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Abstract

Schools are inherently social environments with adolescents spending the majority of their time immersed in academia and peer groups. Furthermore, it is important to understand the dynamics of adolescent peer groups because they can provide support; give the perception of being part of a group, as well as provide the feeling of acceptance which are all key variables contributing to one's academic motivation and achievement. This literature review will examine the influence peer groups have on one's academic motivation and achievement. More importantly it will discuss the importance in understanding the underlying forces of peer groups school counselors can be prepared to respond to both positive and negative peer pressures

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Chapter I: Introduction

Adolescents spend the majority of their time in school immersed in academia and peer groups. Peer groups can be defined on three levels starting with dyadic relationships consisting of two individuals such as a best friend pair or a romantic partner, a small group of individuals who spend time together forming close relationships, or a large group of individuals placed together based on stereotypical similarities, and reputation (Kiuru, 2008). Peer relationships contribute to a child's well-being in numerous ways including: personal validation, emotional support, companionship and entertainment (Wentzel, 2009). Flashman (2012) found that friendships naturally occur between individuals based on a set of similar values, attitude, beliefs, and interests, and who spend their time in similar ways thus understanding each other's choices and decisions. Therefore, the question is as an important part of the school environment do peer relationships facilitate decision-making processes involving the variables of academic motivation and achievement?

Adolescence is a pivotal time in one's academia because it is when decisions are being made about academic motivation as well as pathways being created for their future career paths. Previous research shows that peer groups play a pivotal role in academic motivation as well as academic success (Kindermann, 1993; Kindermann & Skinner, 2012). Peers are more likely to be friends if they have similar academic achievement; and choose similar academic rigor (advanced placement classes vs. remedial classes) (Flashman, 2012). Teachers facilitate classroom environment by establishing rules and norms through this process the teacher is providing the recipe for student interaction; this process can either aid or hinder student cooperation (Ryan & Patrick, 2001). Through this facilitation the teachers create the social environment of their classroom thus teaching adolescents develop peer relationships surrounded

in academia. Furthermore, Schwartz, Gorman, and Naka (2006) found that peer acceptance is predictive in the domains of social and academic outcomes. Therefore the classroom provides an imperative environment for the growth and exploration of academic motivation among peer groups.

Academic achievement is a pivotal part to the access of future endeavors such as job opportunities, college acceptance, and overall self-efficacy. Adolescence is a time of development and decision making that will impact them throughout their lifetime. Through one's beliefs about academics and their intrinsic value of their academic achievement adolescents are choosing individuals for their peer group that align with those beliefs and values (Flashman, 2012). Academic achievements have opened numerous doors and pathways for students as well as have successfully trained individuals to become contributing members of society. While in middle school and high school many teens find themselves tied to their occupation of student. The current study aims to critically analyze previous literature to examine the relationship between peer relationships and academic motivation and achievement. Further this study will attempt to look at the impact of social groups on one's academic motivation as well as academic success. This study will employ the hypothesis that peer groups have a positive correlation with academic motivation in an adolescent life thus furthering the student's academic success.

Statement of the Problem

The study of the influence of peer group on academic motivation and achievement has been thoroughly researched. However, there is little research that has been done on whether peer groups utilize their intrinsic values of school and their academic motivation to facilitate peer group choice or if their peer group is established at such a young age thus influencing their attitudes towards school and academic motivation. There is a need to gather information on whether

adolescents utilize academic variables to choose their friends. The question lies within the debate on whether peer groups facilitate academic motivation and achievement or whether one's intrinsic values of academics influence an adolescent's choice of peer group.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study will be to critically analyze the relationship between peer groups and their influence on one's academic motivation and academic achievement. More specifically, it examined the degree adolescents utilize academic variables and ideas when selecting friends for their peer group. It is imperative for individuals to be aware of the relationship so they can effectively aid students. A comprehensive review of the literature conducted at the University of Wisconsin-Stout during the spring and fall of 2013 will aid in understanding the dynamic relationship of peer groups and academic motivation and academic achievement.

Research Questions

The following research questions have been developed to guide and analyze the relationship between peer groups and academic motivation/achievement:

1. What factors do adolescents consider when choosing their peer group?
2. Is there a correlation between academic motivation and peer group choice?
3. Does peer group choice influence academic achievement or does academic achievement aid in molding peer groups?
4. Do academic variables play a role in adolescent peer selection?

Definition of Terms

For further clarification and understanding these terms are defined:

Peer Group. For this study peer group refers to individuals whom the subject views as the closest individuals whom they voluntarily spend time with. It is further defined as the friends whom they hang around with and talk to the most, a reciprocal dyadic relationship, and/or, a reputation-based peer groups (Kiuru, 2008).

Academic Motivation. For this study academic motivation refers to actions the subject takes to do well in school such as handing work in on time, setting time during the day to do homework, setting goals to do well in school and rewarding themselves for doing well in school.

Academic Achievement. For this critical analysis academic achievement refers to class trajectory (AP classes vs. remedial classes), GPA's, academic grades, and grade completion.

Limitations of the Study

Limitation 1. There was little consistency on the measure and definition of academic achievement among the studies.

Limitation 2. The critical analysis was conducted only on studies available at the University of Wisconsin-Stout, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, and the Eau Claire Public Library.

Limitation 3. The definition of peer groups among studies tends to be subjective and often hard to measure.

Assumptions

Assumption 1. Adolescents have a choice in their classes; that the school has flexibility in their curriculum.

Assumption 2. Adolescents have at least some internal academic motivation and not all facilitated by parent pressures.

Assumption 3. All adolescents have close peers in which they consider their friends.

Chapter II: Review of Literature

The purpose of this critical analysis will be to describe and identify the relationship between peer groups and academic motivation and achievement. Specifically it will examine the nature of the correlation between these variables to further understand the direction of the correlation; thus aiding in the understanding of the relationship between peer group choice and one's academic motivation and achievement. The review of literature will include background information as well as information on peer group choice, academic motivation and academic achievement.

Background Information

Traditionally research has studied the influence of teachers and parents on the academic motivation of adolescents. However, classrooms are inherently social places where individuals are constantly surrounded by their peers. Classrooms provide an environment for peer groups to form as well as cooperative learning to take place. Such an environment aids in the facilitation of engagement from students thus naturally creating peer groups. Peer groups are important because they can provide support; give the perception of being part of a group, as well as provide the feeling acceptance. Ryan and Patrick (2001) found that encouragement for interaction with others and the sharing of ideas was positively correlated academic motivation and classroom engagement. Previous research has looked at natural peer groups, the norms and values of peer groups, as well as the socialization of academic motivation within those groups (Brown, 1990; Kindermann, 1993; Ryan, 2001; Wentzel, 1999). Research has shown that academic motivation among peers within a group tend to be similar (Ryan, 2001).

Previous research has shown that there is a strong correlation between peer group and academic motivation, however, questions remain about the exact nature of that relationship. One

question in particular is in reference to the direction of the correlation. In general, adolescent students spend the majority of their time immersed within their peer group both in and outside the classroom. Therefore, researchers have concluded that the peer group does have an impact on academic motivation (Kinderman, 1993; Ryan, 2001). On the other hand there is an argument that individuals seek friendships with students who have similar motivational levels and academic achievement (Wentzel & Caldwell, 1997; Flashman, 2012). Through investigation and a firm foundation of previous literature this critical analysis aims to aid in the understanding of the direction of the correlation.

Peer Groups

Many adolescent students spend the majority of their day surrounded by their peers naturally selecting individuals whom they would like to spend more time with; therefore establishing a peer group. There are multiple levels of peer groups. Molloy, Gest, and Rulison (2011) discussed the different types of social ties stating that there are three: reciprocated friendships, interaction dyads, and group membership. Reciprocated friendships are characterized by variables such as: mutual liking and closeness, trust in each other's judgment, effective conflict resolution, and an agreement on decisions (Molloy et al., 2011). Interactive dyads are characterized by variables such as: frequent contact, social learning, and "hang around together;" and group membership provides rewards such as access to resources and a source of identity and status (Molloy et al., 2011). Adolescents are often members of more than one peer group and can contribute to their multiple peer groups at varying levels.

Peer groups may form based on convenience (same classroom/grade), similar interests, shared activities, socioeconomic status, intelligence, or academic motivation (Kindermann, 1993; Sage & Kindermann, 1999; Wentzel, 2009). Wentzel (2009) stated that peer relationships

contribute to a child's well-being further stating that those with these positive relationships experience higher levels of emotional well-being, have stronger social interactions, as well as value prosocial forms of behavior than those without these relationships. Flashman (2012) found that individuals are more likely to be friends if their academic achievement is similar; further stating that as achievement differences between peers grows the outlook on their friendship dwindles. Through peer group selections adolescents are potentially creating a network of support and understanding because of the assumption that they are individuals with similar life circumstances.

Peer relationships are untimely created by the opportunities that are presented. Through these opportunities individuals create relationships with others that align with their intrinsic beliefs and preferences (Flashman, 2012). Flashman (2012) further describes the relationship by stating "it works as a feedback loop, where friends affect behavior, in this case academic achievement, achievement then influences friend preferences, and preferences combined with opportunity constraints lead to the friendships we observe" (p. 63). This supports the idea that individuals create relationships with others whom they are surrounded by for a period of time because these are the opportunities open to them. This, further, supports the idea that adolescents choose friends based on individuals in their classes. Urberg, Luo, and Degirmencioğlu (2003) discuss a two-stage model when explaining peer groups. The researchers state that the first stage is peer selection further describing this stage as choosing and associating with peers who have similar values, behaviors, and opportunities; while the second stage is described as the socialization phase consisted of either conforming or not to each other's behaviors (Urberg et al., 2003). Kindermann (1993) found that at the elementary age students will self-select friends who

have similar motivational orientations and these orientations become stronger within the groups and over time.

When comparing non-friend peers with mutual friends peers studies show that mutual friends show higher levels of sharing, trust, emotional support, and prosocial behaviors and through these variables adolescents are building social skills, developing sets of beliefs and behaviors about self (Molloy et al., 2011). Wentzel (1999) states that individuals strive for a sense of belongingness thus striving to maintain and establish interpersonal relationships and social identities. Peer groups contribute to the social environment of the school and classroom; when compared those who belong to a peer group and those who do not researchers found that those who did not belong to a peer group did less well in school and had lower educational expectations (Kiuru, 2008). Teachers can either aid or hinder cooperation and academic discussion among peer groups. Ryan and Patrick (2001) found that there are 3 domains teachers communicate to their students regarding their relationships with peers and academic tasks: promoting interaction, promoting mutual respect, and promoting performance goals. There was a positive correlation between students who perceive encouragement for interactions within the classroom and motivation and engagement (Ryan & Patrick, 2001).

Peer groups have the potential to bring about change leading researchers to investigate the peer group's influence on one's academic motivation. Research has found that adolescent students selected friends with similar academic achievement levels as well as maintain peer relationships with individuals who had similar academic motivation and achievement levels (Chen, Chang & He, 2003; Kindermann, 1993; Ryan, 2001). Wentzel (2009) further found that positive peer relations facilitate engagement of academic tasks more than those with peer relationship problems. Creating groups within the classroom provides an opportunity for

individuals to create high-quality work, as well as an opportunity to discuss academic content with peers (Roseth, Johnson, & Johnson, 2008). Peer groups allow for an environment of acceptance and social networking through similarities on various levels.

Acceptance by peers is positively correlated with school satisfaction and the pursuit of academic goals such as wanting to learn (Wentzel, 1999). Peer group affiliation influenced the intrinsic value for school such as how much a student enjoyed or disliked school, but it also showed that it was not influential in regards to the student's view of the usefulness of school (Ryan, 2001). Wentzel and Caldwell (1997) found that positive relationships at school facilitate support in involvement and engagement in school-related activities. Peer relationships facilitate a sense of support; perceived support from peers is more strongly correlated to academic motivation than perceived support from parents and teachers while being rejected by peers is correlated with lower levels of interest in school, disengagement, and dropping out (Wentzel, 1998, Wentzel, 1999). Ryan (2001) found that peer groups have the potential to facilitate both positive and negative change. Research has shown a relationship between peer relationships and academic motivation thus indicating that peer relations impact adolescent academic motivation.

Academic Motivation

Academic motivation is a key predictor for one's academic achievement. Kindermann (1993) further defines academic motivation as the intensity and quality of the engagement as well as initiating and participating in activities. Wentzel (1999) defines *motivation processes* as, "a set of interrelated beliefs and emotions that direct behavior" (p. 76). Wentzel (1999) further states that there is a positive correlation between a student's belief about personal efficacy and competence with their persistence at activities, their choice in what they do and their likelihood to engage in pursuing goals. In the classroom, students are constantly surrounded by their peers

and are observing behaviors and attitudes towards school thus influencing their own motivation and engagement. Engagement is positively correlated with adjustment to school, grades, and standardized test scores (Skinner, Wellborn, & Connell, 1990). One's motivation in school is directly correlated with intrinsic value of school, amount of engagement within the classroom, and academic achievement (Connell, 1990; Kindermann, 1993).

Motivation is intrinsic with individuals tying their motivation to their abilities. Watts, Cashwell, and Schweiger (2004) stated intrinsic motivation is influenced by four psychological factors: self-determination, self-perceived competence, relatedness, and perceived salience; and utilizing GPA, as a predictor of academic success, a student's fall GPA was a positive predictor of their academic achievement in the spring; however this predication pattern was not true for a student's spring GPA prediction of their academic achievement in the fall. If one believes that they are able to do something they are more likely to have motivation in achieving that goal. Researchers found that social-motivational processes also play a role in motivation by applying the principles of attribution theory, further showing that students have emotional reactions to the assignment of responsibility thus creating expectations for the future (Wentzel, 1999). Wentzel (1999) further states that a student will pursue a goal more if their personal beliefs about self, and their emotions align leading to higher goal achievement.

School is an inherently social environment with students constantly interacting with one another. Motivation among peer groups can be seen at various levels including the classroom. Wentzel (1999) stated that within a classroom there is a set of behavioral standards that must be adhered too; peer group motivation can be seen when students are left to monitor classrooms while a teacher is out; when teachers nominate peer leaders to enforce classroom expectations; or when students as a group are accountable for each other's actions. Motivation within a classroom

can also be seen when cooperative learning takes place. Cooperative learning facilitates communication on academic variables among groups. Through cooperative learning peers hold each other accountable for work, standards of conduct, and socially responsible behaviors such as: helping and sharing knowledge (Wentzel, 1999). Roseth, Johnson, and Johnson (2008) revealed that cooperative learning was associated with higher levels of academic achievement through positive peer relationships. Through cooperative learning working together facilitates discussion on academics thus providing an avenue for academically positive behaviors.

Being a member of a peer group is positively correlated with motivation for learning and achievement as well as academic effort (Wentzel & Caldwell, 1997). Leading researchers to answer the question of whether peer groups have an impact on ones' academic motivation and achievement. Peer pressure also plays a role in how peers influence each other; and peer pressure can be either positive or negative. Ryan (2000) states that peer pressure is found in numerous domains of an adolescent's life including academics and extra-curricular activities in school. Therefore, peer pressure has an impact on ones attitudes and behaviors, including what classes to take and what colleges to apply to (Ryan, 2000). Wentzel (1999) found that that peer relationships are associated with motivational outcomes. Therefore, when high academic achievement characterizes a peer group individuals were more protected from academic burnout throughout the academic year (Kiuru, Aunola, Nurmi, Leskinen, & Salmelo-Aro, 2008). Therefore, peer relationships play a distinctive role in motivating each other to help and cooperate amongst themselves (Wentzel, 1999). Altermatt and Pomerantz (2005) found that highly academic individuals provide a blueprint for completing challenging academic tasks and academic effort, therefore, motivating peers to improve one's academic standards and performances thus leading to higher academic achievement.

Academic Achievement

Academic achievement is a strong predictor of future success. It is a variable that is a key determinate of educational placement (four year/two year college), scholarship opportunities and potential employment opportunities. It is important to distinguish between motivation and achievement. Ryan (2000) defines academic achievement as “performance outcomes such as grades on report cards and scores on standardized achievement tests” (p. 102). Rivkin, Hanushek, and Kain (2005) state that academic achievement is much more abstract including variables such as: family background, teacher characteristics, school characteristics, and student abilities (cognitive skills, motivation and personality traits).

Academic achievement among peers in a group is comparable. Students select friends who have similar achievement levels in school (Ryan, 2001). Flashman (2012) states that high-achieving peers reinforce positive behaviors surrounding academic achievement therefore further their academic success; if high-achieving students make high-achieving friends their desire to do well in school is reinforced and their friendship is maintained. Having similar academic achievement increases the predication of a friendship lasting, as the achievement gap grows the likelihood of remaining friends decreases (Flashman, 2012). The direction for academic achievement and peer group selection goes both directions; high-achieving students desire high-achieving friends, and low-achieving students desire low-achieving friends (Flashman, 2012). Véronneau and Dishion (2011) further support this finding stating that peers that engage in problem behaviors that are detrimental to future academic success are associated with reinforcing similar misbehaviors; whereas peers that model positive academic behaviors are more likely to reinforce such behaviors. Furthermore, researchers found that positive behaviors (studying for exams, completing homework, cooperating with others in school) were more important to

adolescents then getting good grades (Véronneau & Dishion, 2011). This finding shows that positive behaviors surrounding school are important to individuals when choosing peers more than measures of academic achievement such as GPA, grades, and test scores. It is the desire and the motivation behind the behavior more than the outcome that is driving peer choice (Véronneau & Dishion, 2011). Peers are recognizing the effort their friends are displaying rather than their report card or class rank. These findings suggest that peer socialization promote academic achievement through positive school-related behaviors and not specific academic achievement (Véronneau & Dishion, 2011).

It is important to understand the context and socialization agents in the development of ones beliefs about their achievement potential (Ryan, 2000). Véronneau and Dishion (2011) further support this notion by differentiating between selection and socialization. The researchers state that selection is the process of choosing friends based on a similar attitudes and behaviors; while socialization is the influence of peers on each other's behaviors and attitudes (Véronneau & Dishion, 2011). Through the socialization process peers are learning effective study skills through observation and imitation; further stating that communication about academic variables among high-achieving peer groups are more stimulating and engaging than those of average-achieving peer groups (Véronneau & Dishion, 2011). Ryan (2000) also found that peers, along with adults, provide suggestions and alternative options about how to think, react, and engage in school affecting ones motivation and achievement by either affirming, sustaining or changing them. However, over time peers with high-achieving friends showed greater achievement then those with lower achieving friends; and the strongest effect from peers was in regards to academic achievement in which she studied throughout the 6th grade year (Ryan, 2000; Ryan, 2001).

Cross Cultural Perspectives

Feelings of belongingness, and the social climate within the school contribute to the success of a student's academic achievement. Yu and Patterson (2010) state that social goals play a role in contributing to both low and high academic achievement. From a cross-cultural perspective it is imperative to analyze how the school is recognizing them as individuals, if they feel the schools gives them a sense of ethnic appreciation, if their peers are welcoming because these variables contribute to feeling like they belong in the school and the school's overall social climate (Yu & Patterson, 2010). Feeling of belongingness aids in psychological and emotional well-being; and feeling like one belongs in school is correlated with academic achievement and motivation (Mallet, et al., 2011). Therefore it is imperative for school counselors to assess their school environment to ensure that students are feeling safe and welcome within their school.

Mallet et al. (2011) argued that when students of color don't feel like they belong within the school their academic motivation and achievement decline. Furthermore, it is important to facilitate positive interpersonal relationships with teachers, respecting difference, embracing different cultures, and creating an overall feeling of being welcomed to foster academic growth (Yu & Patterson, 2010). Mallet et al. (2011) found that students of color are more likely to experience fluctuations in belonging uncertainty when compared to their peers and that school belongingness was positively correlated with their academic motivation.

From a cross-cultural view academic achievement is based on a combination of peer relationship and perceptions of teacher openness and relationships. When combining the factors of parenting with school variables researchers found differences among different minority groups. Steinberg, Dornbusch and Brown (1992) found that European American adolescents are more influenced by their parents thriving in an environment of authoritative parenting and peer

support; Hispanic American adolescents are disadvantaged by authoritarian parenting because it does not align with the concepts of self-reliance and self-confidence being taught in the schools with little peer support to do well in school. Asian American adolescents also have the negative variables connected with authoritarian parenting, however, they have strong peer support for academic excellence thus aiming to achieve higher (Steinberg et al., 1992). African American adolescents' lack of peer support for academic achievement offsets the authoritative parenting they receive at home (Steinberg et al., 1992). There are several mechanisms that contribute to academic achievement including social environment, parenting styles, and perceived teacher support.

Perceived racial and ethnic barriers are contributing to differences in academic motivation and achievement among adolescents of color (Kenny et al., 2007). Kenny et al. (2007) defined barriers to success as “obstacles identified by students as limiting the achievement of their career goals” (p. 338). Kenny et al. (2007) found that friends and peers antischool values were identified as the most frequent barrier to success; family misfortune (death, health, etc.) and neglect were also perceived as barriers to academic success. Low expectations, irrelevant curriculum and lack of structure were seen as barriers as well stating that the overall school quality was poor thus leading students to have a decrease in the desire to try hard (Kenny et al., 2007). Researchers also found that perceived racial and ethnic discrimination were significant barriers to academic motivation and achievement both within the school and the community (Kenny et al., 2007). While peers were identified most frequently as a barrier, family was most frequently perceived as supportive stating that families offered guidance and emotional support; this supports previous research because of the importance of family in Latino, Caribbean, and African American culture (Kenny et al., 2007). Schools were the second most

salient form of support for adolescents by providing students with resources (personal, activities) with additional guidance found in teachers perceived as supportive (Kenny et al., 2007). More support can be found in friends of high achievers were perceived as a support while peers of low achieving adolescents were more likely to be perceived as a barrier (Kenny et al., 2007).

Researchers have found that through relational support such as positive perceptions of family and teacher support, and positive peer attitudes about academics and career attainment adolescents are attaining higher academic achievement (Kenny et al., 2007). Therefore, it is imperative to assess school climate and be aware of these perceived barriers to ensure positive relationships are developing between students of color and their teachers, parents, and peers.

Chapter III: Critical Analysis

Chapter III consists of numerous key findings derived from the literature review describing the dynamic relationship between peer groups and their influence on academic motivation and achievement. Following the summary chapter III includes a critical analysis of the current literature, as well as, recommendations for further research.

Summary

It is clear that schools are social environments and utilizing the research in Chapter II, it is evident that peers play a significant role in both academic motivation and achievement. Peers tend to choose friends who are similar to them in both academic motivation and achievement (Chen, Chang & He, 2003; Kindermann, 1993; Ryan, 2001). Motivation is both intrinsic and social in nature and can be seen at numerous levels; however, peers can both positively and negatively influence each other's academic motivation (Ryan, 2000; Ryan, 2001; Véronneau & Dishion, 2011; Watts, Cashwell, and Schweiger, 2004). Through cooperative learning working together facilitates discussion on academics thus providing an avenue for academically positive behaviors (Roseth, Johnson, & Johnson, 2008).

Academic achievement is a strong predictor of future success and outcomes for variables including: educational placement (four year/two year college), scholarship opportunities and potential employment opportunities. Numerous variables contribute to academic achievement including social environment, parenting styles, and perceived teacher support (Yu & Patterson, 2010). Positive behaviors surrounding school are important to individuals when choosing peers. It is the desire and the motivation behind the behavior more than the outcome that is driving peer group choice.

School counselors will encounter peer groups because schools are inherently social environments. Through the understanding of the dynamics of peer groups school counselors can be prepared to respond to both positive and negative peer pressures. Through adolescence peer groups are dynamic and often changing as individuals create relationships based on what will reinforce their self-efficacy. Furthermore, peer groups are important when it comes to understanding one's academic motivation and achievement.

Critical Analysis

It is evident through the literature examined and summarized that peer groups play a significant role in adolescent academic motivation and achievement. Students tend to choose friends based upon shared interests, extra-curricular activities, as well as similar academic motivation and achievement. Wentzel and Caldwell (1997) found that positive relationships at school facilitate support in involvement and engagement in school-related activities. Therefore, individuals attempt to choose friends who have similar interest including academic variables. Similar peer group motivation and attitudes facilitate acceptance by peers' thus increasing school satisfaction.

Peers, academic motivation and achievement. Previous research shows that peer groups play a pivotal role in academic motivation as well as academic success (Kindermann, 1993; Kindermann & Skinner, 2012). Peer relationships facilitate a sense of support; perceived support from peers is more strongly correlated to academic motivation than perceived support from parents and teachers (Wentzel, 1998). Therefore, peer groups positively support academic motivation by participating in academically positive activities such as cooperative learning.

Peer group monitoring of behavior is only useful if all peers within the environment adhere to adult standards for achievement and behavioral norms (Wentzel, 1999). Peers will be unable to create an environment of academic motivation and achievement if there are individuals who don't feel accepted within that classroom or a particular peer group. Previous research has stated that peer relationships contribute to a child's well-being in numerous ways including: personal validation, emotional support, companionship and entertainment (Wentzel, 2009). On the other hand, a lack of feeling accepted by peers is correlated with disengagement from school, and lower levels of interest (Wentzel, 1999).

Cross cultural implications. Cross-cultural experiences show that the feeling of belongingness is positively correlated with academic motivation and achievement (Mallet et al., 2011; Yu & Patterson, 2010). Acceptance by peers is positively correlated with school satisfaction and the pursuit of academic goals such as wanting to learn (Wentzel, 1999). The overall school environment contributes to a student feeling welcome. Feelings of belongingness were positively correlated with academic motivation and achievement with findings indicating that academic achievement of students of color who don't feel welcome within their school decline (Mallet et al., 2011). Furthermore, there were numerous perceived barriers to academic success including peer attitudes that were antischool as well as circumstances regarding their family such as health, and lack of financial support (Kenny et al., 2007). Family also plays a significant role in the academic motivation and achievement of minority youth by providing them with a support system (Kenny et al., 2007).

Conclusion

In conclusion, school professionals should be aware that, overall, adolescents have positive attitudes towards school and they are motivated to well in school. It is especially important that

teachers and administration understand that peer groups have similar attitudes towards school and participate in academically positive behaviors as well as achieve similar grades and work in groups together (Véronneau & Dishion, 2011; Yu & Patterson, 2010). This is important to know because administration and teachers can be aware of peer groups and those that are building positive habits and those that are bringing about negative changes. Peer groups are a powerful social avenue in which adolescents continue to desire acceptance, and through an understanding of the impact peers have on each other school professionals can better help students attain their future goals.

Recommendations

Looking forward there are two recommendations that future research could address. First, further research could further look at the degree academic variables contribute to peer group choice. One thing they could do is by utilizing friendship pairs and asking them several questions regarding why they are friends such as: social variables, academic variables, and career variables. Second, further research could look at freshman students' academic achievement in high school by assessing grades before high school and during, while providing a survey on peer group change. With this current information on peer group influence on academic motivation and achievement educators can utilize this knowledge and facilitate positive interactions among peers while identifying peer groups who may need additional support.

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