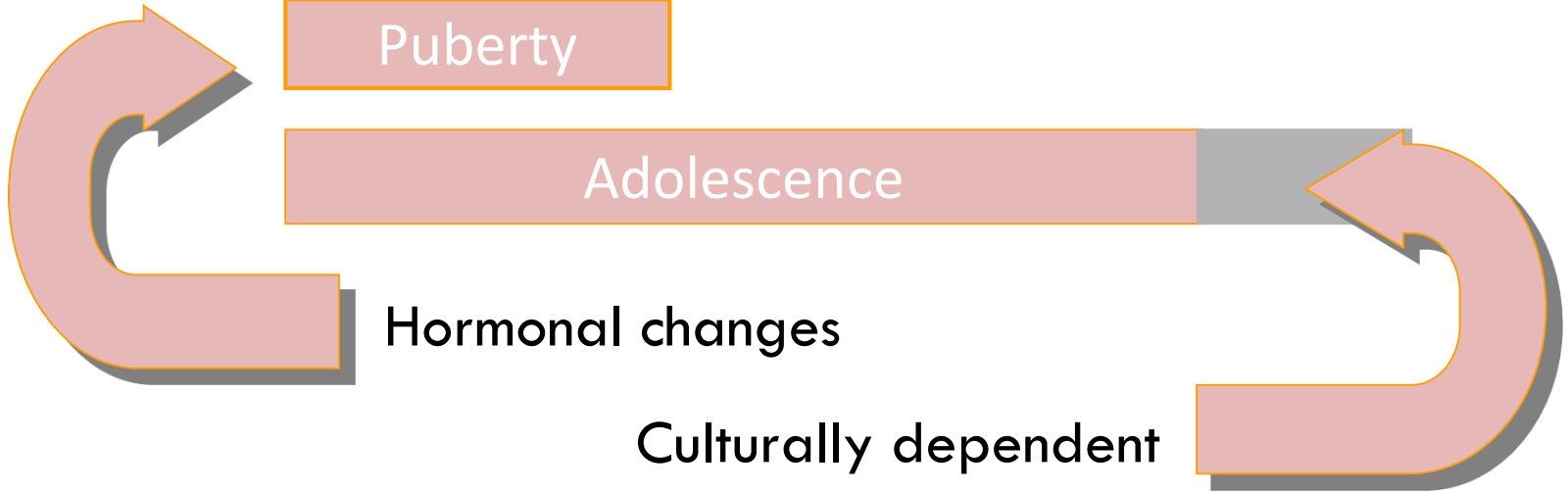
25

Puberty

Adolescence

Hormonal changes

Culturally dependent



Self in Adolescence

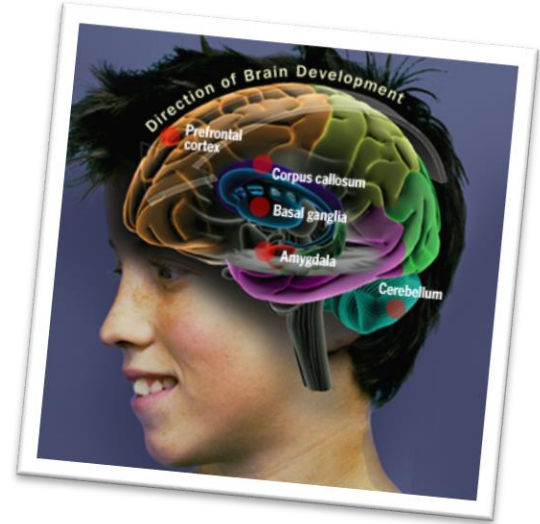
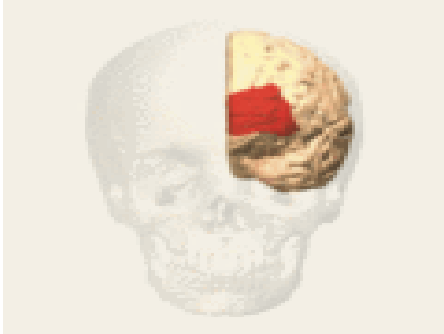
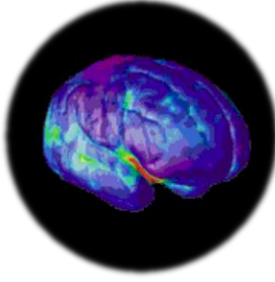
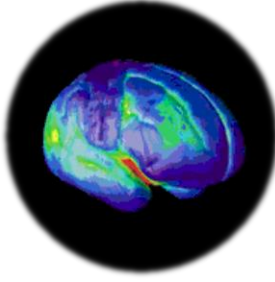
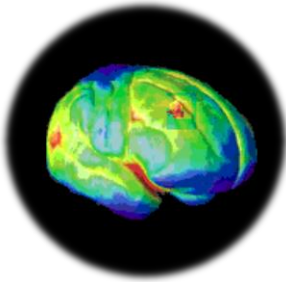


Brain development

Child

Adolescent

Adults





How to study self-concept?

Self-concept Study



Timepoints

3 timepoints
2 waves completed.
Presenting data wave 1



Participants

160 at T1



Age

11-21 at T1
 ± 15 per age



Gender

86 female
74 male



Pubertal Status

5-20
 $M_{\text{females}} = 15.3$
 $M_{\text{males}} = 14.3$



Estimated IQ

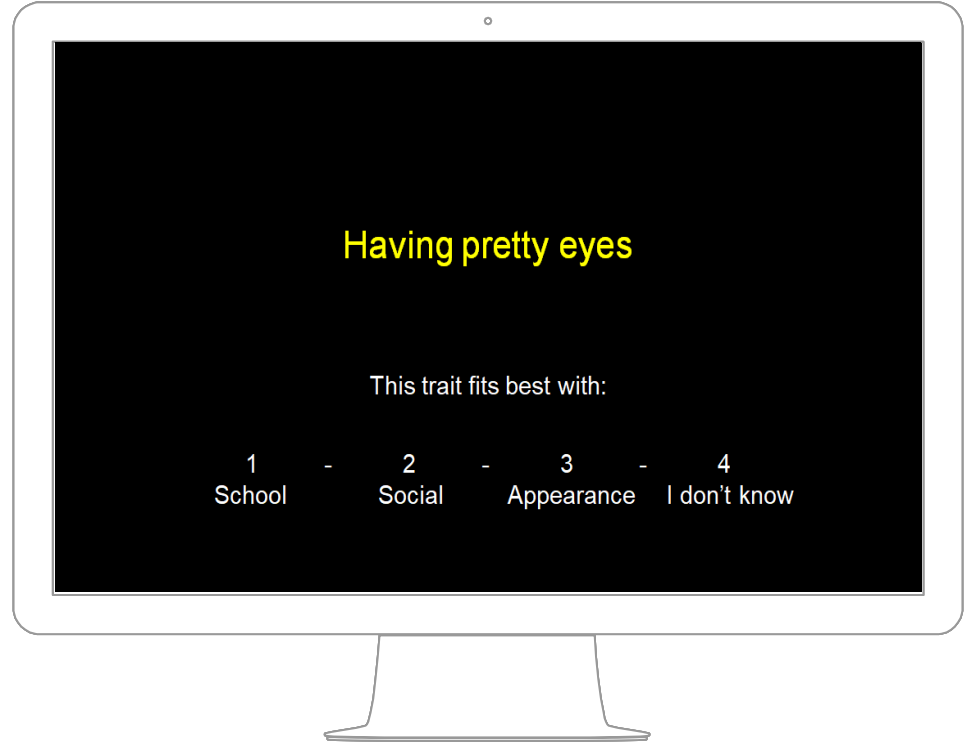
80-137.5
 $M = 109.9$

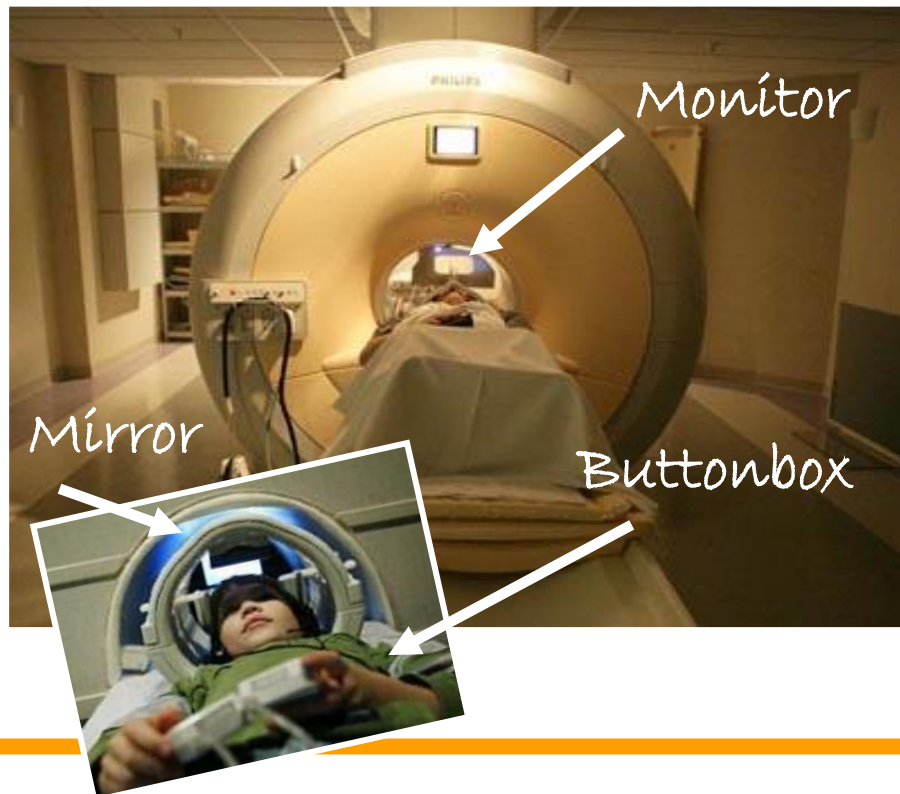
Self-concept Study



Task

- 60 trials
- 3 domains
(physical, academic, prosocial)
- Positive / Negative



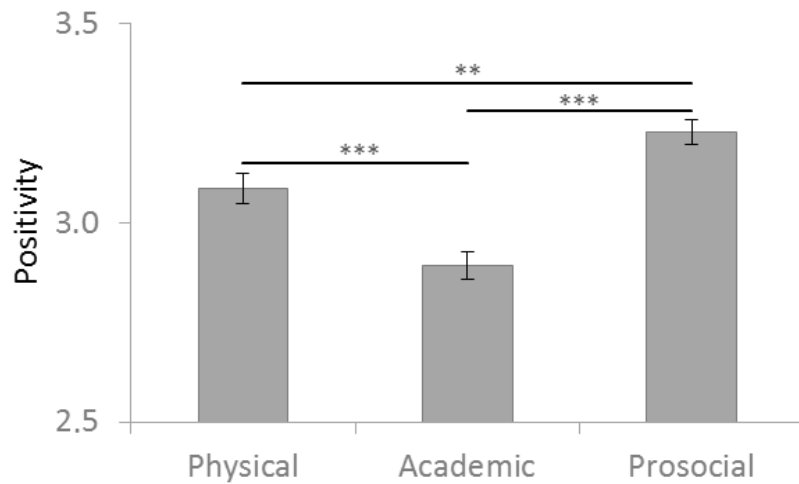




Results

Domains and Development

Behaviour



Most positive about:

○ Prosocial traits

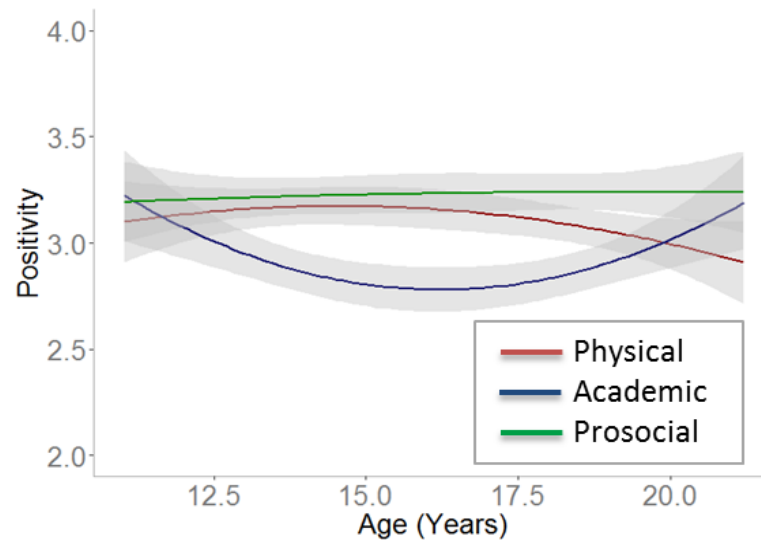
Least positive about:

○ Academic traits

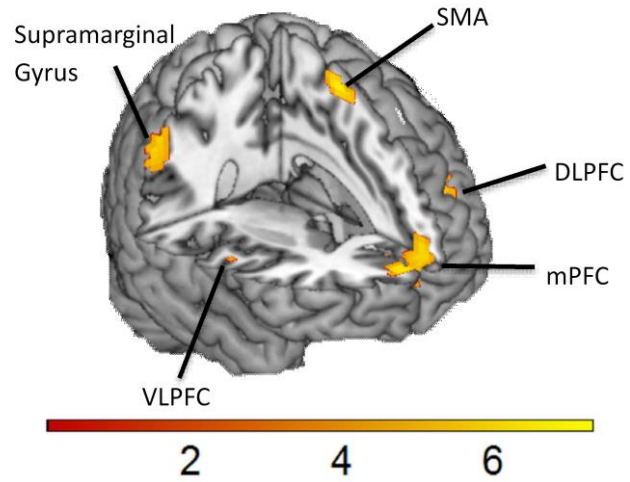
Behaviour

Development

- Only for academic traits
- Less positive in mid-adolescence



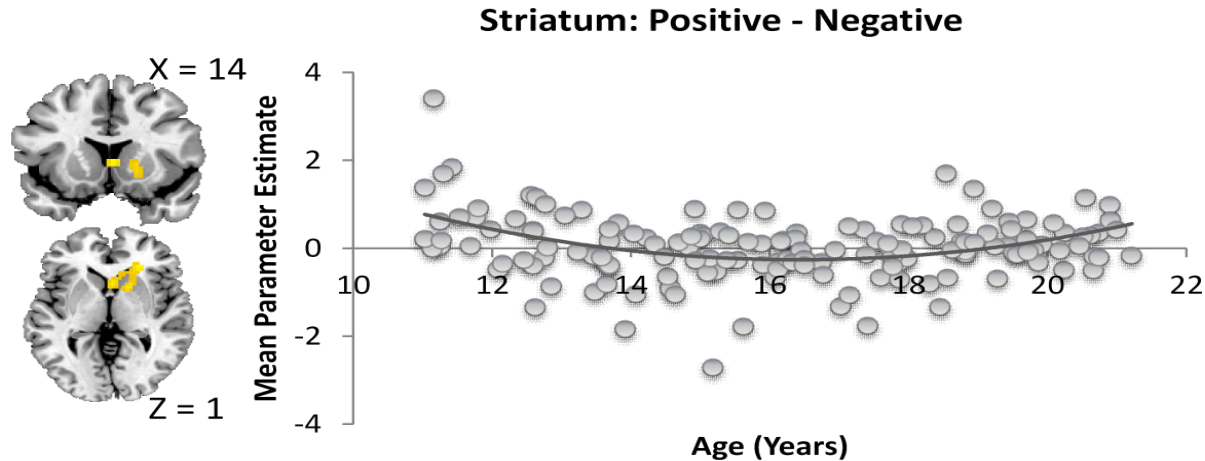
Neural



Domain-general

○ mPFC

Neural



Striatum

- Self-relevance/relatedness, intrinsic/reward value, salience
 - Dip in self-evaluation?



SUMMARY

- Self-concept becomes *more differentiated* upon domain
- Possible *dip* in positive self-evaluation in mid adolescence
- *mPFC* plays an important role in self-concept development in adolescence
- Longitudinal research is needed to better understand these relations



Self-concept related to study choice

What characterizes adolescents who have difficulties
with making academic choices?

**Geen enkele scholier wil de
verkeerde studie kiezen**

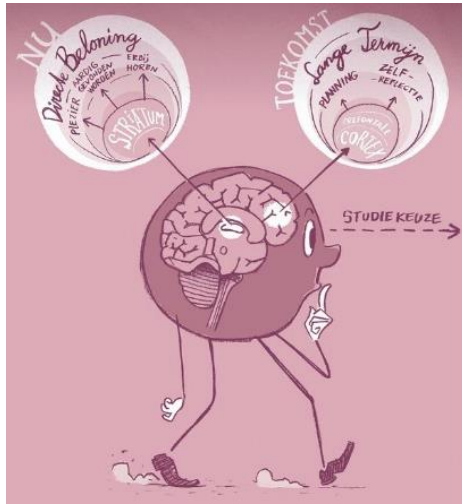


30 to 35 %

Drops out in their first year of college

Why do so many students drop out of college?

- Wrong match between person and study
→ Wrong choice



The adolescent brain...

....Choices

**HEEFT U VAAK
LAST VAN
KEUZESTRESS**

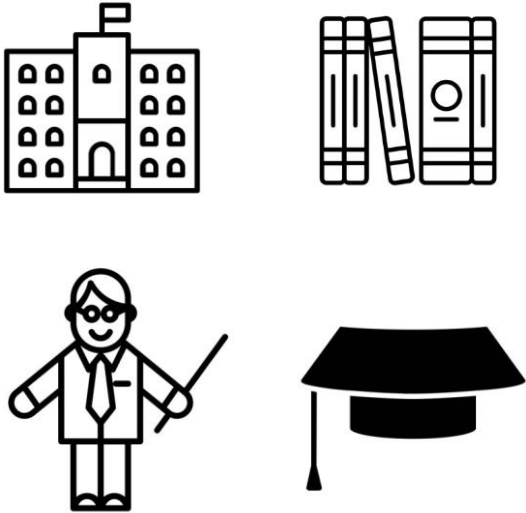
- ☐ JA
☐ NEE
☐ NU WEL

Loesje

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External orientation



Internal orientation





Behavioral and neural correlates of:



Self-esteem

Self-knowledge



*What characterizes adolescents
who have problems with making
academic choices?*

BREEKJAAR.
OM TE
WORDEN
WIE JE
BENT.

- ❑ 10 month structured gap-year program
- ❑ Focuses on increasing self-knowledge and self-esteem
- ❑ Participants will be able to make a better suited academic choices for the future

❑ 2 to 3 days of training and workshops per week

❑ Personal coach

❑ Multiple categories of learning:

❑ Learn about own traits and competences

❑ Awareness and change of own behaviour

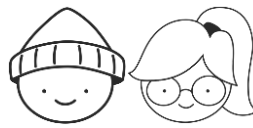
❑ Improving social skills

❑ Decision making

❑ Vitality

❑ Society





- ☐ Adolescents between 16 and 24 years
- ☐ Gap year between high school and higher education, or drop outs
- ☐ Experience difficulties in choosing study / career path

- ☐ A lot of diversity
 - ☐ Level of educational tracks
 - ☐ Background variables

- ☐ Groups in Amsterdam, Utrecht and Eindhoven
- ☐ Around 30 adolescents per group





BREEKJAAR

N = 38

Gender:
14 Male 24 Female

Age:
16 – 24 years; $M = 18,7$

IQ:
85 – 127.5; $M = 104,5$

Educational background:

☐
☐

High school: 22

Tried higher education: 16

CONTROL

N = 46

Gender:
22 Male 24 Female

Age:
17 – 21 years; $M = 19,4$

IQ:
85 – 132,5; $M = 109,1$

Educational background:

☐

All in higher education



SELF-DESCRIPTIONS IN MRI

To what extent individuals describe certain traits in a diverse set of domains to be applicable to them



SELF-CONCEPT CLARITY

The extent to which individuals describe their self-concept as clear, stable, and internally consistent



IMPORTANCE

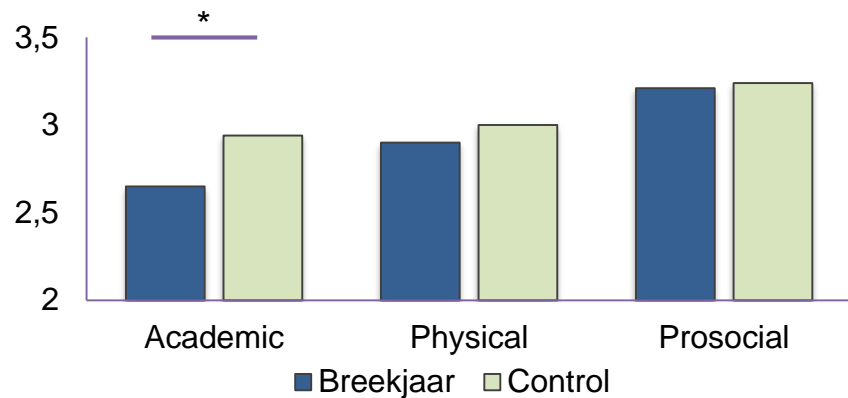
The value one could place upon possessing certain traits



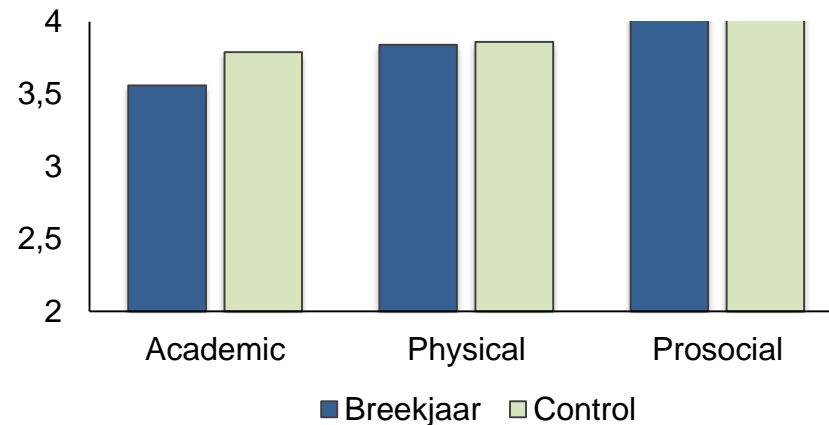
SELF-ESTEEM

General overall evaluation of the self

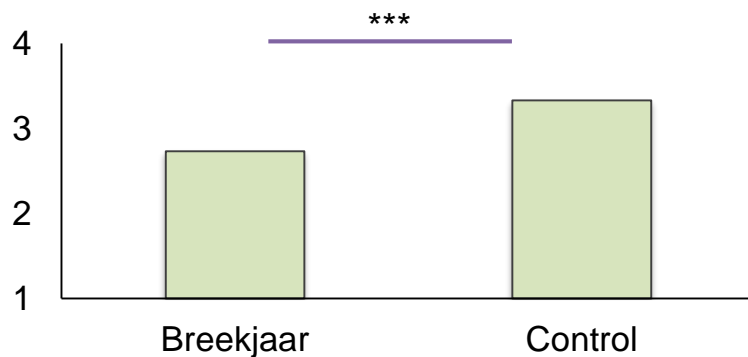
Self-descriptions



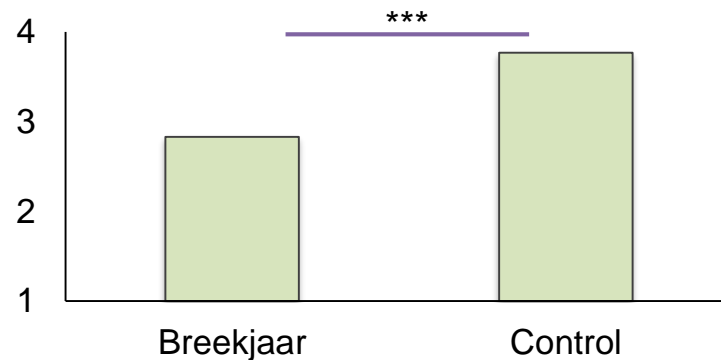
Importance

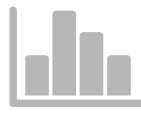


Self-concept clarity

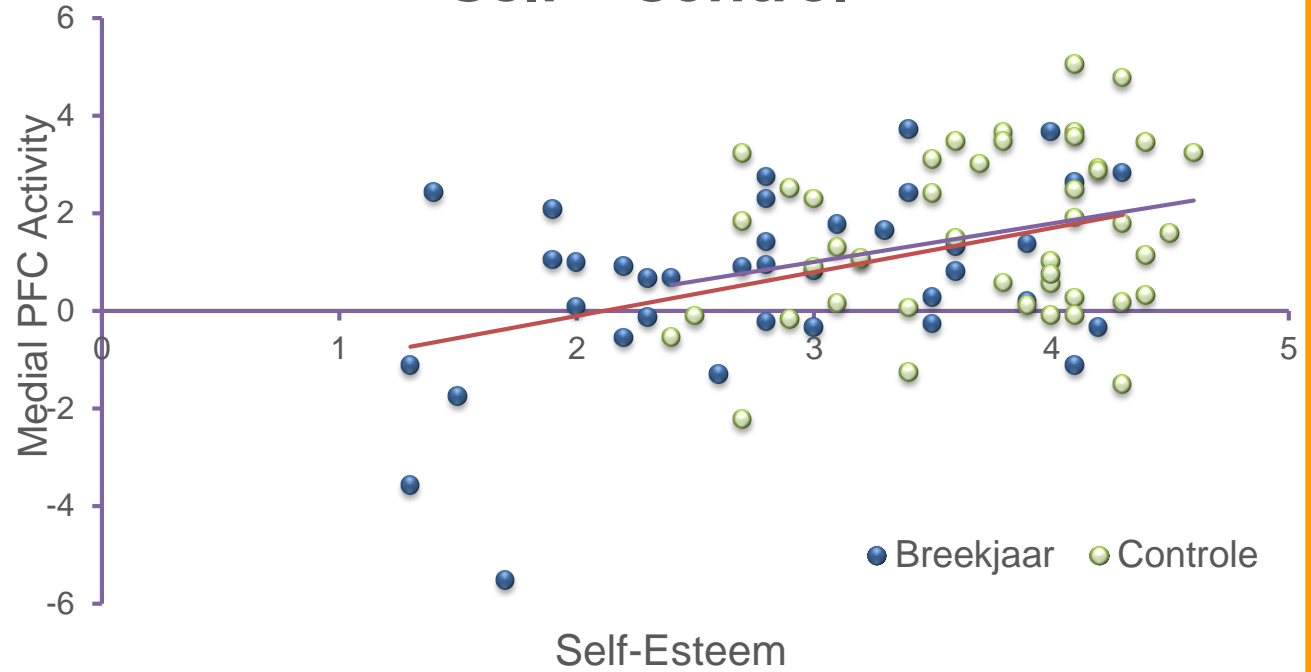
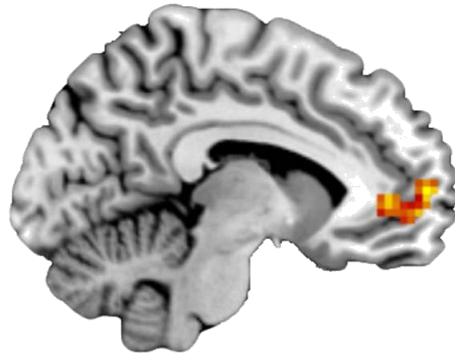


Self-esteem





Self > Control





CONCLUSION

Positive *academic self-evaluations*

&

Healthy levels of *self-esteem*

could be important conditions for the ability to make
future-oriented academic choices.



DISCUSSION

- Focus on self-concept in schools
 - How to *improve* this?



Thank you!



Thanks to:

Brain and Development Research Center
Stichting Breekjaar

Financial support:
Netherlands – NWO