



Gender and personality affect the development of wise-reasoning: A mixed methods brief longitudinal study in middle adolescence



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Introduction

- Wisdom entails exceptional *cognition*, facility with *emotional* issues in life, and *prosocial* motivations (e.g., Staudinger & Gluck, 2011).
- Cross-sectional, quantitative research suggests that being female and higher on trait O is associated with adolescent wisdom (Pasupathi et al., 2001).
- Qualitative research shows that the social domain is a context of wisdom development (Konig & Gluck, 2012), which suggests that empathy also may relate to incipient wisdom in adolescence.
- Longitudinal research is lacking and can illuminate the extent to which individual differences matter for incipient wisdom.
- Our longitudinal study includes quantitative and qualitative methods to ask:
 - 1) What changes occur in wisdom-related thinking over a 9-month period?
 - 2) Which individual differences contribute to gains?
 - 3) Do individual differences relate to how adolescents narrate times of behaving wisely?

Hypotheses

- 1) We expected a higher composite SWRS score at wave 3 (W3) based on previous cross-sectional research (Pasupathi et al., 2001).
- 2) We expected gains in wisdom to be higher for adolescents with higher scores at wave 1 (W1) on trait openness to experience and empathy, and for gains to be stronger for females than males.

Participants and Procedures

- 15- and 16-year-olds ($M=15.8$ years, 53.7% female) were recruited through local advertising and word-of-mouth. Parental consent and teen assent were obtained.
- Participation took place through online Qualtrics Surveys over a 9-month period in 2021. Participation was ~30-40 minutes and participants were compensated \$20 in e-gift cards. Data from the first (W1, March, $N=52$) and last (W3, December, $N=41$) waves are relevant to this poster.

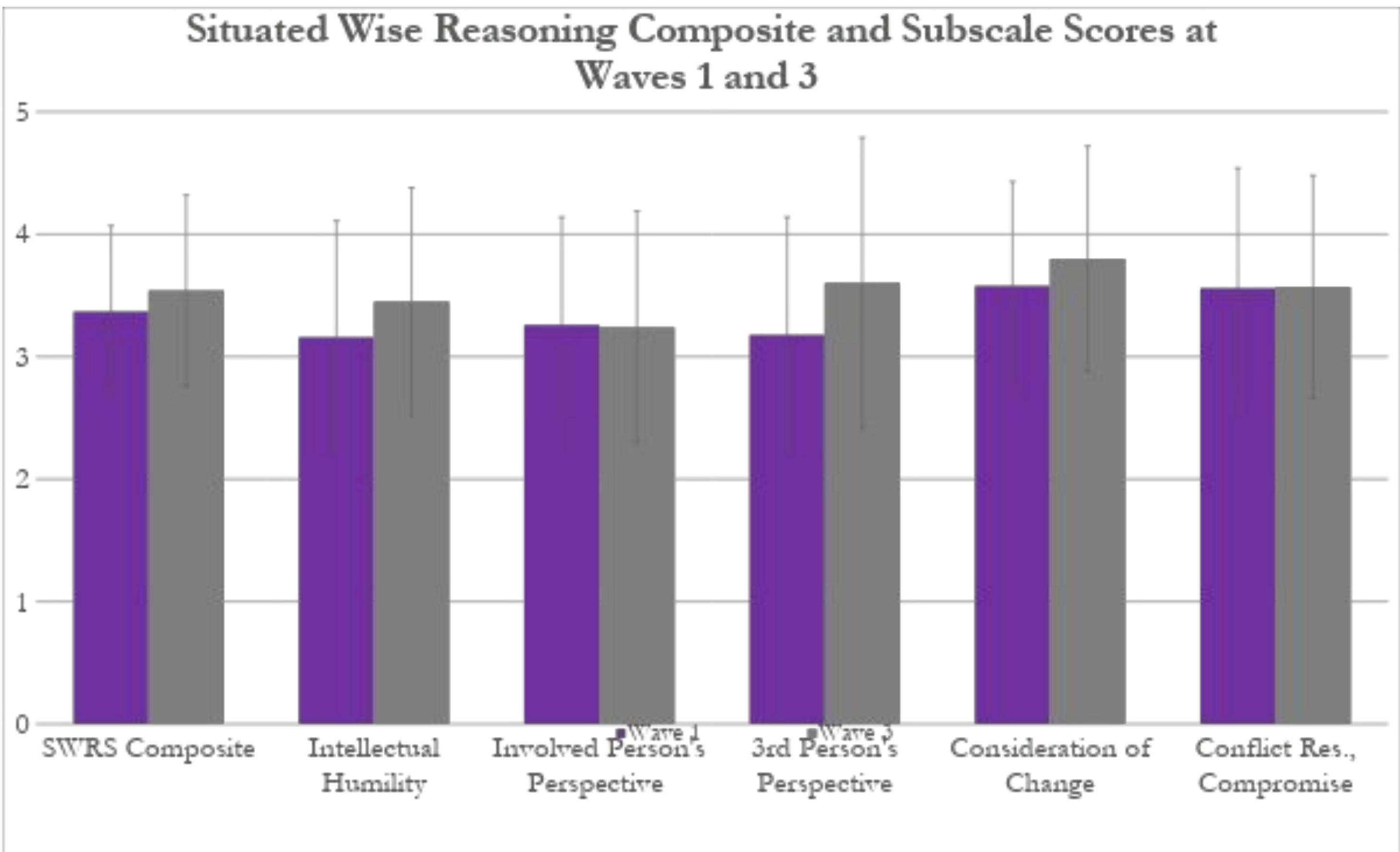
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Measures & Coding

- (W1) Big 5 Inventory Trait Openness $\alpha = .66$
- (W1 & W3) Situated Wise Reasoning Scale (SWRS): a retrospective assessment of the extent to which one engaged in wise reasoning during a conflict with a friend with 5 subscales (rated from 1=*not at all* to 5=*a lot*) α 's = .90-.92
 - 1) Intellectual Humility, 2) Involved Person's Perspective, 3) 3rd Person's Perspective, 4) Consideration Change, and 5) Compromise / Conflict Resolution.
- (W1 & W3) Davis Interpersonal Reactivity–Empathy, α 's = .79-.86
- (W3) Wisdom narrative prompt from Gluck et al. (2005). Narratives were reliably coded for growth (Lilgendahl & McAdams, 2009) and meaning-making (McLean & Pratt, 2007) using typical methods (Syed & Nelson, 2015, *I.C.C.*'s ranged from .72 to .92).

Results

- In partial support of H1, paired samples t-tests revealed trend-level significant increases from W1 to W3 in SWRS Composite score $t(40)=1.67$, $p=.054$, $d = .20$, Consideration of Change $t(40)=1.57$, $p=.063$, $d = .24$, and significant increases in Intellectual Humility $t(40)=1.82$, $p=.04$, $d = .31$ and Taking a 3rd Person's Perspective $t(40)=2.17$, $p=.02$, $d = .32$.



- In support of H2, females drove the above effect. Paired samples t-tests disaggregated by gender revealed no significant increases from W1 to W3 for males. By contrast, females increased on SWRS Composite score $t(21)=1.66$, $p=.054$, $d = .39$, Intellectual Humility $t(21)=2.11$, $p=.02$, $d = .57$ and Taking a 3rd Person's Perspective $t(21)=2.17$, $p=.01$, $d = .62$. When disaggregated, Consideration of Change was not significantly different by gender.

Correlations between Wise Reasoning at Wave 3 and Empathy and Trait Openness at Wave 1, by Gender

	Composite SWR W3		Intellectual Humility W3		3rd Party Perspective W3	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Empathy W1	0.55*	0.13	0.39	-0.15	0.56*	0.4
Openness W1	0.28	0.37	0.3	0.51*	0.29	0.13

Results

- Females ($M=.73$, $SD=.77$) told wisdom narratives that included more meaning-making than males ($M=.33$, $SD=.59$) $t(38)=1.78$, $p=.08$, $d = .57$, and more growth ($M=1.91$, $SD=.92$) than males ($M=1.28$, $SD=.46$) $t(38)=2.65$, $p=.01$, $d = .84$.

Example Wisdom Narrative from a Teen Who Scored 1 SD above Sample Mean Empathy at Wave 1

“There are some people at my school who like to dress in there (sic) own sort of style which isn't considered "good" to beauty standards. People also at my school are not very accepting and very much believe what men used to think like in the olden times such as men are superior over women and it isn't okay to be anything but a straight white men (sic). In my art class there is a man who is transgender (I don't know if that is the right way to say it but he was born a female and is transitioning into a male). In that class we were supposed to do a project on world problems and this male decided to do his on abortion. His project was pro-choice and I had told him that I liked his project because it was very detailed and showed a big cause. One of my male white friends laughed about it while he was presenting his project and my friend and his other male friends were laughing about it as well. I told my friend to shut up and respect her choices. I think that the reason him and all his friends didn't want to listen to him was because of the way he dressed and the topic he choose to present.”

Conclusion & Limitations

- The cognitive, emotional, and social transitions of adolescence (Steinberg, 2023) are fertile ground for the development of wisdom. Our pattern of findings suggests that incipient wisdom may be real, and gains in it are strongest for females in general and for males who are more empathic and open to experience.
- This was an exploratory study with a small and fairly homogenous sample of teens. Replication is needed with a larger, more diverse sample in a pre-registered longitudinal design.



Poster available here: