Peer Power: Clique Dynamics among School Children

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Status-
Social position an individual holds within a group or social system
Role-
Set of expectations about the behavior assigned to a particular status
We modify roles more than statuses

Roles are the dynamic aspect of social status
Key question

How are social hierarchies formed and how is power distributed among third to sixth graders?
Cliques

Organize children’s social world
Determine activities and relationships
Feelings about themselves are often determined here
Cliques have a hierarchy
Dominated by leaders
Exclusive in nature
Not all who desire membership are included
Function as bodies of power within grades
This study does not include all friendship groups
Just those $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ who are in cliques
Techniques of inclusion
Membership screening - maintains exclusivity

Not static - constantly shifting

Leaders hold tremendous sway
Stratification

Leaders
Followers
Wannabes

More status and power means they can control other’s lives
Recruitment

Established members introduce new others
Probationary period of evaluation
Timing important – beginning of school year
Inclusion in popular group – irresistible offer
Popular girls often disliked due to exclusive, elitist manner
Application

Not recruited, but actively seeking membership

Must be done alone
Friendship realignment

Friendship with those more popular than they are can mean moving up

Constantly shifting
Ingratiation

Currying favor with group leader
Imitating style and interests of group leader
Leaders must also pay attention so defections do not occur
Often used manipulation
Even among outsiders - "dorks"
Techniques of exclusion
Out-group subjugation

Considered sporting to pick on outsiders
Different than teasing
Turning the group against the outsider
Fear, dominance of group prevent reporting to authorities
In-group Subjugation

Picking on those weaker members of the clique

Keeps positions in hierarchy

Pick on anyone but the leader
Compliance

Going along with leaders to maintain status

Can be active or passive

Went along with hurtful behavior to avoid it being targeted toward them
Stigmatization

Being ignored, or
Worse, being taunted
Extended periods of time
Worst, physical degradation - beat up, house trashed, etc.
Expulsion

Cast off- usually those with lower status, “bottom rung”

Caused by severe infraction

Or challenging the leader

Rarely, high-status leader deposed
When expulsion happens, “contingency friends”
Sometimes,
complete exclusion means outcast becomes a loner
Influences their identity, behaviors, appearance
Conclusion

Inclusion is central to the clique
Boundary maintenance makes them exclusive
Keeps a sense of hierarchy and structure
Exclusion is also central

It gives cohesion

Can demean others with little consequence

Exclusion from upper rungs means much attention is paid to clique dynamics
Inclusion lures people
Into cliques
Exclusion, or fear of it, keeps them there