

The development of sociability and peer acceptance



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The studies of anthropologists and sociologists and even most scholars in general, have not focused enough attention on adolescent relationships as anything more than a passing part of the human life cycle (Amit-Talai). The pioneering efforts of Vered Amit-Talai argued that the stereotypes of teen relationships in industrial societies are incorrectly implied to be naturally impermanent. She asserts that these adolescent relationships have been disrupted by the structure of the highly institutionalized educational system from building unwavering long term friendships. Defectively, Amit-Talai's research has only focused on adolescence in Western developed countries. Teenagers mature in varied educational environments so they should possess dissimilar limitations and expectations toward friendship during that period of their lives. Schools in Hong Kong are of particular interest in this research paper. Given the high pressure placed on students for achievement and success, the importance placed on education by teachers places blame for academic and social failures on the lack of effort by the students. In this paper, I will analyze how high school teachers in Hong Kong have a significant role in influencing the development of students' sociability.

This paper will discuss the reasons why education workers in Asian high schools hold significant ability to sway teenagers' sociability. Since elementary school, elitism and competition has been the core of Asian educational institutions, and this is even more surpassed as students' progress toward higher education. Intense school work and good grades on public examinations has become the critical objective of both students and teachers. However, the education system exerts significant effects on adolescence beyond academic skills; it also has a deep effect on their social behavior (Kashdan). In the students' perspective, teachers are implied to be the chief representatives of schools. The relationship between teachers and students can be a significant factor in influencing students' sociability. Obstacles that adolescents encounter with sociability development can be imputed to teachers' favoritism and their quality of interactions with students.

Influence of Teacher's preference on students

From a student's perspective, life in the classroom involves three portions: the student themselves, the student's peers, and the classroom teacher. In order to study students' social interactions in the classroom, the mediating influence of teacher preference on the connection between students' social behaviors and peer acceptance become topics that have to be focused on. Teacher's preference would be more evident with high school students; as the students mature, they can learn to adapt to their teachers' preferences and points of view. Teachers reveal their favoritism toward students according to students' behavior.

In recent years, the Hong Kong educational system has become the target of widespread scrutiny and criticism, prompting continual waves of education reforms, which have greatly transformed the nature of a teacher's job and increased the complexity of teachers' functioning in schools (Tarrant).

Specifically, teachers have to teach students who have behavioural and emotional problems, making classroom management and counseling an important part of their work. Controlling and correcting students' problematic behaviors is a major fundamental goal of classroom teachers (Kedar-Voivodas). Teachers always have to spend much of their non-instructional time dealing with problematic and disruptive students (Beaman & Wheldall). The large amount of time and effort devoted to these students provides abundant opportunities for teachers to transmit their liking and disliking of these students and their behavior (Hughes, Cavell, & Jackson).

Among the inferior students, rebellious behavior is likely to annoy classroom teachers since students are challenging the teachers' authority and they interfere with their work (Kedar-Voivodas). Teachers are more likely to unambiguously express their dislike of students who behave offensively, overtly showing their dislike. Indeed, teachers have frequently used presentation punishment with problematic students to let the class learn the consequences of misconduct (Tulley & Chiu). Thus, the stronger teacher preference to nitpick for delinquency rather than for the other behaviors suggests a more explicit motivation, in which teachers convey their disliking of problematic students to the other students, who have come to adopt the teachers' views (Goldstein, Arnold, Rosenberg, Stowe, & Ortiz). In contrast,

students that possess better performance and show responsible behavior possibly create a positive social reputation for themselves.

Peers adapt to the teacher's preferences, which lead to the students' positive reputation. A good social reputation serves to strengthen the association with peer acceptance. Students who have a good reputation are well accepted by peers. Similarly, a teachers' disliking of a student who behaves negatively, would serve to create a negative reputation for that student. The negative reputation associated with misconduct will likely lead to teachers disliking the students with the negative reputations. This suggests that peers respond to problematic students according to their teachers' preference of them.

Limiting preferred students' performance

The classroom teacher is a powerful role model and influence for the students in his or her class, as teacher's preference can affect students' attitude and treatment of their peers. It also implies that school-based interventions for problematic and peer rejected students are justified. Indeed, most counseling workers have only focused on improving the social skills of these problematic students (Cheung). Decreasing negative interactions between problematic students and their teachers can possibly be a more effective strategy that can be applied to reduce these students' peer rejection.

One possible method to guide students in maintaining appropriate behavior without damaging their self-confidence and reputation is to correct students' behavior in private ways. Without drawing unnecessary attention to the

other students, the liking or the disliking of the teacher toward a particular student, does not therefore give guidelines to their peers to realize the teacher's cognitions toward that student. In particular, teachers that are skilled in protecting students appear to use nonverbal cues and other less public means of correction (Cheung). Cheung suggests that they also are likely skilled in proactive methods of behavior management and in this way they may decrease the need for behavioral correction. Changing teachers' cognitions about students is important. To change the corrective techniques that they employ, the teachers' prejudices or assumptions about students have to be altered.

The way that teachers think about the students in their classrooms may affect their behavior toward these students. Thus, changing these cognitions in a more positive direction may help teachers be more open to private and gentle means of correcting misbehavior, as contrasting to more public and harsh correction (Cheung). For example, teachers are encouraged to look beyond their first impressions of students' problematic behavior, and objectively seek the core of the problem. Moreover, teachers are encouraged to find likeable qualities in their most behaviorally challenging students. If teachers could learn to think in more compassionate ways about their "problem students," they might be more amenable to using corrective techniques that would support more positive peer relations for these students.

The purpose of changing teachers' perceptions of problematic students is to create a positive social climate in the classroom. By the teachers' modeling of these attitudes and behaviors, they can act as a role model that can

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encourage students to value all of their peers and treat them well. This can also increase the sociability and feelings of acceptance across the student body. This may also eliminate peer disliking and prejudices toward problematic students, and therefore eliminate the factors that obstruct the development of students' sociability.

Limiting preferred students' performance

More than teachers revealing their lack of preference towards problematic students, the positive embrace of the teacher for a likeable student can lead to a negative effect. Beyond the previous argument, Chan suggests students may be more influenced by the teacher's behavior when making less common and much harsher judgments about disliking, then when making more normative and innocuous judgments about liking. However, it is important to emphasize the possibility of the opposite that positive teacher behavior will contribute to a negative result of peer rejection. Students who are praised more frequently by the teacher are actually less well-liked by their peers, and a sense of isolation occurs.

Teachers may have praised their favorite students frequently, and this favoritism may lead these students to being less liked by their classmates (Chan). When school teachers modify student behavior through praise, this is encouraging desired behaviors from the other students by praising these behaviors whenever they are displayed. Also, teachers may have given an unequal amount of praise to their most behaviorally challenging students, in an effort to increase their displays of appropriate behavior. If a student witnessed the teacher's praise of a classmate for behavior that simply met

classroom expectations, he or she might consider the praise as a sign that the peer is ingratiating the teacher, but not as a sign that the peer is someone to be liked.

In fact, teachers should limit their praise to students in need of behavioral or academic assistance, rather than praising all students when they behave appropriately or perform well academically (Chan). With regard to the implications for intervention discussed above, these ideas further suggest that teacher-focused interventions aimed at reducing the peer rejection of problematic students emphasize decreases in corrective teacher behavior, and perhaps increase proactive means of behavior management.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper is to examine the mediating role of teacher cognitions about students' and teachers' behavior toward students in the link between student behavior and peers' evaluations of liking and disliking. Both problematic and well-behaved student behavior contribute to peer disliking, through each of the teacher cognition variables in combination with corrective or negative teacher behavior toward the student. The indirect effect of problematic student behavior on peer disliking is significant, and equally important to prosocial student behavior on peer disliking. These studies on adolescence allow teachers to gain introspection of their cognition variables and abilities to mediate the students' behavior toward one another.

In fact, the ideas above provide an ideal context for scholarly hypotheses about the influence of teacher cognition and teacher behavior on peer dislike of problematic students. Hence, these speculative ideas will require

empirical evaluation before dissemination. Nevertheless, the current study provides a useful but introductory empirical foundation to improve intervention efforts for peer-rejected and problematic students.

The overall argument is an extended agreement and endorsement of Vered Amit-Talai's research, that a highly institutionalized education system in developed areas such as Quebec, has prevented students from developing both friendships and sociability at school. This paper has focused more on influences from a Hong Kong high school and its educational system, but the school's most significant representation is indeed the teachers. As teachers are the executor of different educational policies and systems, they possess the most direct and critical relationship with students during classes. Teachers' behavior and favoritism toward students should be critically considered in order to avert unfavorable factors that disturb the development of students' sociability.

Finally, this research was based on samples of Chinese teachers and students. Unique cultural characteristics of this sample may have contributed to the observed results. Chinese students are particularly susceptible to adult influences because of the country's Confucian traditions. Such a cultural belief could have facilitated the hypothesized mediating and moderating teacher-related effects in the present sample. However, this study may not be suitable to other cultures because the teacher-student relationship as well as students' peer relations in the classroom varies across cultures. Future studies can replicate this study with Western and other cultural samples. Cross-cultural researchers may also incorporate culturally relevant processes or treat culture as an additional factor to compare <https://assignbuster.com/the-development-of-sociability-and-peer-acceptance/>

potential teacher influences on students' peer relations across ethnological and or societal groups.

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