In the Eye of the Beholder: The Role of Peer Group Heterogeneity in Adolescent Victimization

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Various Approaches Used to Study Peers

• Peer Influence
  – Warr, 1996; Akers

• Characteristics of Friendship Networks

• Characteristics of Peer Groups
  – Brown et al., 1990; Coie et al., 1982
Research Sample

- 6\textsuperscript{th} to 8\textsuperscript{th} graders from two NY middle schools. 
  (N= 394 Nominators)

- Rochester 68% white
- Dryden 98% white

- Sociometric Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Popular</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rejected</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neglected</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controversial</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Classified</td>
<td>610</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Questions

• Is there homogeneity among all youth as to the kind of qualities and behaviors that they perceive as valuable in others?

• Could any existing heterogeneity be the result of the status of the peer group from which the nominator belongs?
Chart #1: Percentage of All Students Who Like and Dislike Fighters, Leaders, and Helpers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavioral Quality</th>
<th>Like Most</th>
<th>Like Least</th>
<th>Percent of Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fighters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders</td>
<td>Like Most</td>
<td>Like Least</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpers</td>
<td>Like Most</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chart #2: Do Adolescents of Differing Status Vary in their Liking & Disliking of Fighters?

Sociometric Status of Nominator

Mean Nominations (Max=3)

Like Most

Like Least

*
Chart #3: Do Adolescents of Differing Status Vary in their Liking & Disliking of Leaders?
Chart #4: Do Adolescents of Differing Status Vary in their Liking & Disliking of Helpers?

Sociometric Status of Nominator

Mean nominations (Max=3)
Conclusions

- Youth are not homogeneous in their liking and disliking of the qualities of fighting, leadership, and helping.

- Some of these differences are a result of the Sociometric status of the nominator.

- There is more consensus between groups as to what qualities are liked than what qualities are disliked.

- Need to study victimization beyond the individual level. (i.e. peer group, classroom, school, community)