International and Comparative Peer Research: Challenges in comparing apples to oranges

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Inhalt

Vorwort .................................................. 9
Peergroups als Forschungsgegenstand — Einleitung ........................................ 11
Sina-Mareen Köhler, Heinz-Hermann Krüger und Nicole Pfeff

I Grundlagentheorie und Disziplinperspektiven

Die erziehungswissenschaftliche Perspektive:
Peers, Lernen und Bildung ........................................ 37
Heinz-Hermann Krüger

Die soziologische Perspektive: Peers und ihre Bedeutung für die
gesellschaftliche (Des-)Integration .................................. 55
Hartmut M. Griese

Die psychologische Perspektive: Persönlichkeitsentwicklung ...................... 75
Maria von Salisch

Die sozialisationstheoretische Perspektive:
Der Wandel der Peer- und Freundschaftsbeziehungen im Lebensverlauf ...... 89
Sina-Mareen Köhler

International and Comparative Peer Research:
Challenges in comparing apples to oranges ........................................ 121
Jonathan Bruce Santo, Lina Maria Saldarriaga and William M. Bukowski

II Methodische Zugänge

Das Gruppendiskussionsverfahren ........................................ 137
Peter Loos

Interviews .......................................................... 145
Maren Zschach

Ethnografie ...................................................... 151
Heike de Boer
International and Comparative Peer Research: Challenges in comparing apples to oranges

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Introduction

The study of peer relationships has had to negotiate from its beginnings the challenges of conducting international and comparative peer research. Although we have a dearth of literature to better inform our theory and approaches, not to mention a wealth of statistical resources at our disposal (that would have marveled early pioneers in this field), a range of new complexities require our careful attention and examination. The current chapter aims to speak to the progress made in this area thus far and delineate remaining issues that researchers interested in conducting international peer research must address. In this chapter, we use Urie Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory (1977) as a framework to highlight some of the major issues in comparative peer research. Given that the study of peer relationships is inextricably linked to the understanding of contexts, we will also explore a variety of these contexts relevant to the current chapter. In many respects, methodological and statistical challenges are intertwined with our theoretical understanding of peer relationships. Though we cannot in the current chapter detail all of them, suggestions for supplemental reading are provided. We’ve broken this chapter into three different sections to touch on each of the major areas of peer research namely sociometry, friendships and peer ratings. For each section, we’ve aimed to provide an example (‘In Focus’) of how all these ideas can be applied. We conclude with a discussion of the future directions in the study of international and comparative peer research.

Applying ecological systems theory to peer research

Urie Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory (1977) served as a counterpoint to a strict behaviorism approach to the study of human development. Among other things, this theory calls us to better understand development from a number of contextual per-
spectives. From the most proximal influences on development of the microsystem to those more removed from the individual at the level of the exosystem and the more distal (though no less relevant) macrosystem level influences, the environment shapes the individual in direct ways or through interactions across levels (i.e.: the mesosystem) and over time through the chronosystem. This approach to the study of human development in general is just as useful to the study of peer relationships in particular. It behooves peer relations researchers to consider these various contextual influences especially when conducting international or comparative work. Though this type of theoretical framework may be daunting, put more parsimoniously Rubin, Bukowski and Parker (1998) point to the need to study peer relations at the dyadic, individual and group level.

International and comparative peer relations through a contextual lens

Using such a contextual approach to the study of the peer group forces us to make important decisions regarding exactly which contextual influences we aim to better understand. For example, Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory (very briefly described above) illustrates that even using peer groups as a context in which developmental change occurs but is also subject to change over time. Case in point, the change in the organization of peer groups as children move from elementary school to middle school and high school in North America may serve to explain the change in the association between aggression and status (Gillesen/Mayeu 2004). As such, developmental change is our first context that we should also keep in mind when measuring peer group dynamics.

The next most pressing context to consider when assessing peer dynamics is the choice of cohort as an index of the peer group (Bukowski/Gillesen 1998). For example, in the study of child and adolescent peer relationships, whether one chooses to use the same-sex peer group, the classroom overall, the entire grade or the whole school as comparative group is going to have theoretical, practical, methodological and statistical implications (Bukowski/Gillesen 1998). While this topic itself is too vast to explore in detail in the current chapter, suffice it to say that it is in our best interests to target the cohort used as the reference group based on where we expect to see the most variability to be explained by the peer constructs at our disposal.

Gender serves as another key contextual layer that has innumerable implications to our understanding of peer relations not least of which is how the individual is nested in the group. Based on the work of Maccoby (1998), gender has been considered as an additional factor beyond simply comparing mean differences across groups but by instead conceptualizing the role that gender may play as a culture in which people develop within. Countless studies have aimed to delineate the role that gender plays in determining what's acceptable to the peer group (for a view on how these issues apply to aggressive behavior, see Hawley/Littl/Rodkin 2013).

Moreover, it's also important to consider the relations in a number of correlative studies. Very least a research group can do is measure inter-group coloring how peer pressure to place culture and input powerfully, the place. The groups that index behaviors that are most prevalent, peer behaviors of a group (Lee/Gesner/Lewis descriptive norms as how peer relations how comparative aspects assume that the various or another.

International and Comparative Peer Research

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Moreover, it's also important to consider socio-economic status in shaping peer relations in a number of ways. Unfortunately, a dearth of literature has shown that disentangling socio-economic status from other variables in next to impossible in most correlational study designs using community-based samples. With that in mind, the very least a researcher interested in assessing contextual differences between peer groups can do is measure and seriously consider socio-economic status as an additional layer coloring how peer groups function.

It is embedded within this discussion of the previous contextual factors that we place culture and international considerations. Stated perhaps simplistically but no less powerfully, the place of testing is an additional context which shapes peer relations. The groups that individuals are embedded within serve to form the basis of the types of behaviors that are expected and modeled (Bukowski/Adams/Santo 2006). Though it is beyond the scope of this chapter to enumerate the various aspects of the international context which can influence peer groups, instead we point to the easiest and most prevalent, peer group norms. For example, descriptive norms reflect the aggregated behaviors of a group while injunctive norms reflect the compiled beliefs of a group (Lee/Geisner/Lewis/Neighbors/Larimer 2007). Understanding these injunctive and descriptive norms are crucial if we are expected to design informed studies to quantify how peer relationships vary as a function on the peer group. All told, the international/ comparative aspects of peer research we describe in brief in the current chapter assume that the various contextual considerations above are also addressed in some form or another.

International and Comparative Examination of Sociometry

Peers can provide valuable information about children's interpersonal connections and social status (Moreno 1934). One original method for gathering such information is through sociometry. Sociometry is rooted in the theory that social dynamics consist of three dimensions: positive forces (attractions) that pull people together, negative forces (repulsions) that push people apart, and indifference. Sociometric measurements rely on two primary measurement techniques: rating scales and peer nominations. For rating scale measures, each child in the peer group provides ratings of the degree to which they like or dislike each member of the peer group. In peer nomination measures, each child identifies which members of their peer groups they like and dislike. These ratings or nominations are then summed for each member of the peer group to provide indices of the degree to which each child is liked (accepted) by their peers and disliked (rejected) by their peers. Traditionally, this information is used to classify children into groups or along dimensions.

Given the storied history of sociometry in quantifying peer groups, it's perhaps surprising that so little work in the area of comparative sociometry exists. One likely explanation for this is that the use of classifications makes cross-cultural studies clumsy
characteristics of the class (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.85 for the scale).

Analyses were conducted at level 1 nested within school level, with repeated measures of SES, gender, same-sex, and individualism and collectivism. In the more well-known model of independence with random intercepts and slopes, standard errors were estimated using restricted maximum likelihood.

We observed the manifested differences across variables, including sex, age, and SES. To explain, when we tested for sex differences, we found that girls were more likely to be rejected by their peers compared to boys.

In one study (Saldarriaga/Velásquez/Santo/Chaux/Bukowski 2009; Bukowski/Cillessen/Santo/Saldarriaga/Velásquez 2014), we examined how differences in adolescents’ peer acceptance, attraction, and rejection varied as a function of a number of contextual factors in a sample of 1081 early adolescents (mean age = 10.25 years, SD = 1.42; 559 male, 522 female) in Montréal, Canada (N = 391) and in Barranquilla, Colombia (N = 690). The goal of the study was three-fold, first to delineate how canonical peer dynamics differed across contexts. Second, to identify differences between the children from Montréal and Barranquilla in the number of friendship nominations and the degree of reciprocity and how much children liked their friends (see In Focus: Friendships from an international and comparative approach). Lastly, we wanted to clarify whether the ratings of peers on two popular (pun intended) forms of measured behavior differed across samples, SES or other characteristics of the classroom (see In Focus: Peer ratings from an international and comparative approach).

Using the cross-cultural dataset detailed above, some insights can be gleaned so as to better understand how contexts influence traditional sociometric assessments. In this example, participants were provided with a list of every participating member of the class. The children were asked to rate each of their classmates from 1 “...do not like this person”, 2 “...usually do not like this person”, 3 “...sort of like this person”, 4 “...usually like this person” and 5 “...like this person very much”. To assess differences in the chara...
characteristics of the classroom context, we used a measure (Singelis 1994) of individualism (Cronbach’s alpha = .51) and collectivism (Cronbach’s alpha = .64).

Analyses were conducted using two-level multilevel modeling with children (at level 1) nested within their same-sex class peer group (level 2). For each of the outcomes, we tested for differences as a function of place of testing (Montréal vs. Barranquilla), SES, gender, same-sex peer group size and lastly, the same-sex peer groups’ mean level of individualism and collectivism. Readers unfamiliar with multi-level modeling need not dismay. In the examples in this chapter, we use multi-level modeling instead of the more well-known multiple regression due to its ability to address the fundamental lack of independence when having people in any group rate each other which can constrain standard errors when using multiple regressions thus increasing type 1 statistical errors (Raudenbush/Bryk 2002). Nevertheless, the findings can be interpreted much as in with multiple regression.

We observed three unique patterns of findings such that contextual effects were manifested differently in the measures of acceptance overall, attraction and repulsion. To explain, when we analyzed for differences as a function of place of testing, SES, gender, same sex peer group size and individualism/collectivism, the effects varied based on the outcome.

For peer acceptance (the average rating a child received from peers), there was a strong effect of place of testing in that participants in Montréal received much lower acceptance scores than those in Barranquilla of almost half a point (the scale ranged from 1 to 5). Moreover, there was a similarly strong influence of SES such that participants from high SES classes were higher in acceptance than their low SES counterparts. There was no significant difference in peer acceptance between boys or girls, as a function of the size of the same sex peer group or either individualism or collectivism.

A completely different pattern of findings emerged for attraction, the number of times a child was rated a “5” on the scale (...like this person very much) by participating classmates. As expected based on the effects on the average ratings detailed above, participants in Montréal received fewer nominations for the highest measure of attraction compared to children in Barranquilla. The similarities between the results end there however. There was no meaningful difference in attraction based on SES or gender. However, same-sex peer group size did, in that the larger the same-sex peer group, the more of the highest nominations children received in general. Even more interesting is that collectivist peer groups gave significantly fewer of the highest nomination while individualistic peer groups gave more.

When examining the repulsion nominations, the number of times a child was rated a “1” on the scale (...do not like this person) by participating classmates another set of results was observed. Here, we saw no differences on the basis of place of testing. Nevertheless, SES effects emerged in that high SES peer groups were less likely to nominate peers as someone they do not like. There were no gender differences though there was again a significant effect of the same-sex peer group size in that the larger the same-sex peer group, the more of such nominations children received in general. Also observed
again was that collectivistic peer groups gave significantly fewer of the lowest nomination while individualistic peer groups gave more.

It's worth mentioning that this provides only a taste of the potential richness available to study sociometry from a comparative approach. All we've done above is simply illustrate how much variability there exists in peer acceptance ratings (be they given or received) as opposed to attraction and repulsion nominations (also given and received). We've yet to delineate how the associations between these outcomes to 'traditional' predictors of sociometric attraction and repulsion vary as a function of the contextual systems. Leadership, aggressive and prosocial behavior are prime candidates to examine from a comparative approach. For a more detailed description of this framework see Santo (2006) and Santo et al. (2015). Lastly, there are a host of contextual factors worth exploring beyond place of testing, SES, gender, same sex peer group size and individualism and collectivism.

**International and Comparative Examination of Friendships**

Perhaps the most ubiquitous measure of peer relationships is that of friendships. Friendships can be identified using observational methods but are perhaps best assessed using individuals' nominations of who their friends are. The major advantage of using nominations of friendships is that it allows us to differentiate between friendships that are reciprocated (where the peer also chose the child as a friend) compared to those that are not. The distinction between friends can also be quantified by asking people to indicate who their best friend, second best friend, third best friend is and so on to other more peripheral friends. Though we don't discuss them here, mutual antipathies are an underexplored but equally fruitful contrasted application of this type of approach.

There are a variety of ways in which friendships can be compared from international perspective (Chen/Chung/Hsiao 2009). Previous international research has explored differences in the characteristics of friends as a function of culture (Sharabany/Wiseman 1993). Studies have explored proportions of friends (French/Bae/Pidada/Lee 2006), intimacy among friends (French/Lee et al. 2006; Schneider/Fonzi/Tomada/Tani 2000; Way 2006), self-esteem derived from friendships (Dayan/Doyle/Markiewics 2001; French/Pidada/Victor 2005; Chen/ Kaspar/Zhang/Wang/Zheng 2004) and help from friends (Chen/Kaspar et al. 2004; Tietjen 1989).

However, these are just a starting point for questions that might be answered. Friendships besides best friendships have been shown to be influenced by context. There are a number of interesting examinations of the size of the clique in some places compared to others. There's also evidence to suggest that sex cleavage, a remarkably consistent characteristic of children's friendships differ across samples. Perhaps most importantly, studies of the degree to which friendships are stable over time based on context are rare. Below, we provide an example of how children rank their friendships differently based on a number of contextual factors.

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**In Focus: Friendship**

The participants were of a list of every part their same-sex best child they considere their third best friend, up were used in the current discussion of testing (Montreal peer groups' mean). Concerning the f having a larger numbre of friends in the current discussion.

The largest compared SES though. Children friends than children almost identical. The forms of contextual ranquilla liked the f their friends. Mean Other SES differenc more reciprocated f aspects of friendship same sex peer group collectivistic groups.

Together, these factors occur as a function characteristic the same sex p chosen, whether the chosen friends...
In Focus: Friendships from an international and comparative approach

The participants were also administered a friendship nomination form which consisted of a list of every participating member of the class. The children were asked to identify their same-sex best friends by writing a number in the box beside the name of each child they considered a same-sex friend (one best friend, one second best friend, one third best friend, up to three other friends). Only reciprocated same-sex friendships were used in the current analyses.

Analyses were conducted using three-level multilevel modeling (Raudenbush/Bryk 2002). Individual ratings of each friend (level 1) were nested within the child (level 2) and each child was nested within their same-sex class peer group (level 3). Relevant to the current discussion is that we tested for a range of contextual factors including place of testing (Montréal vs. Barranquilla), same-sex peer group size and lastly, the same-sex peer groups’ mean level of individualism and collectivism.

Concerning the first research question, children in Barranquilla were more likely to have a larger number of other friends (approximately 16% more) than children in Montréal. Though the difference was smaller, they nominated more close friends as well. The largest comparative difference in the number of friends chosen was as a function of SES though. Children from high SES classes nominated approximately 50% more other friends than children from low SES classes even though the number of close friends was almost identical. These findings alone reiterate the importance of considering multiple forms of contextual differences. It’s worth pointing out though that children from Barranquilla liked the friends they choose significantly more and were liked back more by their friends. Meanwhile, the children in Montréal had more reciprocated friendships. Other SES differences included that high SES children liked their friends more, had more reciprocated friendships and were liked back more by their friends. Finally, other aspects of friendships varied as a function of how individualistic and collectivistic the same sex peer group was. Most notably, individualistic groups had more close friends while collectivistic groups liked their friends more.

Together, these findings serve to illustrate that differences in children’s friendships occur as a function of place of testing, gender, SES and how individualistic and collectivistic the same sex peer group is. These effects were observed in the number of friends chosen, whether they were close or more distal friendships, how much children liked their chosen friends and whether these friendships were reciprocated.

International and Comparative Examination of Peer Ratings

Finally, because children can provide unique information about their peers, peer assessment techniques are an important method for understanding children’s characteristics, behaviors, and reputations. Children are in the position to offer insider information
about peers based on several varied experiences that occur over time that may not be apparent to outside observers. Furthermore, measurement error can be reduced by gathering data about each child from every member of the peer group. However, there are important considerations in interpreting peer assessment data from an international and comparative approach. Peer reports can be significantly influenced by the characteristics of the reporter (e.g., gender, peer status), the reporter’s liking for the target child, infrequent or uncharacteristic but salient events (e.g., violations of social norms), and previously constructed behavioral reputations (e.g., aggression and narcissism) that are often resistant to change (Hymel 1986; Hymel/Wagner/Butler 1990).

Peer assessments, like the ubiquitous Revised Class Play (Masten/Morison/Pellegrini 1985), often rely on peer nominations in which children indicate which members of their peer group fit particular characteristics (e.g., someone who is cranky) or behavioral descriptions (e.g., someone who reacts quickly without thinking). The number of nominations each child receives for each description are summed to provide a score on each item. By aggregating these scores, researchers can construct a behavioral profile for each child consisting of both broad and narrow dimensions. Broad dimensions are often organized into three categories: moving towards others (e.g., sociability), moving away from others (e.g., social withdrawal) and moving against others (e.g., aggression). Broad dimensions are often further divided into more specific constructs, or narrow dimensions. For example, based on previous research that has distinguished between different types of aggression, peer assessment measures often distinguish between physical, relational, verbal and electronic aggression distinct from whether the aggressive behavior is proactive or reactive let alone direct or indirect.

There exists a wealth of information comparing the information collected from peer ratings across contexts. Perhaps the best example comes from the work of Xinyin Chen and colleagues. Chen, Rubin and Sun (1992) showed that peer assessed shy-sensitive children were less liked by peers in a Canadian sample but better liked by Chinese peers. Even more interesting, increased globalization in China appears to have begun reversing this effect (Chen/Cen/Li/He 2005).

However, to illustrate the complexity in capturing contextual differences in peer reports of behavior, we’ll use a relatively recent publication of some of our work (Velásquez/Saldarriaga/Santo/Bukowski 2010). In this paper, using data collected in Barranquilla and Bogota, Colombia we aimed to explore gender differences in same-sex nominations of two forms of aggressive behavior namely physical and relational aggression. Though there were a number of interesting mean differences, the most intriguing findings related to the associations with peer victimization. In particular, physical aggression was more strongly associated with peer victimization among girls while relational aggression was more strongly associated with peer victimization among boys. The rationale for this effect was differences in the measured descriptive norms. The twist however was that the association between physical aggression and peer victimization differed between girls attending all-girl schools compared to those in mixed-gender schools. Again, the rationale for the difference was based on different norms in each of the groups. The challenge though was ensuring that the groups were comparable be-

In Focus: Peer ratings

The participants were given limited-choice peer evaluation (Masten/Morison/Pellegrini 1985) which two of their peer nomination (Masten/Morison/Pellegrini 1985) which two of their peers is mean, hurts others one who plays fairly, and helps others; Crc call them names, oth = .80).

Analyses were of mean number of same-class peer group (level and prosocial behavior we tested for a range of scores vs. Barranquilla), and level of individualism.

In terms of mean differences, the sample from Barranquilla relates to every individual nominations of the mean number of behavior showed that sample. However, on the other hand, of SES with higher prosocial behavior was not observed even controlling differences across SES variables (like SES) and nominations was at least than boys.

Beyond mean differences in the a
time that may not be or can be reduced by group. However, there from an internationally-influenced by the characteristics of liking for the target persons (social norms), depression and narcissism (Butler 1990).

Masten/Morison/ (Masten/Morison/Pelligrini 1985). Each participant was asked to indicate which two of their participating same-sex classmates was aggressive (i.e., someone who is mean, hurts others and causes trouble; Cronbach's alpha = .85), prosocial (i.e., someone who plays fairly, cares about others, makes sure that everyone is treated equally and helps others; Cronbach's alpha = .87) and who was victimized by peers (i.e., others call them names, others do mean things to them and try to hurt them; Cronbach's alpha = .80).

Analyses were conducted using two-level multilevel modeling wherein each child's mean number of same-sex nominations (level 1) were nested within their same-sex class peer group (level 2). We used peer victimization as the outcome and used aggression and prosocial behavior as predictors. Relevant to the current discussion is that we tested for a range of contextual factors including, gender, place of testing (Montréal vs. Barranquilla), same-sex peer group size and lastly, the same-sex peer groups' mean level of individualism and collectivism.

In terms of mean differences, a number of interesting effects emerged. First, it bears mentioning that the average same-sex peer group size was significantly larger in the sample from Barranquilla compared to Montréal. This is important because it directly relates to every individual's likelihood of being nominated in each group (seeing that limited nominations were used in this study). More to the point, a simple comparison of the mean number of nominations of peer victimization, aggression and prosocial behavior showed that prosocial behavior nominations were higher in the Barranquilla sample. However, this effect disappears when controlling for same-sex peer group size. On the other hand, there was also same-sex peer group size differences as a function of SES with higher SES schools having significantly smaller peer groups. Interestingly, prosocial behavior was also significantly higher in upper SES classes. This effect persisted even controlling for same-sex peer group size. Thus far, the findings illustrate that differences across countries may be more illusory compared to more salient contextual variables (like SES). Lastly, the only mean difference as a function of gender in peer nominations was also for prosocial behavior with girls receiving more nominations than boys.

Beyond mean differences, the multi-level modeling analyses revealed interesting differences in the associations as well. As might be expected, prosocial behavior was...
negatively associated with peer victimization while aggressive behavior was a positive predictor. More interesting however is that there was significant variability in both of these effects at the level of the same sex peer group. Even though we observed gender differences in the number of nominations of prosocial behavior, there was no significant difference in the degree to which prosocial behavior was negatively associated with peer victimization between boys and girls. However, the negative association between prosocial behavior was significantly stronger among the participants from Barranquilla. When SES was added to the model as a moderator, there emerged a significant effect on how aggressive behavior predicts peer victimization. To explain, in the low SES classes aggressive behavior was more strongly associated with peer victimization than in high SES classes. Lastly, when individualism and collectivism were added to the model, one effect emerged in that the association between aggressive behavior and peer victimization was stronger if classes were higher in collectivism.

All told, these results point out that subtle differences in children's nominations of their peers differ based on place of testing, gender, SES and how individualistic and collectivistic the same sex peer group is. These effects were observed in the mean number of nominations received for prosocial behavior but more importantly in how both variables were associated to peer victimization. Hopefully, this final example serves to bring home how nuanced contextual effects can be even when analyzed relatively simplistically as done here.

Conclusions

In the current chapter, we’ve discussed the role of a number of contextual influences related to the study of sociometry, friendships and peer ratings. For each topic, our aim has been to bring up key examples in which international and comparative approaches served to explain variability in each area of peer research. Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) ecological systems theory has provided a useful framework with which to place contextual variables that have been explored above. Whether they be environmental influences proximal to the individual (microsystem), more distal influences (exosystem), influences at the level over the overarching culture (macrosystem) or interactions across levels (mesosystem), the study of peer groups is deeply imbedded in this ecological theory. Whether through the study of friendships, sociometry or peer ratings there is any advantage of considering individual, dyadic and group processes at play.

Future Directions

Although we are not the first to point to the need for more studies using longitudinal data, larger models and interdisciplinary work in the area of peer relations (Duncan 2012), there is even less understood in how these differ across countries or any num-
behavior was a positive variability in both of we observed gender here was no significant rily associated with ssociation between ants from Barranquillos a significant effect 1, in the low SES class- victimization than in e added to the model, behavior and peer vic- children’s nominations w individualistic and ved in the mean numb- ortantly in how both nal example serves to analyzed relatively sim-

er of other contexts for that matter (Schneider/French/Chen 2006). We would like to go one step further so as to make specific suggestions as to where further researchers should focus their attention.

From a sociometric perspective, there remains a need for longitudinal data to understand international differences in the dynamic nature of attractions and repulsions in the peer group. Jacob Moreno’s (1934) conceptualization of sociology was steeped in an interest in observing change over time. Given the lack of extensive findings in this area, it’s difficult to pinpoint exactly where future research should be focused. Perhaps one particularly pressing area is the need to simply understand contextual differences in understanding attractions and repulsions.

Meanwhile, in the area of friendships, there is a crucial need for more longitudinal studies examining the creation and (just as importantly) the dissolution of friendships over time but ever more so from an international perspective. A large portion of the current literature is cross-sectional from North America and Europe leaving us to wonder how these processes may differ across countries. Moreover, international longitudinal friendship data would allow us to better understand the mechanisms through which peers are liked, identified as potential friends, chosen as close or distal friends and how the quality of the relationship changes over time.

As for peer assessments, the first major hurdle being tackled currently involves the attempts to establish equivalent measures across languages and countries. Beyond that, we know nothing about the degree to which these reputations crystallize as socialization within peer groups takes place. Another avenue that we see as ripe for theoretical delineation is the various structures of groups and the means by which different forms of norms emerge.

Given the myriad advances in statistical software packages in the last 15 years, there is also a nagging need for models which capture the complexity of the (though still imperfect) multiple layers of the peer contexts. In the study of friendships, do the processes through which they form differ for neighborhood compared to school-based peer groups? To ascertain this would require large models with individuals nested within schools AND neighborhoods simultaneously. These more complex models of peer group functioning (read: larger multilevel models accounting for nested data) are already underway with statistical advances that have allowed us to create three level and now four levels models (and more by somewhat arcane means of partitioning variance).

Lastly, no discussion of future directions in comparative peer research would be complete without a call for additional Interdisciplinary research. The next generation of pioneers in the field will be those who (appear to) seamlessly integrate economic principles, biological markers, genetic considerations, neuroscience approaches and sociological theories with our understanding of peer relationships, to simply name the low hanging fruit. As stakeholders in this endeavor, we are especially eager to see what burgeoning scholars working with more established researchers in a variety of fields will bring to this already complex field.
Closing remarks

Although a large body of peer research exists in the area of international and comparative perspective, in many ways we are only beginning to touch on the various ways in which peer groups may be similar or different across contexts. Though we’ve explored contextual factors ranging from international issues, socio-economic among others. With the above longitudinal, statistical and theoretical considerations touched upon in the study of international and comparative differences in friendships, sociometry and peer assessments, there is also a need to examine these principles with an integration of ideas and practices beyond psychology.

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