

**Attitudes of Adults That were Socially
Rejected During Their School Years Towards
Minority and Foreigner Groups: Are There
Variables That Contribute to the Differences
in Their Positions**

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Ph.D. Thesis

Submitted to the Senate of Bar-Ilan University

Abstract

The rejection of outgroups, such as minority and foreigner groups, by ingroup members is a perennial human problem that has become even more acute in our times (Aloni, Yogev, Michaeli & Nave, 2011). There are different theories that explain the causes for the development of negative positions towards outgroups. The current research focuses on theories according to which the rejection of an individual by his peers in his school years might lead him to reject outgroups in adulthood. Based on previous studies (e.g., Kornyeveva & Boehnke, 2013), the first objective of this study is to find out whether peer rejection of an individual during school years can lead him to reject outgroups such as minority and foreigner groups as an adult, and whether factors exist that could intermediate this connection.

In addition, the question arises whether there are variables that inversely cause the rejected individual to accept the minority and foreigner groups rather than reject them, since peer rejection is a complex experience involving significant stress, and might, therefore, affect individuals who undergo it in different ways (Binstock, 2003; Sapouna & Wolke, 2013). Also, studies have shown that there are factors that might prevent the transmission of ethnic and racial prejudice from parents to children (Dhont & Van Hiel, 2012). In other words, due to these factors, children might accept minority and foreigner groups rather than reject them as their parents do. Based on those studies, the second objective of this study is to track both inner and outer factors that lead an adult who was a rejected child to accept minority and foreigner groups.

The research assumptions were investigated through the use of Mixed Methods, both quantitative and qualitative. In the first stage, questionnaires were used to check the positions of 300 Jewish youngsters, all born in Israel and pre-military, towards minority groups (Israeli Arabs and Israelis of Ethiopian descent) and foreigner groups. The aim of the questionnaires was to check if there was a connection between the experience an individual had had with his peer group in his school years and his positions towards minority and foreigner groups in his adulthood. The questionnaires were also designed to check whether there are factors that affect the relation between negative experience in school years and positions in adulthood. Out of the 300 participants of the first stage, 24 participants who had been peer rejected in their school years were interviewed. The

purpose of the interviews was to identify the factors that distinguish between peer rejected children who have turned into adults that reject minority and foreigner groups and peer rejected children who became adults that accept these groups.

The assumptions of the quantitative study were mostly confirmed. A positive relation was found to exist between school years peer rejection suffered by a subject and rejection of minority groups (Israeli Arabs and Israelis of Ethiopian descent) later on by that subject. Furthermore, variables that intermediate this relation were also found, in addition to variables that moderate it. The intermediating variables discovered were self-evaluation, aggressive reaction to the rejection and social connections with minority groups. The moderating variables found were ethnic origin, gender and degree of religiosity. However, a connection between peer rejection and rejection of foreigners (Foreign residents who emigrate to Israel) in adulthood were not found. The assumptions of the qualitative study were also corroborated: factors were found to affect positively the positions towards minority and foreigner groups of adult individuals who suffered peer rejection in their school years. Moreover, the findings of the qualitative study revealed two different mechanisms affecting peer rejection: result and process. The result mechanism relates to the direct effect of the peer rejection on positions towards the rejected during school years, positions that become fixed in adulthood. The process mechanism relates to the contribution of peer rejection to positions towards those who are rejected in adulthood through a process involving resources of psychological strength. Revealing these mechanisms helped to explain the findings of the quantitative study, among other things.

The current study offers both theoretic and practical contribution to research in the field. From the theoretic point of view, the research findings support previous studies that found that in the immediate short term peer rejection leads to a rejection of outgroups (e.g., Nesdale et al., 2007). In addition, the findings expand and demonstrate that beyond the immediate effect of peer rejection on negative positions towards outgroups the effect of the rejection is a long term effect. The current study is also important for the theoretical literature that deals with the development of the authoritarian personality, as, in addition to parental rejection that negatively affects positions towards rejected outside groups in adulthood, peer rejection has a similar effect on these positions. Moreover, the findings of the qualitative study revealed the multidimensional effect of school years peer rejection on positions towards minority and foreigner groups

in adulthood, contributing thus to the theoretic knowledge dealing with the different effect of school years peer rejection on individuals who had experienced it later in adulthood. From the practical point of view, the research findings might clear the way towards developing prevention programs to help peer rejected students in order to develop and enhance factors that might lead these students to become adults who accept minority and foreigner groups.