

# Longitudinal associations among peer and family identity and susceptibility to peer influence

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## Introduction

Adolescents are known to be highly susceptible to the influence of their peers, and this can often lead to unsafe behaviors.

However, this susceptibility is not homogenous across all adolescents. **Social identity theory** may help us understand individual differences in susceptibility to peer influence. We know that peers and families are two salient sources of social influence in adolescents' lives, but not much research currently focuses on how these identifications affect susceptibility to peer influence.

## Research Question

How are family and peer identity individually associated with susceptibility to peer influence in adolescence?

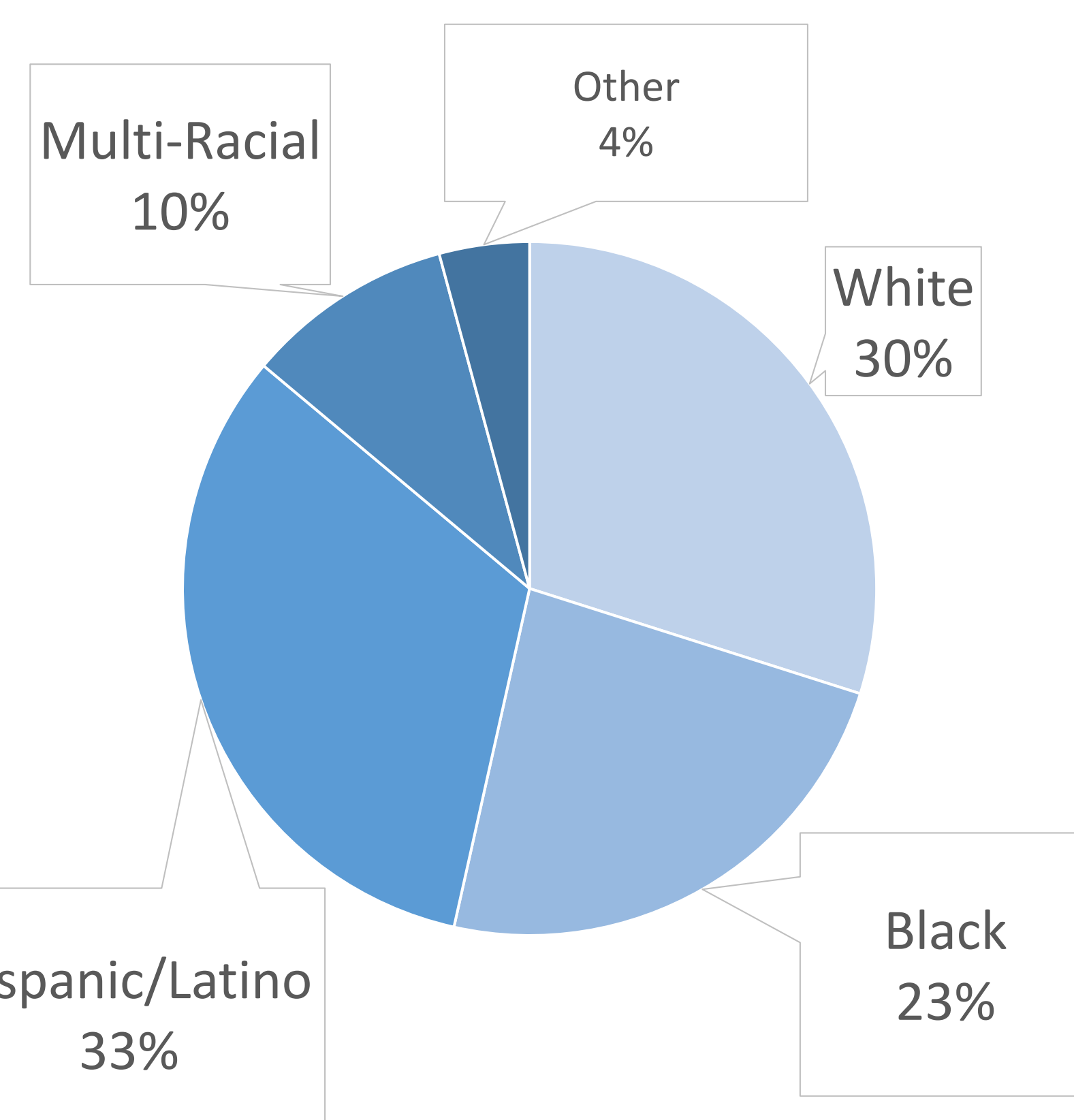
## Participants

142 adolescents (52% female) measured across 3 waves.

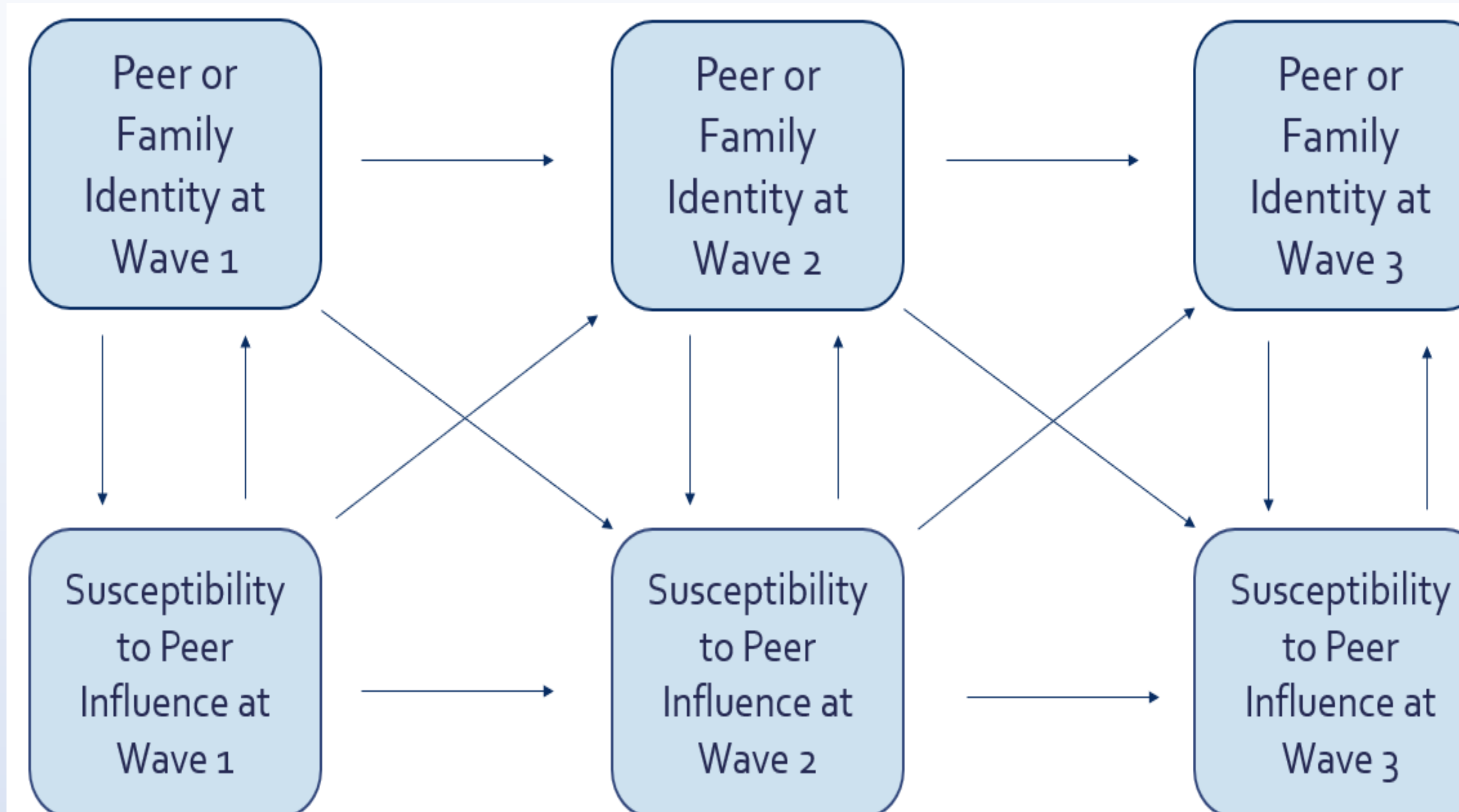
Wave 1: 12.32 years (SD = .6)

Wave 2: 13.2 years (SD = .7)

Wave 3: 14.23 years (SD = .7)



## Longitudinal Study Model



## Measures

Questionnaires were completed via Qualtrics on a laptop computer during an in-person lab session. Statements were coded on a 1-5 Likert scale, 1 being "strongly disagree" and 5 being "strongly agree"

### Measuring Peer and Family Identity

1.) I feel a sense that I personally belong in my friend group/family

2.) My friends/family are important to the way I think of myself as a person

### Measuring Susceptibility to Peer Influence

1.) I go along with my friends just to keep my friends happy

2.) I think it is more important to fit in with the crowd than to stand out as an individual

3.) It's pretty easy for my friends to get me to change my mind

4.) I would do something that I knew was wrong just to stay on my friends' good side

5.) I do risky activities when I am with my friends that I wouldn't do if I were alone

## Results

### Concurrent Analyses

- High family identity predicted low susceptibility to peer influence at wave 3 only ( $B = -.236$ ,  $SE = .061$ ,  $p < .001$ )
- High peer identity predicted low susceptibility to peer influence at wave 1 only ( $B = -.118$ ,  $SE = .053$ ,  $p = .026$ )

### Longitudinal Analyses

- High susceptibility to peer influence at wave 2 predicted higher peer identity at wave 3 ( $B = .347$ ,  $SE = .153$ ,  $p = .023$ )

## Discussion

- Associations between peer and family identity with susceptibility to peer influence are not stable across adolescence.
- **Peer Identity**
  - Contrary to expectations, higher susceptibility to peer influence at age 13 was associated with higher peer identity at age 14. Perhaps:
    - Susceptibility to peer influence is a stable trait that predicts later peer identification
    - Susceptibility to peer influence does not predict peer identity earlier in adolescence because individuals are still "shopping" for a core friend group.
- **Family Identity**
  - Higher family identity only reduces susceptibility to peer influence concurrently, suggesting that positive family relationships should be cultivated and maintained over time

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