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Santo, Jonathan Bruce and Bukowski, W. M., "The relationship between morality, popularity and acceptance among children" (2005). *Psychology Faculty Publications*. 34.

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The Relationship Between Morality, Popularity and Acceptance Among Children

Jonathan Santo, Concordia University; William Bukowski, Concordia University

1245 children (mean age = 10.42) participated in the study (681 female). Data collection took place in Montréal, Canada (MO, $n = 382$) and Barranquilla, Colombia (BA, $n = 863$), from either high SES ($n = 528$) or low SES ($n = 717$). Subjects rated each other for levels of justice, care, popularity and acceptance. Care and justice were found to be strongly related to acceptance ($r = 0.43$ and $r = 0.40$, respectively) and less strongly related to popularity ($r = 0.32$ and $r = 0.31$, respectively). Care and justice were highly positively correlated to each other ($r = 0.61$) as were acceptance and popularity ($r = 0.45$). Using multiple regression, care was most predictive of popularity in low SES BA boys and low SES MO girls. On the other hand, care was the least predictive of popularity in high SES MO girls and high SES BA boys. Justice was most predictive of popularity in low SES and high SES BA boys as well as low SES BA girls. Finally, justice was the least predictive of popularity in low SES MO boys and high SES BA girls. Both care and justice predicted popularity and acceptance, though more strongly for acceptance. Based on Piagetian thought, the relationship between morality and acceptance suggests “mutual respect.” On the other hand, the weaker relationship between morality and popularity may demonstrate a form of “unilateral respect” exemplifying authority (within the peer group).