

Abstract

Introduction: Relationship between social anxiety and peer victimization established in children and adolescents (Flanagan et al., 2008) but not young adults.

Method: Participants completed measures of social anxiety and peer victimization at two time points as well as a computer game that simulated social exclusion.

Results: Higher social anxiety related to higher levels of teasing and higher anxiety after exclusion. Higher appearance teasing at Time 1 was associated with higher social anxiety at Time 2.

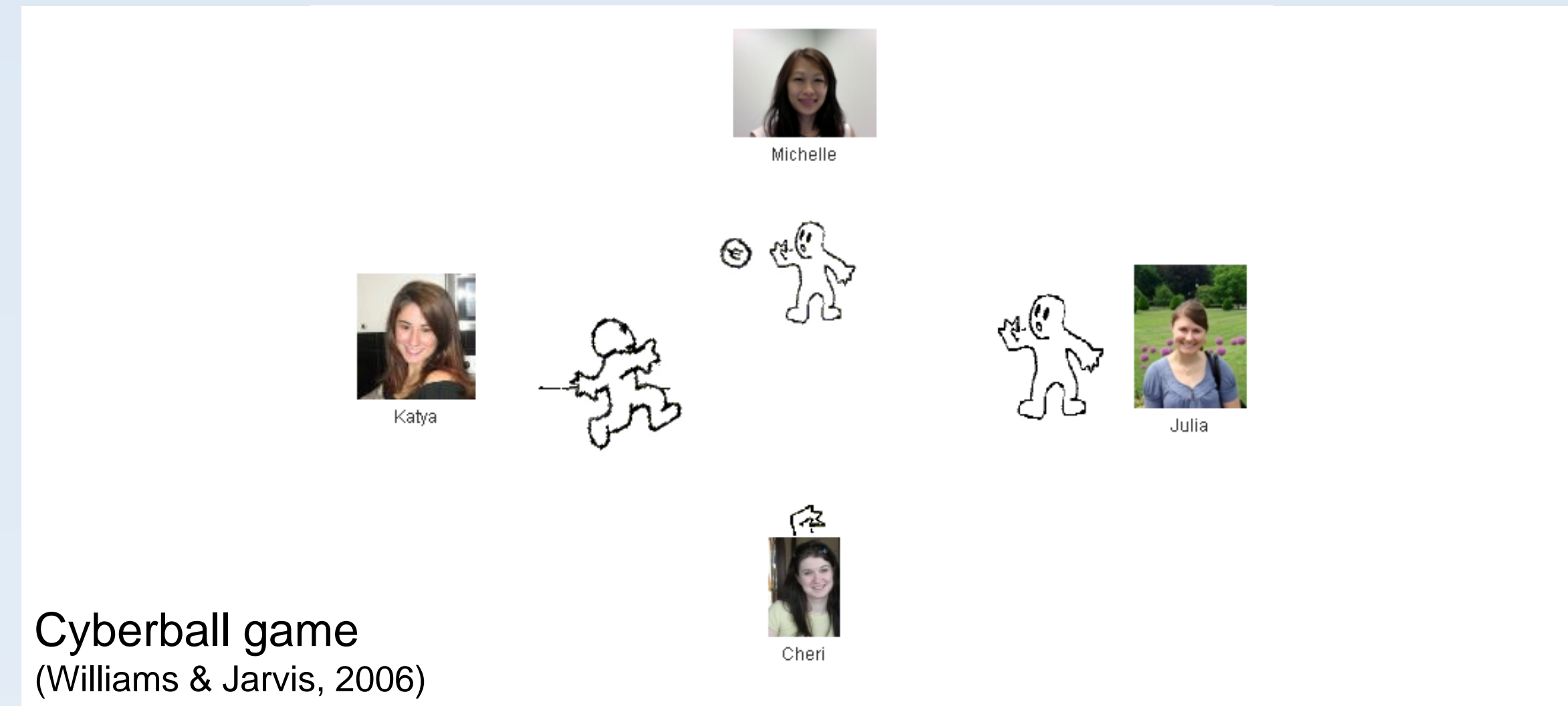
Discussion: Some forms of peer victimization may be a risk factor for higher social anxiety.

Introduction

- Social anxiety related to peer victimization in children and adolescents (Flanagan et al., 2008; Siegel et al., 2009)
- Adults with SAD more likely to report history of teasing than those with obsessive compulsive or panic disorder (McCabe et al., 2003)
- No known prior research on relationship between peer victimization and social anxiety over time in young adults
- Tested in current study:
 - Relationship between peer victimization and social anxiety across two time points
 - Relationship between social anxiety and simulated peer exclusion
- Hypotheses:
 - Higher social anxiety will relate to higher state anxiety after exclusion
 - Higher state anxiety after exclusion will relate to higher social anxiety at Time 2
 - Peer victimization at Time 1 will predict social anxiety at Time 2

Participants

- Participants were 107 students
 - Time 1 (107 students)
 - Time 2 (49 students)
 - Mostly women ($N = 67$; 63%)
 - Mostly Caucasian ($N = 63$; 59%)
 - Mean age of 19.26



Cyberball game (Williams & Jarvis, 2006)

Measures

Straightforward Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (S-SIAS; Mattick & Clarke, 1998; Rodebaugh et al., 2004)

- 20-item measure of anxiety-related reactions to social situations

Straightforward Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation (S-BFNE; Leary, 1983)

- Brief version of the original FNE (Watson & Clark, 1969)
- Measures fear of being negatively evaluated

Brief State Anxiety Measure (BSAM; Berg et al., 1998)

- 6-item measure of state anxiety

Teasing Questionnaire (TQ; Roth, Coles, & Heimberg, 2002)

- 20-item measure of recall about frequency of past teasing
- Four subscales: social, academic, appearance, and performance teasing

Procedure

Session 1:

- Participants completed self-report questionnaires of social anxiety and peer victimization
 - Participants played two rounds of Cyberball computer game (Williams & Jarvis, 2006) to simulate social exclusion
 - Simulates ball-throwing game
 - Excluded for one round and included for one round. Order counter-balanced.
 - Exclusion round: participant is thrown to at first, but then excluded for the rest of the game
 - BSAM before and after each round
 - Created a composite measure of social anxiety by combining the S-SIAS and S-BFNE
- ### Session 2:
- Approximately two months later
 - Participants completed self-report questionnaires

Results: Computer Task

Multiple regression analyses

- Social anxiety (part $r = .23$, $p = .021$) predicted anxiety from exclusion during the computer task over and above state anxiety before the task began (part $r = -.13$, $p = .183$)

Results: Time 2

- State anxiety (part $r = .26$, $p = .076$) from exclusion at Time 1 approached significance predicting social anxiety at Time 2
- Academic teasing (part $r = -.53$, $p < .001$), appearance teasing (part $r = .51$, $p < .001$), and Time 1 social anxiety (part $r = .82$, $p < .001$) were significant predictors of Time 2 social anxiety
- Performance and social teasing did not significantly predict social anxiety at Time 2

Results: Time 1

Zero-order correlations between self-reported peer victimization and social anxiety

	Social Anxiety	TQ total	Social	Academic	Appearance	Performance
Social Anxiety	.74					
TQ total	.32**	.79				
Social	.34**	.74**	.68			
Academic	.27**	.70**	.35**	.76		
Appearance	.18	.73**	.35**	.41**	.70	
Performance	.24*	.69**	.46**	.40**	.34**	.58

Social Anxiety is composite of the S-SIAS and S-BFNE; TQ total = Teasing Questionnaire Total; TQ Subscales: Social, Academic, Appearance, Performance; ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$; The diagonal is Cronbach's Alpha.

Discussion

- Individuals higher in social anxiety experience higher anxiety after completion of a computer task simulating peer victimization via social exclusion
- Individuals high in social anxiety are likely to experience particularly high levels of anxiety when they perceive peer victimization in daily life
- Individuals who reported higher levels of appearance teasing at Time 1 experienced higher levels of social anxiety at Time 2
- Peer victimization may be a risk factor for elevated social anxiety