

Does Other-Sex Popularity Impact Same-Sex Peer Experiences?

Carrie S. Fisher & Julie C. Bowker

University at Buffalo, State University of New York



Introduction

- The early adolescent developmental period (10-14 years), is when being “successful” among peers becomes increasingly important and influential on adjustment outcomes (e.g., Cillessen & Mayeux 2004).
- One type of peer “success” is **popularity**.
- Most researchers focus exclusively on popularity among *same-sex* peers. However, peer relationships with *other-sex* peers become increasingly important during early adolescence.
- The current study focuses on **other-sex popularity**, and whether other-sex popularity predicts later popularity and social preference among same-sex peers.
- Drawing from past research, 3 possible hypotheses regarding the ways in which other-sex popularity might impact later same-sex popularity and social preference were developed:
 - 1. Other-sex popularity leads to **increases** in same-sex popularity and social preference.
 - 2. Other-sex popularity leads to **decreases** in same-sex popularity and social preference.
 - 3. Other-sex popularity is **not related** to same-sex popularity and social preference.
- Gender was considered as a potential moderator.
- Also tested was how same-sex popularity impacts later other-sex popularity and preference because it is likely that the relation between same and other- sex peer experiences is bidirectional.

Method & Participants

- N= 270 6th grade students
- $M_{age} = 11.54$ years
- 58.10% Caucasian, 21.20% African American, 4.10% as Hispanic or Latino, and 16.60% biracial/other.
- Data was collected at two times (T1: November, T2: March).

Measures

Other-sex and same-sex popularity

- Participants nominated peers for the items “Someone who is very popular” and “Someone who is not popular”
- “Not popular” scores received from same- and other-sex peers were subtracted from “popular” scores to yield same- and other-sex popularity scores.

Other-sex and same-sex social preference

- Participants nominated peers for the items “Someone you like to be with the least,” (rejection) and “Someone you like to be with the most,” (acceptance).
- Rejection scores received from same- and other-sex peers were subtracted from acceptance scores received to yield same- and other-sex social preference scores.

Tables

Table 1: Other-Sex Popularity Predicting Later Same-Sex Peer Experiences

		Model 1: Same-Sex Popularity T2		Model 2: Same-Sex Preference T2	
		B	β	B	β
Step 1	Same-Sex Popularity T1/ Same-Sex Preference T1	0.54	0.59**	0.43	0.45**
	Ethnicity	0.04	0.10	0.01	0.02
Step 2	Other-Sex Popularity T1	0.13	0.15*	-0.04	-0.05
Step 3	Sex	0.07	0.04	0.13	0.07
Step 4	Sex-x-Other-Sex Popularity T1	0.10	0.05	0.54	0.25**

Table 2: Same-Sex Popularity Predicting Later Other-Sex Peer Experiences

		Model 1: Other-Sex Popularity T2		Model 2: Other-Sex Preference T2	
		B	β	B	β
Step 1	Other-Sex Popularity T1/ Other-Sex Preference T1	0.28	0.30**	0.43	0.45**
	Ethnicity	0.04	0.09	-0.01	-0.03
Step 2	Same-Sex Popularity T1	0.27	0.27**	-0.01	-0.01
Step 3	Sex	0.16	0.08	0.05	0.03
Step 4	Sex-x-Same-Sex Popularity T1	-0.48	-0.37**	0.18	0.13

Results

Correlational Analyses

- T1 *other-sex* popularity was related positively to *same-sex* popularity at T1 and 2.
- T2 *other-sex* popularity was related positively to *same-sex* popularity at T2 and *other-sex* preference at T2.

Other-Sex Popularity as a Predictor of Same-Sex Peer Experiences (Table 1)

- Main effects*: T1 same-sex popularity and T1 other-sex popularity were significant predictors of T2 same-sex popularity. T1 same-sex preference was a significant predictor of T2 same-sex preference.
- Interaction effect*: A significant interaction involving sex and T1 other-sex popularity was found. Simple slope analyses revealed that other-sex popularity at T1 was a significant positive predictor of T2 same-sex preference for girls ($\beta = 0.43, p = .002$), but a significant negative predictor for boys ($\beta = -0.15, p = .019$)

Same-Sex Popularity as a Predictor of Later Other-Sex Peer Experiences (Table 2)

- Main effects*: T1 other-sex popularity and T2 same-sex popularity were significant predictors of T2 other-sex popularity. T1 other-sex preference was a significant predictor of T2 other-sex preference
- *Interaction effect*: A significant interaction between sex and same-sex popularity at T1 was found. Simple slope analyses revealed that same-sex popularity was a significant positive predictor of other-sex popularity at T2 for boys ($\beta = 0.56, p = .001$) but not for girls ($\beta = 0.08, p = 0.29$).

Conclusions

- In general, results from this study supported hypothesis #1 and indicated for the first time that the association between other-sex popularity and same-sex popularity is bidirectional. This is also the first study to show that other-sex peer experience can predict changes in same-sex peer experiences.
- But, same-sex popularity predicted increases in other-sex popularity for *boys* but not girls, suggesting that the characteristics that help boys attain popularity with same-sex peers might also be valued by other-sex peers. The same does not appear to be true for girls.
- It is interesting that other-sex popularity predicted *increases* in same-sex preference for girls but *decreases* for boys. Future research will be needed but it is possible that girls might admire and like other girls who are popular with boys. However, boys who are popular with girls might behave in ways that promote popularity with other boys, but not liking (e.g., flirting behaviors).
- 1R03 HD056524-01; PI: Julie Bowker