



Self-nominated peer crowds, school achievement, and psychological adjustment in adolescents: Longitudinal analysis

Patrick C.L. Heaven ^{*}, Joseph Ciarrochi, Wilma Vialle

University of Wollongong, Department of Psychology, Northfields Avenue, Wollongong, NSW 2522, Australia

Received 21 August 2007; received in revised form 17 October 2007; accepted 24 October 2007

Available online 20 December 2007

Abstract

We assessed the extent to which identification with peer crowds in the first year of high school predicted scholastic achievement, teacher-rated adjustment, and self-reported emotional experience in the third year of high school. Unlike previous studies, we controlled for initial levels of our criterion variables. Crowds were found to predict most of the outcome variables in the second year and many of the significant differences remained in the third year, even after controlling for students' initial levels of the criterion variables. These findings are discussed with reference to the importance of social networks and the impact that peer networks, over time, have on students' scholastic achievement and psychological adjustment.

© 2007 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Crowds; Peers; Adolescence; Academic achievement; Adjustment

1. Introduction

It is well established that a range of individual difference characteristics are linked to adolescents' school achievement and overall adjustment (e.g. [Adams & Berzonsky, 2005](#)). These characteristics span a wide range of possibilities including personality, family, genetic, and

^{*} Corresponding author.

E-mail address: patrick_heaven@uow.edu.au (P.C.L. Heaven).

hormonal influences. The influence of peers on adolescent adjustment is all too often neglected in individual differences research. It is not clear whether and to what extent peer group affiliations and memberships explain unique variance in adolescent outcomes. The present research is concerned with the influence of the peer network on adolescent adjustment and focuses specifically on the “crowd”, that is, reputation-based groups (Brown, Mory, & Kinney, 1994).

Although it is often assumed that peers shape adolescent outcomes and may be direct and indirect “sources of influence” on teenagers (Smetana, Campione-Barr, & Metzger, p. 267), almost no research has systematically and longitudinally evaluated the impact of peer crowds on adolescent outcomes. Thus far, studies have failed to demonstrate that measurable behavioral differences that have been found to exist across peer crowds (see review below) are, in fact, due to crowd membership or identification rather than to already existing characteristics of the group members themselves, such as their levels of intelligence or particular personality dispositions. The present study is unique in that it is the first to examine the longitudinal effects of early peer crowd membership on school achievement and adjustment whilst controlling for baseline levels of the criterion variables.

The relationships that teenagers form with their peers are important in shaping a wide range of different outcomes (e.g. Barber, Eccles, & Stone, 2001; Brown, Eicher, & Petrie, 1986; Emler & Reicher, 1995; La Greca & Harrison, 2005; Urberg, Degirmencioglu, Tolson, & Halliday-Scher, 2000; Younnis, McLellan, & Strouse, 1994). As teenagers expand their interpersonal horizons and make academic and other choices, so peers assume a critical role in shaping the individual’s trajectory of development. As Gavin and Furman (1989, p. 827) explained, “Without being connected to the peer group, one may be left without an important source of support during a period of physical, emotional, and social upheaval”.

1.1. The importance of peer crowds

As young people move into high school, peer crowds take on added significance. According to Younnis et al. (1994) crowds provide “shared knowledge” that give rise to “orderly” and “efficient” social interactions (p. 107) that are reflective of cultural and behavioral norms, values, and attitudes. They set the “rules of engagement” that determine acceptable group behavior and the rituals to be performed (Coleman & Hendry, 1990). Not only does acceptable behavior vary from one crowd to another, but crowds and smaller interaction-based groups provide “common experience” (Emler & Reicher, 1995, p. 179), a social map for interacting with like-minded others (Barber et al., 2001; Prinstein & La Greca, 2002), as well as a distinctive status hierarchy (Younnis et al., 1994). By following the rules of engagement, one’s reputation as a valued member is maintained, if not enhanced.

The “social map” generated by the peer crowd underpins adolescents’ interpersonal relationships and choice of friends (Emler & Reicher, 1995; Urberg et al., 2000), their overall levels of adjustment (Barber et al., 2001) and their academic achievement (Brown et al., 1994). By providing shared knowledge, crowds impart to individuals a sense of identity and self worth (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Smith & Mackie, 1997). Because crowd membership is so closely allied to and integrated with the self, membership shapes not only our social interactions, but also behaviors at the individual level (Allport, 1962). The propensity of crowds to engage in certain behaviors (e.g. delinquent versus pro-social behaviors, or academic versus non-academic behaviors) will therefore vary depending on crowd status (Younnis et al., 1994) and crowds’ respective values and behavioral norms.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/892786>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/892786>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)