

# Behaviors Preceding Ostracism in Established Play Groups of Children

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## Introduction

- Over the past 20 years, research on ostracism has focused on the effects it has on adults and adolescents
- Most research has involved experimental laboratory paradigms, not natural transient play settings
- “Ostracism is usually defined as ignoring and excluding” especially in peer groups (Williams, 2001, p. 472)
- Research shows that self-esteem and arousal both decrease with ostracism, but they do not look at what leads to the ostracism, especially in children (Gerber and Wheeler, 2009)
- Boivin, in 1995, observed boys in a laboratory setting to help understand the dynamics between ostracism in play, but this does not address both genders
- Researchers will observe natural play behaviors from children in transient play groups to see if certain behaviors lead to ostracism



## Research Questions

- What non-normative behaviors correlate with ostracism from peers?
- Does gender have an effect on how children are treated in play groups?
- Does race relate to how aggressively children behave towards one another?
- Does a child get ostracized more when displaying aggression?
- Do disgusting behaviors (ex. picked nose, scratched butt, etc..) elicit more ostracism or aggression from peers?

## References

- Boivin, M., Dodge, K. A., & Coie, J. D. (1995). Individual-group behavioral similarity and peer status in experimental play groups of boys: The social misfit revisited. *Journal Of Personality And Social Psychology*, 69(2), 269-279. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.69.2.269
- Gerber, J. & Wheeler, L. (2009). On being rejected a meta-analysis of experimental research on rejection. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 4, 468-488.
- Williams, K.D. (2001). *Ostracism: The power of silence*. New York: Guilford.

## Method

- **Participants**  
Participants were selected at random. 217 subjects between the ages of 5 and 40 years were observed. 80 of these were target children estimated to be between the ages of 5-13 years, and 137 individuals were the source, who interacted with the target children (no age restriction). There were 82 females and 135 males that participated in this study. The average estimated age of the target children was 7.69 (SD= 1.95). The average estimated age of the source was 8.89 (SD= 4.73). The target participants were 77.5% Caucasian with 84.7% of source participants being Caucasian.
- **Procedure**  
In this follow-up study participants natural behaviors were observed during play at the Foundation For Youth gymnasium. Participants were be randomly chosen for observation. We documented behaviors exhibited by all participants in narrative form. After collecting data, we coded the narratives using a 0-5 scale, where 0 means none of the behavior was shown and 5 means it was shown 5 or more times during the 10 minute observational session.

## Results

- The independent samples T-test revealed that there is enough evidence to state that there are gender differences in terms of who contributes to aggressive behaviors during play  $t(47)=-2.00, p = .05, d = -.95$ . The large effect size indicates that gender plays a large role in if a person will ostracize others or not.
- ANOVA showed that there is no significant difference between ethnicity of the targets and aggression towards them  $F(4, 29)=1.31, p = .29, \eta = 0.15$ .
- Correlation test showed there is not a connection between aggression from the source peers and the amount they ostracize the target  $r(26) = -.165, p = .419$ .
- Correlation test showed that there is not a statistically significant connection between disgust and ostracism  $r(139) = -.08, p = .75$ .
- There is no correlation between aggression from the target and aggression from the source,  $r(98) = .03, p = .89$ .

## Discussion

- There were no consistent predictors of ostracism. However, there was some evidence suggesting gender has an effect on determining who will ostracize others.
- We do not have enough evidence to say there are certain behaviors that can be correlated ostracism.
- Ostracism is a group dynamic, maybe in established play groups it is the entire group that ostracizes and not just a single person.
- This research could also show that ostracism is more dependent on what the group determines, not just the actions of the target child.
- This study will help to eliminate third variables, such as parent involvement and the presence of siblings or babies.
- However, there was still the presence of adults and supervision that could interfere.
- A more longitudinal study may be better.
- More participants could change the statistics as well.

