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Effects of social skills training program designed to improve the social status of isolated and rejected children

Mariella Giuffra Zapatero
College of William & Mary - School of Education

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EFFECTS OF SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAM
DESIGNED TO IMPROVE THE SOCIAL STATUS OF
ISOLATED AND REJECTED CHILDREN

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Faculty of the School of Education
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

by
Mariella Giuffra Zapatero
July 1995

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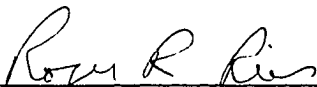
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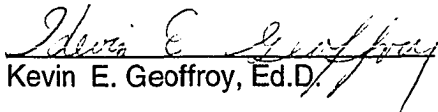
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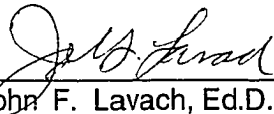
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vi
LIST OF TABLES.....	vii
ABSTRACT.....	viii
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	2
Justification for the Study.....	2
Statement of the Problem.....	3
Theoretical Rationale.....	3
Definition of Terms.....	6
Research Questions.....	6
Sample Description and Data Gathering.....	7
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	8
Historical and Theoretical Overview of Social Learning Theory....	8
Critique.....	12
Social Skills Training.....	13
Critique.....	17
Relationship Between Social Skills Training and Self-Esteem....	19
Critique.....	22
III. METHODOLOGY.....	24
Population and Sample.....	24
Collection of Data.....	25
Instrumentation.....	26
Research Design.....	29

Statistical Analysis.....	30
Research Hypotheses.....	30
Ethical Considerations.....	31
IV. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS.....	32
Hypothesis 1.....	34
Hypothesis 2.....	35
Hypothesis 3.....	36
Hypothesis 4.....	36
Hypothesis 5.....	37
V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	39
Summary.....	39
Findings and Conclusions.....	41
Recommendations.....	44
APPENDICES	
Appendix A. Parent Consent Form.....	46
Appendix B. Sociogram.....	51
Appendix C. Piers-Harris Children Self Concept Scale.....	53
Appendix D. Achenbachs' Teacher's Report Form.....	54
Appendix E. Social Skills Training Sessions.....	55
REFERENCES.....	67
VITA	

EFFECTS OF SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAM
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LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table	
1. 4.1	Table of Raw Score Means and Standard Deviations of Dependent Measures for Experimental and Control Groups..... 33
2. 4.2	Analysis of Covariance Summary Table on Sociogram.....34
3. 4.3	Analysis of Covariance on Social Problems Index for TRF.....35
4. 4.4	Analysis of Covariance on Level of Happiness Index for TRF.....36
5. 4.5	Analysis of Covariance on Self-Concept Index for P-H..... 37
5. 4.6	Analysis of Covariance on Popularity Index for P-H.....38

EFFECTS OF SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAM
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ISOLATED AND REJECTED CHILDREN

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of a social skills training program designed to improve the social status of isolated and rejected children. Subjects were fourth and fifth grade students from two different elementary schools. One school served as the control group and the other one was the experimental group.

The sample consisted of 91 identified students from both schools. A nonequivalent control group research design was used. Pre- and posttest information was gathered using the Piers-Harris Self-Perception Questionnaire, Achenbach's Teacher's Report Form, and Sociogram. Dependent variables were children's self-perception, level of popularity, level of happiness, and social status. Analysis of covariance was chosen to control pre-existing differences between the groups.

The students in the control group were exposed to the same guidance program, educational curriculum and school activities as the experimental group, the only exception was the treatment intervention which was delivered to the experimental group in six weekly sessions of thirty minutes.

The results of this study indicated that students in the experimental group improved their social status when compared with the children from the control

group. The intervention program was effective in decreasing the level of rejection in the identified students. The scale of social problems was higher indicating an increase of identified social difficulties by the classroom teachers of the students in the experimental group. The treatment program was not effective in the improvement of level of happiness, popularity and self-concept.

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EFFECTS OF SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAM
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ISOLATED AND REJECTED CHILDREN

Chapter 1

Introduction

Justification for the Study

Acts of violence among young people nationwide have increased dramatically in recent years. Results from the 1990 Census Bureau indicate that United States is the leading country in the world on reported incidents of violence per capita. According to the Chief of Medical Examiner from the State of Virginia the rate of crime is steadily increasing. Recently, the number of students suspended or expelled due to inappropriate behavior in the schools has also increased significantly.

There is evidence to support the need for intervention programs. According to Parker & Asher (1987), individuals who exhibit antisocial behavior during their formative years are at risk for abnormal socio-emotional development and poor mental health in adolescence and adulthood.

Remediation from a preventive model is more effective and easier than crisis intervention. Working with school counselors to implement training programs to help children acquire adequate social skills in a relaxed circumstance increases the chances for success.

Statement of the Problem

The scope of this research attempted to determine the effectiveness of a social interaction training model delivered by school guidance counselors as part of their regular classroom guidance curriculum.

Theoretical Rational

The fundamentals of social learning theory, according to social learning theorist A. Bandura (1985), are based on direct rewards and punishment, consequences others receive, and verbal instructions from socializing agents. Children integrate the information they receive from these diverse social learning experiences to formulate response-outcome contingency rules. Social learning is strongly influenced by the direct disciplinary experiences children encounter at the hands of their parents and other socializing agents. Another major way that children learn about response-outcome relationships is through observational learning. When children see other children, especially children who are similar to themselves, being rewarded or punished for displaying various responses in certain situations, they infer that they too might incur positive or negative treatment for performing such behaviors under similar circumstances. Observation of the actions of others and the consequences of those actions is an extraordinarily powerful and efficient mechanism of social learning.

Social learning theory stresses reciprocal causal influences among three classes of variables: person variables, situations, and behavior. Each of these factors both influences and is influenced by the other two factors.

Bandura has termed this interacting system of causes 'reciprocal determinism'.

Social learning theory expects individual differences in social behavior as a function of child-rearing climate, social class, and other variables predictive of behavior-consequence rule learning. Predicting behavior, then, depends on knowing each individual's unique history of reinforcing and punishing consequences for a behavior within particular situations.

Bandura contends that much observational learning occurs at a covert, cognitive level. By paying close attention to a model's actions and by forming mental representations of the model's behavior, children can learn and retain a vast repertoire of complicated new response patterns. Because most observational learning takes place without the child actually performing the modeled action at the time it is modeled, Bandura has termed his theory of observational learning a theory of 'no trial learning'. As far as Bandura is concerned, then, social learning is largely an information-processing activity in which information about response patterns and environmental contingencies is transformed into symbolic representations that serve as guides for behavior. Bandura believes that both observational learning and performance are under the control of cognitive processes.

There are three main ways children learn response-outcome expectations. First, they learn through verbal instruction; a second way children learn is through the direct rewards and punishments they receive for imitating; the third, and perhaps most powerful, way in which children learn to anticipate the consequences for imitation is by observing the outcomes that others receive for their actions (vicarious consequences). Children's imitation is most influenced by the consequences they see received by other children who are similar to themselves. This is because children learn that society expects them

to behave the same way as other children who are similar to them in terms of sex, age, and other role memberships. Although Bandura believes that children often strive to perform behaviors they perceive to be appropriate for others of their reference groups, he stresses outcome expectations rather than innate striving for competence as the main motivating factor. Bandura further emphasizes that children learn from a variety of models, picking and choosing behaviors to imitate on the basis of their usefulness and appropriateness for the situation at hand.

In social learning theory peers play a vital role in teaching children new modes of behavior. Peers influence the developing child according to the same laws of social learning as do the child's parents, teacher, heroes, and other classes of socializing agents. However, the content of what children learn from their peers is often very different from what they learn from adults. Furthermore, there are occasions when children deliberately seek out their peers rather than adults for certain kinds of social information.

Peers serve not only as models but also as agents of reinforcement and punishment. Thus, in part, a child's response-outcome rules are learned through the direct consequences they themselves receive from their peers for performing various responses. Children can learn new skills and overcome behavioral deficits through observing the step-by-step performance by a competent peer model, especially a similar peer.

Many children who are deficient in certain social skills do eventually overcome their difficulties. But many unpopular children do not spontaneously shake their difficulties as they develop. In particular, children who are actively rejected by their peers in grade school stand an above-average risk of dropping out of school, becoming delinquent, being diagnosed neurotic or

psychotic, and even committing suicide.

A large body of research provided clear evidence of a significant increase in peer acceptance or interaction of the unpopular/isolated children after a few training sessions. Coaching of social skills appears to be a promising method for helping socially handicapped children acquire the skills needed to participate effectively in school (Perry and Bussey, 1984).

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of a social skills training program, implemented with children who were socially incompetent, group them with children who were popular and offer them training sessions in which desirable social behaviors were presented and reinforced.

Definition of Terms

Observational Learning: The process of acquiring new behavioral patterns from the surrounding environment, stimuli and models.

Social Skills: A repertoire of skills needed to participate effectively within a social group.

Socially Incompetent/Handicapped: An individual who lacks the necessary social skills to form positive interpersonal relationships.

Vicarious Consequences: Application of consequences by observing the outcomes that others receive for their actions.

Research Questions

The study attempted to answer the following questions:

1) Is there any difference in the social status of the students after the training?

2) Is there any difference in the way the student feels about himself or herself as a consequence of participating in the training sessions?

Sample Description and Data Gathering

The study was implemented with students in fourth and fifth grade, from two different elementary schools. A sociometric measurement, the Piers-Harris self-esteem questionnaire and the teacher's report forms were completed for all of the students in the study.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Introduction

In this section theoretical concepts relevant to the effects of social skills training on socially isolated and rejected children were reviewed. This chapter was divided into three sections which summarized both theory and research relevant to the study including: social learning theory, social skills training, and self-esteem.

Historical and Theoretical Overview of Social Learning Theory

Formal, scientific interest in social development can be traced back as early as the beginning of the century. From a psychoanalytic perspective, Adler, Horney, Fromm and Sullivan have been identified as important figures in the development of a psychosocial theory (Hall and Lindzey, 1978). Cognitive Psychology also placed a great importance on the interaction of individuals with their physical and social environments. Cognitivists propose that equally essential to children's development is their interaction with other people (Piaget and Inhelder, 1969). Social learning theorists focused their interest on human learning that occurred within a social context (Ormrod, 1990).

According to Segal (1979), we are all born with an "appetite" for human

contact. The primary caregiver will satisfy this need during the first months of the infant's life. The process of differentiation develops slowly, as the baby grows to form distinct relationships with others.

According to Bandura's (1985) social learning theory, appropriate social skills are acquired by direct reward and punishment, verbal instruction from social agents, and observation of the consequences others receive for performing various responses to certain situations (also called observational learning). Environment and family are crucial during the first years of life. When the child becomes more interested in the interaction with friends of his own age, peers begin to play a vital role in teaching new modes of behavior.

Children usually make friends with children of similar age, sex, race, degree of sociability, interests, and values. The qualities that children seek in a friend vary with age. According to Bigelow (1977), children's friendship expectations fall into three stages. The first stage lasts through the early elementary-school years and is called a 'reward-cost stage.' To children of this age, the ideal friend is someone who is useful and a source of pleasure. In mid-elementary school, children enter a 'normative state' in which shared values and rules become important. Children at this stage stress that mutual acceptance, admiration, and loyalty are important for friendship. In adolescence, children enter an 'empathic stage'. Perhaps for the first time, children really begin to care about what happens to a friend. In their descriptions of friends, children now stress mutual understanding, self-disclosure, and intimacy.

Most children want to make friends with their peers. Hence the social skills necessary to initiate and sustain friendships constitute an important part of social competence. Many children simply lack the necessary skills to make

friends and, as a result, are forgotten, left out, or isolated. Socially competent children possess the skills necessary to achieve the social goals they desire: they know how to make friends, how to influence a playmate, how to solicit information, and so on, and they know how to accomplish these goals in socially acceptable ways. Social competence is not the same thing as having a high rate of social interaction. The quality or skillfulness of a child's interaction is more important to social competence than the child's overall rate of interaction (Hartup, 1983).

A clear consensus exists among social developmental researchers that children's social interactions provide unique and essential contributions to their development (Asher, Coie, 1990; Hartup, 1983). During the last decade, numerous studies have explored social development from different perspectives. Research efforts have included empirical investigations of risk factors associated with poor peer adjustment and intervention efforts designed to ameliorate difficulties in peer relations (Newcomb, Bubowski and Pattee, 1993).

In any given social group, individuals will be grouped in a gradient status that goes from the most popular to the least. Children that belong to the former group will turn out to be successful and well adjusted, and those in the latter group will have a higher risk of developing emotional problems. Studies have demonstrated a strong correlation between adult sociopathology and their early social maladjustment during elementary school years (Putallaz and Gottmen, 1981).

Children need to learn and develop a variety of skills in order to function adequately as productive members of society. School plays an important role in this process. It provides the appropriate environment to develop cognitive

abilities as well as social skills. Formal subjects are covered by specific curricula but socialization is left, for the main part, to the children's ability to develop effective social interactions on their own. Unfortunately there are many children that can not accomplish this goal independently. They are either isolated or rejected by their peers. This group of children is at risk for developing a variety of serious adjustment difficulties during adolescence and adulthood (French & Waas, 1985).

Research has proven that training on appropriate social problem solving affects children's behavioral adjustment in the classroom. Spivack and Shure (1974) developed a cognitive-behavioral model of interpersonal problem-solving which teaches children a set of socially competent behavior.

A large body of research provided clear evidence of a significant increase in peer acceptance or interaction of the unpopular or isolated children after a few training sessions. Coaching of social skills appears to be a promising method for helping socially handicapped children acquire the skills it takes to participate effectively (Perry and Bussey, 1984).

A major concern of our society is the significant increase in violence. Students are not only packing books to schools but also weapons. They have not developed any appropriate problem solving strategies that are socially acceptable. Social skills can be effectively taught within the same structure of the regular curriculum subjects. Many non-academic topics have been introduced in the schools in recent years, such as: family life, drug education, fire safety, etc. A program directed to improve social interactions on identified socially handicapped children is proposed as a preventive intervention model.

Critique

From Bandura's social learning theory to the recent research cited above it is possible to trace the malleability of human social behavior. There are specific points during children's social development in which peer modeling and imitation play a critical role.

There are a number of experimental studies that demonstrate a clear relationship between the lack of social skills and the risk of adult maladjustment and sociopathology. There is also enough evidence to support the effectiveness of social skill training.

A criticism of the program of social skill training is that they were implemented under laboratory conditions and not as part of the students' regular school curriculum. The purpose of this study was to explore the possibility of implementing a program of social skill training within the students' grade curriculum. While socially handicapped children were targeted they were not isolated from their group in order to receive the treatment. The goal was to integrate them as much as possible and help them acquire the skills from their socially successful peers through modeling and coaching.

An additional criticism of these studies is that they did not focus on the preventive aspect of social skill training. The relationship between poor social competence and antisocial behaviors in adulthood was established using a retrospective model. Basic characteristics of incompetence were determined from the profile of those maladjusted adults. This study identified children with social deficits with the purpose of preventing future social malfunction.

Social Skills Training

There is some agreement concerning the benefits of early peer relations. Through peer interaction, children develop the capacity for sensitive perspective-taking in interpersonal relationships (Piaget, 1965). Peers also serve as effective models and reinforcers of socially appropriate behavior (Rubin & Mills, 1988). Poor peer relations may serve both as a reflection of adjustment problems and as a contributor to later difficulties. Childhood peer difficulties are often thought of as predictors of later psychological maladjustment. Indeed, longitudinal data have indicated that aggression and rejection by peers in childhood are risk factors for later antisocial behavior, school drop out, and poor mental health (Parker & Asher, 1987).

Reviews of research linking early social dysfunction with later negative outcomes have consistently reported strong evidence that both aggressiveness toward peers and rejection by them in childhood are predictive of abnormal socio-emotional outcomes in adolescence and adulthood (Coie, 1985; Kohlberg, LaCroze, & Ricks, 1972). Children probably evidence social withdrawal in various ways and these different forms of withdrawal reflect and predict varying forms of psychological difficulty (Rubin & Mills, 1988). Passive isolation appears to become a more salient, deviant, and disliked behavior with increasing age (Younger, Schwartzman, & Ledinham, 1986). These studies consistently show that social withdrawal tends to persist across time. Unpopularity and poor social functioning correlate with and predict children's internalizing difficulties (Lefkowitz & Tesiny, 1980).

Measures of sociometric status are now being used to select children for preventive intervention programs and to evaluate progress in those programs

(Ladd, 1981; Oden & Asher, 1977). Dodge, Coie, and Brakke (1982) found that, rejected children engaged in more off-task behavior than did other children. A number of researchers have found a relationship between antisocial behavior and peer rejection (Dodge, et al., 1982; Hartup, Glazer, & Charlesworth, 1967; McGuire, 1973).

According to Newcomb & Bukowski (1983) social skills training programs have achieved a certain level of success, particularly when change in sociometric status has served as a criterion measure. Asher & Markell (1981) suggest that the relationship between sociometric status and its correlates may be quite complex among elementary school-aged children. The consideration of the frequency and intensity of behavior in various social situations may be particularly important for understanding the role of such behaviors as aggression (Masters & Furman, 1981), and the contextual influence of prior social reputation may be closely associated with maintenance and change of social status (Dodge, 1980).

Hartup (1976) views the quality of a child's interactions with friends as a powerful diagnostic index. "Among the most sensitive indicators of faulty development," he observes, "are failure by the child to engage in the activities of the peer culture, and to occupy a relatively comfortable place within it." Roff (1968) was drawn repeatedly in his studies to highlight the role of peer adjustments, a factor which proved to be predictive with surprising efficiency of later psychological problems of various kinds. He has expressed his findings a number of ways, but their theme is constant: "Childhood behavior that is antagonizing to peers," says Roff, "precedes various types of adult maladjustment."

Roff's evidence stems from a series of follow-up studies in which children

with problems in adjusting to peers were found many years later to suffer more than the usual range of mental health difficulties, including poor adaptation in the military service, disabling neuroses, or even psychotic states in young adulthood. Roff (1961) compared two groups of young men in the military. He traced their educational histories and found that those whose childhood records showed negative peer interactions typically encountered a host of behavioral problems in their military careers. The control group, made up of young men with good adjustment in the military, had no such pattern of poor peer relations embedded in their clinical files compiled years earlier. Roff found that youngsters who habitually antagonized their friends were those whose lives some years later were scarred by anxiety reactions, conversion hysteria, obsessive-compulsive behavior, depression and other neurotic symptoms.

Similar data emerged from Roff's studies (1963) where more serious and disabling mental illnesses were reported. He examined 166 former child guidance clinic cases, of whom 83 were diagnosed as psychotic (primarily schizophrenic) in the young adult period. The remaining 83 served as control cases. Again, the statistics told a consistent story. Those children who grew to be victims of severe mental illness had a more prominent history of childhood peer problems than those who did not.

The prognostic power of peer interactions has also been addressed by the research of Cowen (1973) and his colleagues. In a longitudinal study of first grade children identified as at risk from their poor peer relations; they found 13 years later that at risk children, in fact, appeared with a disproportionately high frequency referred to a psychiatric center. Cowen et al. (1973) found that assessments of children's social competence by their own peers were by far

more powerful predictors of later behavior disorders and the need for future psychiatric treatment than the views of parents, teachers, or even clinicians.

Because peer relationships convey so much about a child's potential for emotional difficulties, it is hardly surprising that there is embedded in them the seed of healthy development as well. Segal and Yahraes (1979) believe that the imprint of peers on the child's personality is second only in importance to that of parents, and in some areas it is actually predominant. It is largely through the child's interaction with peers that many of life's most important attitudes and behaviors are shaped in the young. Friends are more than passive playmates. They are key instruments in the symphony of human development.

According to Hartup (1970), peer modeling is among the most powerful social influences to which children are exposed. Data from a study conducted by Hicks (1965) suggested that emulation of peer models is even more frequent than that of adults.

Learning social perspective requires experience more than directions from the child's elders. It is the peer experience that helps transform the egocentric child into a person with the kind of social consciousness and moral sensitivity that spring from within (Piaget, 1965). Some of that experience is gained by copying or modeling the behavior of peers.

Results from a study performed by Hartup (1967) suggested that peer modeling is an extraordinarily powerful tool in the child's development. Bandura et al. (1967) demonstrated extensively the capacity of peers, serving as models.

Bronfenbrenner (1974) believes that American education is peculiarly one sided in its emphasis on learning subject matter rather than the skills of

living as a productive member of society. Education should include the development of the child's qualities as a person, including his or her values, motives, and patterns of social response. Bronfenbrenner believes it is crucial for the healthy development of children that school be reintegrated into the life of the community.

As a result of numerous studies providing evidence of the importance of teaching social skills, a variety of resources has been developed targeting pro-social skills. Different authors have different approaches; some favor social learning theories, others are more cognitive, or cognitive-behavioral, and others have a psychoanalytic orientation (Honig, A.S., & Wittmer, D.S., 1992). According to Bullock, J.R. (1991), children found to be socially incompetent with peers benefit from techniques such as modeling, and coaching.

Dodge's study (1983) is an examination of the process by which children come to be popular, neglected, and rejected among their peers. He was interested on the behavioral patterns that may precede or help determine children's peer status. According to his results, there is no reason to believe that merely increasing the frequency of social approaches would make the children more successful with peers. He recommends emphasis on the quality and competence of the social approaches. According to Dodge, researchers must begin to focus on relatively specific aspects of peer interaction, such as the quality of a social approach made by one child toward a peer.

Critique

Development and implementation of social skills have been the subject of research for many years. Studies such as the ones mentioned above

indicate a strong relationship between early childhood antisocial behaviors and emotional dysfunction in adulthood. The need to identify children with social deficits has been clearly established. The present study intended to go a step further and provide specific skills to those children who were identified as rejected and/or isolated by their peers. The intention was to present an intervention strategy that would be implemented in the school setting in order to prevent further antisocial behaviors.

Newcomb and Bukowski (1983) document the effectiveness of social skills training using sociometric measurements. This study also included information from the teacher's perspective as well as a child's scale of self-esteem. According to Cowen et al. (1973) one of the most important ways to identify children with social difficulties is via their peer's perception. In order to incorporate this aspect of the socialization process, this study used information from teachers, and the children themselves, as well as their peers.

Masters and Furman (1981) were interested in the relationship of antisocial behavior and aggression. Our study was oriented toward a preventive design in which the purpose was to provide the necessary social skills in order to redirect antisocial behaviors. Provide the rejected/isolated children with a repertoire of social skills that will allow them to be incorporated within their peer group.

Another dimension affected by poor social skills, as identified by Lefkowitz & Tesiny (1980), is internalization of difficulties. Children with a limited level of socialization tend to be withdrawn. Our study identified the level of self-esteem of these children with the intention of affecting it in a positive direction.

According to Roff (1968) children who antagonize with their peers have a

minimal chance of becoming part of their peer group. His studies came from a clinical setting rather than an educational one. The orientation of this study was to provide training in the environment in which the children spend most of their time: school.

Bronfenbrenner (1974) recognized the need to include in the curriculum more than subject matters. This study proposed to add training in social skills.

Segal, Yahraes, Hartup, Bandura, Bullock, and many others have emphasized the importance of peer interaction in the normal development of young children. The present study developed a model of social skills training based on peer modeling and peer relationships.

Relationship Between Social Skills Training and Self-Esteem

The basic self is developed within the family unit early in life. The experiences during the period of the formation of the self in the first years of life become the prototype for the specific forms of later vulnerability or security. These experiences determine the ups and downs in self-esteem (Samuels, 1977).

Bibring (1953) stated that self-esteem is "(1) the wish to be worthy, to be loved, to be appreciated, not to be inferior or unworthy; (2) the wish to be strong, superior, great, secure, not to be weak and insecure; and (3) the wish to be good, to be loving, not to be aggressive, hateful and destructive."

Coopersmith (1967) summarized the following factors considered significant as they relate to self-esteem: the amount of respectful, accepting, and concerned treatment received from significant others, the history of successes and status and position held in the world, the interpretation and

modification of experiences that accord with values and aspirations, and the individual's manner of responding to devaluation.

Self-esteem arises as a result of social experience. The groups to which an individual belongs serve as significant frames of reference (Samuels, 1977). Erickson's theory recognizes the influential role of society in helping individuals to grow toward a sense of identity (Erickson, 1968). In an atmosphere of rejection by others, children are likely to acquire an attitude of rejection toward themselves. If the home fails to help children to negotiate early stages of emotional development, the school's role becomes more important. Although previous successes and failures will determine their expectations for those young children who have lacked positive treatment by significant others, the need to grow toward more positive self-esteem would allow change to be effected with new significant others in school (Samuels, 1977).

A child who feels good about himself/herself tends to be adjusted socially and to be more accepted by his peers. According to Epstein (1973) children with positive self-esteem are more likely to enjoy high peer status than children with low self-esteem. This difference transcended race and social class.

Levels of self-esteem have been the focus of study from a variety of viewpoints. Self-esteem has been correlated with academic performance, achievement, outlook in life and sociability. As part of their study, Schneider and Leitenberg (1989) analyzed the relationship between children's self-esteem and aggression or withdrawal tendencies. They administered the Piers-Harris to 583 children (304 girls and 279 boys) from three school districts, seven schools and 37 fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade classes. Children ranged in ages from 9 to 13 years, and almost all were Caucasian. They came from lower- to upper-middle-class homes spread across small urban and suburban cities and

towns near Burlington, Vermont. According to their findings, children who were solely aggressive had higher self-esteem scores than children who were solely withdrawn. LaGreca (1981) found that aggressive children are more popular with their peers than are withdrawn children. Fielstein et al. (1985) and Seligman et al. (1984) have shown in their research a significant association between higher self-esteem and lower depression in children.

According to Strauss et al. (1986) there is evidence that suggests that children who interact at a low rate relative to their peers may be at risk for internalizing problems such as anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. They also state that previous investigations have primarily focused on young social isolates, including children enrolled in preschool, kindergarten, or early elementary grades. Their study was directed toward an older population, 640 second- to fifth-grade children in two rural public elementary schools. Their data suggested that socially withdrawn children may require intervention. They recommend interventions that go beyond merely altering frequency of peer interactions and targeted additional related problem areas to include self-esteem and popularity among peers.

Brynner, O'Malley, & Bachman (1981) indicated in their research that withdrawn children consistently tend to have lower self-esteem than nonwithdrawn children. Kaplan (1975) has argued, low self-esteem may initially contribute to the development of delinquency, but once a youth has identified with a delinquent subculture, his self-esteem may be enhanced by further antisocial behavior. Recent research suggests that young boys who simultaneously exhibit both aggressive and withdrawn characteristics are less liked and less popular with their peers than solely aggressive boys (Landau & Milich, 1985).

Critique

Research studies document the impact of withdrawal tendencies on the children's self-esteem. The family environment in which youngsters develop their self-esteem provides the basic structure of their personality. Adequate relationship with significant others bring positive results and better social adjustment later in life. Unfortunately many children begin their school experience with a very reduced social skill repertoire. They become isolated and withdrawn which in turn negatively affects their self-esteem. Students with low self-esteem tend to be poor achievers, and to be rejected by their peers. The lack of success at school and diminished socialization opportunities lower the students' already poor self-esteem. A vicious circle is created and it is extremely difficult to come out of it.

Samuels (1977), Bibring (1953) and Coopersmith (1967) emphasize the influence of family life in the early development of the child's self-esteem. They even suggest a deterministic view from early experiences into further development of the child's personality. This study recognized the importance of the formative period but stressed the importance of the school experience for those children who start with a diminished self-esteem.

Erickson and Samuels place a significant amount of importance to the role of schools into a more positive experience and adequate growth for children with social skills deficits. Following their lead, this study provided an optimum environment in which the children could learn skills from which they have been previously deprived.

Schneider, Leitenberg, LaGreca, Fielstein et al., and Seligman et al.

have conducted a variety of research in which they identified significant low levels of self-esteem in those children with aggressive tendencies, withdrawn, and depression. The purpose of this study was to explore the correlation between self-esteem and social status.

Strauss et al. (1986) presented data supporting the need for intervention for socially withdrawn children. Brynner, et al. (1981) documented the relationship between withdrawal behavior and low self-esteem. As a follow up this study recommended targeting those children who exhibit low self-esteem and who are being rejected/isolated by their peers.

Many studies have established the relationship between self-esteem and leadership, self-esteem and aggressive tendencies, and self-esteem and academic performance. In all instances the level of self-esteem is an accurate estimate of the child's success, and vice versa.

The purpose of this study was to find out the relationship between children's social status and their level of self-esteem. It was expected that after intervention sessions directed toward the increase of social skills, the children's social status, and self-esteem would also be increased.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Population and Sample

The data for the study was gathered from two elementary schools in Hampton, Va. Hampton occupies 55 sq. miles on the Virginia Peninsula in the Hampton Roads region. On Hampton's northeast border is the Chesapeake Bay; to the west is Newport News; and to the south is the Hampton Roads harbor, the worlds' largest natural deepwater harbor. Hampton is about 75 miles southeast of Richmond (state capital) and 175 miles south of Washington, D.C. The city is surrounded by military installations, such as: NASA Langley Research Center, Langley Air Force Base, and U.S. Army-Fort Monroe. It also has many Civil Service Agencies. Adjacent to Hampton, in Norfolk, is the site of the world's greatest concentration of permanent naval installations. Among the more than 20 major commands are the headquarters of the Fifth Naval District, Commander in Chief Atlantic and U.S. Atlantic Fleet and NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic. According to the latest census in 1990, the total population in Hampton is 133,793, from that total, 26% are minorities, and less than 1% live in poverty.

The two elementary schools selected were located in the northeast section of Hampton. Their enrollment is approximately 500 students per school, in grades K-5th. The student body represented an economic cross-section of society. The ratio according to grade level, race, sex, and socioeconomic status

(as determined by the student's eligibility for free or reduced lunch) was proportionate to the general population in Hampton.

The study targeted students in grades 4th and 5th. The accessible population consisted of 16 whole classrooms: 4 classrooms from the fourth grade level, and 4 classrooms from the fifth grade level; 8 classrooms from each school. As of March 1995, there were 327 students enrolled on those grade levels.

Collection of Data

As part of their regular curriculum guidance program, the school guidance counselors provide weekly visits to each classroom and lessons are presented to the entire classroom. The Social Skills Training program was offered as a curriculum unit to all the students in 4th and 5th grade level in the experimental school. The information needed for the study was gathered from those students whose parents gave written permission for their children to participate (Appendix A).

The study of social status within a specific group requires the identification of such group as a unity. Students were identified as popular or rejected by their peers in their own grade level. The students completed a sociogram (Appendix B) and the Piers-Harris Children Self Concept Scale (Appendix C). The classroom teacher completed a checklist, the Achenbach's Teacher's Report Form, on each student participating in the program (Appendix D).

The other elementary school, was the control group. Permission from the parents of all the 4th and 5th grade students was requested (Appendix A).

Subjects in the control group completed the same measurements as the students in the experimental group.

The treatment was implemented by the school psychologist and the guidance counselor as part of the regular classroom guidance plan. (Appendix E). The dependent variables were social status as determined by peers, teacher ratings of children's social behavior, and students' self-esteem. These three variables: social status, social behavior, and self-esteem were measured before and after the treatment intervention.

Instrumentation

Sociogram: Children were nominated by their own peers as which ones did they most (positive) and least (negative) prefer to interact. A two-dimensional framework for sociometric classification was implemented. Positive and negative nominations provided information about social preference (likability) and social impact (visibility). By combining positive and negative scores, children were classified into popular (high positive, low negative), neglected (low positive, low negative), rejected (low positive, high negative), controversial (high positive, high negative), or average (extreme on neither positive or negative) groups. Results from the sociogram were analyzed using the standard score proposed by Coie et al. (1982). They developed standardized acceptance and rejection scores that define the dimension of social impact and social preference. Social impact is the standardized sum of acceptance plus rejection, whereas social preference is the standardized difference of acceptance minus rejection. Standardized liked and disliked scores are used to index social impact for popular and rejected children, and

standardized liked and disliked scores are used to index social preference for neglected and controversial children.

The specific criteria for the Coie and Dodge (1982) standard score approach are as follows:

Popular children: have a standardized preference score higher than 1, a standardized liked score higher than 0, and a standardized disliked score lower than 0 (the latter two scores determine social impact).

Rejected children: have a standardized preference score lower than -1, and standardized liked score lower than , and a standardized disliked score higher than 0 (the last two scores index social impact).

Neglected children: have standardized impact score lower than -1, and standardized liked and disliked scores lower than 0 (the liked and disliked scores specify social preference).

Controversial children: have a standardized impact score higher than 1 and standardized liked and disliked scores higher than 0 (the liked and disliked scores index social preference).

Average children: are all remaining children.

Sociometric procedures have a demonstrated reliability (Asher and Hymel, 1981) and concurrent and predictive validity (Hartup, 1983).

Achenbach's Teacher's Report Form (TRF): Each classroom teacher completed a TRF for all the students in her/his classroom that participated in the study. The TRF is a general clinical scale that consists of two sections. The behavior problem section consists of 118 specific problem items and two open-ended problem items. The problem items are rated on a three-point scale. This yields scores on Internalizing, and Externalizing broad-band dimensions, and

13 specific dimensions. The adaptive functioning section assesses academic performance, working style, behavior, learning style and level of happiness.

According to Reynolds and Kamphaus (1990), the TRF has adequate reliability with a high correlation between the teacher's checklist and observations of children's behavior. They concluded that the TRF is a well designed instrument that has an impressive foundation of empirical support.

Towle (1987) analyzed the factor structure and external correlates of the scale and found the patterns obtained to be consistent with previous research.

The TRF manual claims a test-retest reliability of .90 for academic and adaptive scores, and .92 for problem scores. The manual also sustains appropriate levels of content validity, and criterion-related validity.

The Piers-Harris Children Self Concept Scale (P-H): The scale consists of 80 simple declarative statements scored as 'yes' or 'no' by the children. It can be administered individually or in a group. The scale yields an overall score reported as percentiles where average scores are usually considered to be those between 31st and 70th percentiles. A factor analysis grouped some of the items according to behavior, intellectual and school status, physical appearance and attributes, anxiety, popularity, and happiness and satisfaction.

Piers (1984) reports coefficient alphas for the six scales ranging from .73 to .81 with a mean of .77.

Reynolds and Kamphaus (1990) reported and internal consistency for total score of .88 to .90 and .73 to .81 for cluster scores. Convergent validity with other measures of self-esteem was also presented. Haynes et al. (1987) document the reliability, or internal consistency, at the .78 level.

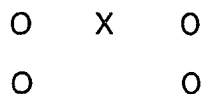
Cooley and Ayres (1988) studied the reliability of the P-H. They

concluded that the reliability of the global score was high for both internal consistency measures (above .88) and test-retest measures (mean of .73 for 3 week to 8 month intervals). The coefficient alphas for all of the cluster scales were larger than .70 reflecting acceptable levels of internal consistency. In their discussion they concluded that the internal consistencies of the scales were good, reflecting a reasonable level of scale homogeneity. The internal consistency of the total score for the scale was very high ($\alpha=.92$). Cooley and Ayres (1988) agreed with the coefficients reported by Piers (1984) in the test manual and by other researchers (Franklin, Duley, Rosseay and Sabers, 1981).

Schneider and Leitenberg (1989) described the PH as having good psychometric properties, with test-retest reliabilities ranging from .75 to .80.

Research Design

The study used the nonequivalent experimental design of pretest/posttest with a control group. The design is represented by the following diagram:



The X represents the experimental treatment. According to Borg and Gall (1989) this design effectively controls for the most common threats to internal validity identified by Campbell and Stanley (1963): history, maturation, testing, instrumentation, regression, selection, mortality, and interaction effects.

Statistical Analysis

The pretest-posttest control-group experiment typically yields mean scores for each measure. The preferred statistical method in this case, was the analysis of covariance in which the posttest means are compared using the pretest scores as a covariate (Borg and Gall, 1989).

Research Hypothesis

- H 1** Students participating in the social skills training group will not show statistically significant differences from students in the control group in the improvement of their social status as assessed by sociometric scales.
- H 2** Students participating in the social skills training group will not show statistically significant differences from students in the control group in the scale that assesses social problems according to the Teacher's Report Form.
- H 3** Students participating in the social skills training group will not show statistically significant differences from students in the control group in the scale that assesses level of happiness according to the Teacher's Report Form.
- H 4** Students participating in the social skills training group will not show statistically significant differences from students in the control group in their rating of self concept according to the Piers and Harris scale.
- H 5** Students participating in the social skills training group will not show statistically significant differences from students in the control group in the scale of popularity according to the Piers and Harris scale.

Ethical Considerations

Procedures as outlined by the Human subjects Research Committee of the College of William and Mary and the Research Committee of the Hampton City School System were followed.

Written parental permission was requested and obtained for all the children participating in the study (Appendix A).

Chapter 4

Analysis of Results

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of a social skills training program designed to improve the social status of isolated and rejected children. Subjects were fourth and fifth grade students from two different schools; one served as the experimental group (n=46) and the other as the control group (n=45). The 91 identified students were pretested and posttested using three instruments: Piers-Harris Self-Perception Questionnaire, Achenbach's Teacher's Report Form, and Sociogram. The variables assessed were:

1.- Children's self-perception: assessed by the total raw score from the Piers-Harris.

2.- Level of popularity: assessed by the raw score from the V subscale, popularity, in the Piers-Harris.

3.- Level of happiness: assessed by the raw score from the VIII subscale, happiness, in the Achenbach's Teacher's Report Form.

4.- Level of social problems: assessed by the raw score from the IV subscale, social problems, in the Achenbach's Teacher's Report Form.

5.- Social status: assessed by the total raw score from the sociogram.

The experimental group was divided according to their grade level and classroom assignment. There were four classrooms with third graders, and four classrooms with fourth graders. They received six training sessions by the

same instructors, who presented each session in identical conditions for all the students in the experimental group. The control group did not receive treatment. Pretests and posttests were collected and scored, and the resultant data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to control possible group differences on the posttest due to initial group differences rather than due to a treatment effect. The .05 level of confidence was applied for acceptance or rejection of the hypotheses. Means and standard deviations of the Piers-Harris, Teacher's Report Form, and sociogram at pretest, and posttest of experimental and control groups are presented in Table 4.1.

TABLE 4.1

Raw Score Means and Standard Deviations of Dependent Measures for Experimental (n=46) and Control (n=45) Groups

	Experimental Group				Control Group			
	Pre-test		Posttest		Pre-test		Posttest	
Measures	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Rejected	27.0	12.2	26.3	13.1	22.2	8.6	25.2	11.0
Neglected	24.3	7.2	23.8	7.4	18.7	7.5	18.2	9.0
Popular	10.4	4.2	11.2	5.8	10.4	4.9	10.5	7.1
Happiness	3.9	1.3	3.6	1.5	3.7	1.8	3.6	1.6
Soc. Prob.	3.7	3.1	5.6	5.3	4.9	5.5	5.0	5.5
Self-Conc.	55.3	13.5	55.4	15.2	55.8	12.8	57.4	14.7
Popularity	7.1	3.2	6.9	3.7	7.6	3.2	7.7	3.7

HYPOTHESIS 1

H 1 : Students participating in the social skills training group will not show statistically significant differences from students in the control group in the improvement of their social status as assessed by sociometric scales.

Analysis of covariance indicated a significant difference in the posttests of sociometric scale that assessed rejection, between experimental and control groups. The treatment effect was significant ($P = .007$, $df = 1$). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was rejected. Thus, the students participating in the social skills training showed statistically significant differences from students in the control group in the improvement of their social status as assessed by sociometric scales (Table 4.2.).

Table 4.2

Analysis of Covariance Summary Table on Sociogram

	Sum of Squares	D.F.	Mean Squares	F Ratio	p-value
Popular	9.592	1	9.592	0.410	.523
Neglected	31.681	1	31.681	0.888	.349
Rejected	262.754	1	262.754	7.702	.007 **

The sociometric scale also gave raw scores for popular or neglected

indexes, of which neither one was found to have changed significantly after the treatment (Table 4.2).

This results support the benefits of the social skills training program for the students who were being rejected by their peers. There was no significant change for either the neglected children or the popular children. This last two variables were maintained at the same level while rejection was statistically decreased.

HYPOTHESIS 2

H 2: Students participating in the social skills training group will not show statistically significant differences from students in the control group in the scale that assesses social problems according to the Teacher's Report Form.

Analysis of covariance revealed that there was a significant difference on the posttest of TRF between experimental and control group ($P = .003$, $df = 1$). Therefore, hypothesis 2 was rejected. The results of the analysis of covariance are reported in Table 4.3.

TABLE 4.3

Analysis of Covariance on Social Problems Index for TRF

	Sum of Squares	D.F.	Mean Squares	F Ratio	p-value
Pre-test (covariate)	1952.84	1	1952.84	247.71	.000
Treatment	74.48	1	74.48	9.37	.003 **

HYPOTHESIS 3

H 3: Students participating in the social skills training group will not show statistically significant differences from students in the control group in the scale that assesses level of happiness according to the Teacher's Report Form.

Analysis of covariance revealed that there was no significant difference on the posttest of TRF between experimental and control group. Therefore, hypothesis 3 was not rejected. The results of the analysis of covariance are reported in Table 4.4.

TABLE 4.4

Analysis of Covariance on Level of Happiness Index for TRF.

	Sum of Squares	D.F.	Mean Squares	F Ratio	p-value
Pre-test (covariate)	98.55	1	98.55	72.87	.000
Treatment	.451	1	.451	.334	.565

HYPOTHESIS 4

H 4: Students participating in the social skills training group will not show statistically significant differences from students in the control group in

their rating of self concept according to the Piers and Harris scale.

Analysis of covariance revealed that there was no significant difference on the posttest of P-H between the experimental and control group. Therefore, hypothesis 4 was not rejected. The results of the analysis of covariance are reported in Table 4.5.

TABLE 4.5

Analysis of Covariance on Self-Concept Index for P-H

	Sum of Squares	D.F.	Mean Squares	F Ratio	p-value
Pre-test (covariate)	12052.18	1	12052.18	148.3	.000
Treatment	49.678	1	49.678	.611	.437

HYPOTHESIS 5

H 5: Students participating in the social skills training group will not show statistically significant differences from students in the control group in the scale of popularity according to the Piers and Harris scale.

Analysis of covariance revealed that there was no significant difference on the posttest of P-H between experimental and control group. Therefore, hypothesis 5 was not rejected. The results of the analysis of covariance are reported in Table 4.6.

TABLE 4.6

Analysis of Covariance on Popularity Index for P-H.

	Sum of Squares	D.F.	Mean Squares	F Ratio	p-value
Pre-test (covariate)	718.455	1	718.455	134.725	.000
Treatment	3.320	1	3.320	.623	.432

This study has demonstrated that the social skills training program was effective in reducing the level of rejection on the students in the experimental group. Social problems as identified by the classroom teachers increased after the intervention program. Level of happiness, popularity and self-concept did not show any statistically significant difference between the groups.

Chapter 5

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

Interest in socialization has been documented since the beginning of this century. There are a variety of theories on human development that emphasize the aspect of socialization. An impressive body of research indicates a strong relationship between the lack of appropriate social skills during school years and presence of psychopathology later in life.

Many states have started to incorporate "peer mediation" and "conflict resolution" educational units as part of their regular curriculum. Our society has begun to understand the importance of providing students with the necessary survival skills that go beyond the basic three "Rs". One of the most debated topics of our era is the effect on our youngsters of a world that glamorizes violence.

This study intended to breach the gap for the students that were actively rejected or isolated. The purpose was to teach those students the appropriate social skills that would help them develop a more positive image. The objective of the study was to address the question: "Does social skills training help improve the social status of socially rejected or isolated children?"

The research sample consisted of 91 fourth and fifth grade students from two different elementary schools in Hampton, VA. One school served as a

control group with 45 identified students, while the other school was the experimental group, with 46 identified students. The students from the latter group received six intervention sessions delivered by the same leaders and following identical procedures for all the classrooms involved. The students in the control group did not receive any treatment, but they were exposed to the same guidance curriculum and general education as the students in the experimental group. Both groups participated in similar school activities and educational curriculum with the only exception of the social skills training program that was only delivered to the experimental group.

The experimental subjects participated in six, thirty minute sessions of social skills training designed to increase social competence and acceptance. The intervention sessions were presented during the students' regular classroom curriculum guidance time, delivered in their classroom with the rest of the students from their grade level. The students participating in the study were not separated from their peers, nor were they identified or targeted during the training sessions. The treatment went from April 10, 1995 to May 26, 1995. The social skills training component employed verbal instructions, peer modeling, coaching, covert and overt rehearsal, corrective feedback, and positive reinforcement. Each session targeted specific social skills which included: introducing yourself to a new person, starting conversations with peers, use of positive self-statements, anger control, accepting peer's suggestions, and compromising in conflict situations (Appendix E).

A nonequivalent control group research design was used. Pre- and posttest information was gathered using the Piers-Harris Self Concept Questionnaire, the Achenbach's Teacher's Report Form, and Sociogram. Dependent variables were self-concept (P-H), popularity (P-H), happiness

(TRF), social problems (TRF), and social status (sociogram). The data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Analysis of covariance was chosen to control pre-existing differences between the groups. Five hypotheses were developed to test whether or not there would be significant differences between the two groups (.05 level).

Findings and Conclusions

Results from the Analysis of Covariance indicated that students in the treatment and control groups did not show significant differences in their level of happiness, popularity or self-concept as measured by the Piers-Harris, and the Achenbach's Teacher's Report Form.

The identified students did show a significant difference in their social status as evaluated by the sociometric measurement and the index of social problems as assessed by the Teacher's Report Form. The results of the data analysis indicated that students in the experimental treatment group achieved a lower score in the index of rejection/isolation than did students in the control group. The six-week program of social skills training was effective in reducing peer's rejection and isolation. Another variable that showed a significant change was social problems as measured by the classroom teachers using the Achenbachs' Teacher's Report Form. The students in the experimental group scored higher in this scale after the treatment when compared with their peers in the control group. A cursory interpretation of this finding seems to indicate that identified students engaged in more socially inappropriate behaviors. Individual interviews with the classroom teachers from the experimental group, indicated their awoken sensitivity to the issues presented in the intervention

program. They showed their interest by actively participating in the sessions and implementing follow-up activities related to the lesson presented by the leaders. A more plausible explanation could be that teachers became more aware of the targeted skills, which could have affected their scoring on the posttest. In contrast, the treatment did not show statistically significant differences on the variables of happiness, popularity, and self-concept.

Possible explanations for the limited success of the intervention program include:

- 1) The brief duration of the intervention
- 2) Timing of the intervention
- 3) Delivery model in the large group setting

The intervention procedures started by the fourth school semester and most of the students had already developed strong feelings of like and/or dislike toward their classmates. The groups had been formed from the beginning of the academic year 1994-1995; therefore, they had been together for over a six-month period of time. Although the level of popularity was difficult to modify in a six-week training period, the level of rejection and isolation was successfully stopped in the experimental group while it continued to grow in the group with no intervention. Thus, it might be necessary to implement the intervention over a longer period of time, starting earlier during the academic year, in order to maximize the possibility for development of more appropriate social skills.

Another factor that could have contributed to limited success was the model used for implementation of the intervention program. The leaders presented the lessons in the classroom to the entire group at the same time. The identified students had been subject to rejection/isolation for a long period of time and they might need a more direct approach. According to Hartup

(1983) the ideal training situation targets students in small groups, with no more than 4 or 5 students per group. While the study by Perry and Bussey (1984) had a high rate of success, it was implemented under laboratory conditions which makes it difficult to replicate in a school setting. Nevertheless, the students could be taught as a group with follow-up sessions for those children who seem to be having more difficulty acquiring appropriate social skills.

According to Samuels (1977) children who are actively rejected by their peers, begin in time to reject themselves, further lowering their self-concept. Samuels proposes to affect this relationship by changing peers' perceptions. This study did not find a significant difference on the identified students' rating of self-concept and the change in their social status. Although there was an improvement in their levels of rejection/isolation, it was not perceived as significant by the targeted children. One possible explanation could be related to the fact that the students did not increase their level of popularity. While the students in the control group were rejected even more after six weeks than the experimental group, this latter group had maintained the level of rejection, which in a way is considered an improvement, but not to the point of making any difference on the children's self-perception.

Another explanation for nonsignificant statistical results on the measurement of happiness might have been related to the teachers' perceptions since they completed the information for both scales. It was observed that the majority of teachers were reluctant to score their students under low standards. Even those students that obtained a significantly low score on the subscale of satisfaction in the Piers-Harris, were considered "above average" in the subscale of happiness in the Teachers' Report Form. According to Hartup, the best estimate of the students' social status is provided

by their peers. Newcomb, et al. (1983) reported sociometric information from different sources: adult information, peer information, self-report and direct observations. They found that the children themselves have the most accurate perceptions about their social status. These results and the information from this study seems to support such view, placing a higher emphasis on the input from the children over the adults.

Recommendations

The current study demonstrated that social skills training was effective in improving the social status of rejected and isolated students. Social problems, as perceived by the classroom teachers, seemed to intensify after treatment. It would be interesting to investigate this aspect even further to clarify the variables affecting this change.

Although there was no statistical significance for the remaining variables, they did present a slight improvement toward the desired outcome. The literature on social interventions suggests an optimal amount of intervention lessons to be somewhere between six to eight sessions (Elliot and Gresham, 1991). This study was implemented in six sessions; perhaps increasing the amount of training sessions may enhance the treatment effects even further.

A follow-up assessment will provide information about maintenance or improvement of social status for the students that were identified as rejected or isolated. Furthermore, since the skills were presented and assessed in the classroom, there was no information about possible transfer outside the school environment. This aspect could also be explored in order to have a complete picture about the impact of the intervention in different settings.

This study was implemented rather late in the school year. It would be interesting to see the difference with an intervention program that starts earlier in the year.

Another concern is the lack of individualized support for those students who are presenting significant difficulties in their socialization. It might be beneficial to reinforce those skills presented in the training units by providing small group sessions for those students.

In addition, this study was implemented with fourth and fifth grade students; it would be interesting to duplicate the procedures with a younger population.

Finally, further research is needed to determine whether this study findings, of 4th and 5th grade students from two schools in Hampton, can be generalized to other populations.

APPENDIX A
Parent Consent Form

Letter for the parents of the students in the experimental group:

Dear parents,

All students in the 4th and 5th grades at your child's Elementary School, will be offered a program about reinforcement of appropriate social skills. This program will consist of six sessions in which lessons about friendship, communication, cooperation, etc. will be presented to the students during their regular curriculum classroom guidance time.

An evaluation of this program is part of a research study being conducted by Mrs. Zapatero, our School Psychologist, as part of her doctoral dissertation.

To assess the effectiveness of the program, certain measurements of socialization will be gathered before and after the training sessions. The children will be asked to complete two checklists and the teacher will complete one checklist for each student participating in the program. The students will be assigned a numbered code in order to protect their anonymity. All checklists will be destroyed as soon as the program is completed.

If you would allow your child's data to be used in the program evaluation, please sign the attached form and send it back no later than (date). If you would like to have more information about the measurements or exact content of the sessions please call Mrs. Zapatero at her office number 850-5349.

Thank you very much for your interest and cooperation,

School Principal

Letter for the parents of the students in the control group:

Dear Parents,

Mrs. Zapatero, our School Psychologist, is in the process of evaluating a program designed to reinforce appropriate social skills in young children. This program is part of a research study for Mrs. Zapatero's doctoral dissertation.

In order to assess the effectiveness of the program, she needs to gather information from children who are not participating in the program (control group). She will like to include our students in the 4th and 5th grades as the control group.

The children will be asked to complete two checklists, which requires no more than 20 minutes, on two different occasions. The classroom teacher will complete a checklist for each student participating in the program. The students will be assigned a numbered code in order to protect their anonymity. All checklists will be destroyed as soon as the program is completed.

Depending on the effectiveness of the program, its implementation will be considered as part of a unit in the regular classroom guidance curriculum.

If you wish for your child to participate on the program evaluation, please sign the permission form attached and send it back no later than (date). If you would like to have more information about the checklists, please call Mrs. Zapatero at her office number 850-5349.

Thank you very much for your interest and cooperation,

School Principal

Social Skills Program Permission Form
(control group)

Name of Student: _____

Grade: _____

School: _____

My child has permission to participate in the data gathering procedures for a research study. I understand that the purpose is to gather information about the effectiveness of a program about appropriate social skills on young children. My child will only participate by providing information on two checklists completed by him/her and one completed by his/her teacher.

I understand that all information will be kept confidential. Individual data on my child will never be released or published.

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature

Social Skills Program Permission Form
(experimental group)

Name of Student: _____

Grade: _____

School: _____

My child has permission to participate in the data gathering procedures involved in a social skills program. I understand that the purpose is to gather information about the effectiveness of a program offered as regular guidance curriculum. The data will consist of two checklists completed by my child and one completed by his/her teacher.

I understand that all information will be kept confidential. Individual data on my child will never be released or published.

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature

APPENDIX B
Sociogram

Students will be instructed to answer all four questions. A list with the names of all classmates will be provided for each question. The students have to check each name as either "Very Much", "O.K.", or "Not At All".

Directions given to the students: I want you to answer some questions. At the left side of your paper you will find a list with the names of most of the children in your classroom. Please read the question carefully and then place an "X" mark for each name. You could pick either "Very Much", "O.K." or "Not At All" for each name in the list. If you have any questions please raise your hand and someone will assist you. The first question is an example, let's read it together.

Example:

I would like to play with

	Very Much	O.K.	Not At All
1- John	X		
2- Susan			X
3- Peter		X	

Do you have any questions? I am going to read the questions and then I will give you time to put your marks.

- A) Your teacher gives you a classroom assignment, would you like to work with
- B) You are going on a field trip, would you like to be in the same group as
- C) If you could pick with whom to sit by in the classroom, would you like to sit by
- D) Your parents let you invite some friends over, would you like to invite

APPENDIX C
Piers-Harris Children Self Concept Scale
Protocol

APPENDIX D
Achenbach's Teacher's Report Form
Protocol

APPENDIX E
Social Skills Training
Sessions

SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING SESSIONS

Every session followed the same format:

- 1.- Ice breaker
- 2.- Definition of the skills
- 3.- Role play
- 4.- Modeling
- 5.- Homework

Steps 3 and 4 varied according to the situations presented. The situations were performed by the students. First the students performed the role play by pairs or small groups, taking turns and changing roles so all the students had an opportunity to practice the skill. Then they had the opportunity to demonstrate the role play for the entire group. The students to present the skill in the large setting were randomly selected. Counselors focused in the positive aspects of their presentations and requested interventions from their peers. Positive reinforcement, peer modeling and coaching of appropriate social skills were stressed throughout the entire process.

SESSION ONE

Skill: Introducing oneself to new people.

Objective: Upon approaching a new person whom the student wishes to meet, he will greet the person and introduce himself.

1.- Ice breaker: Students will be randomly seated by pairs and then they will be asked to share with each other a funny experience or moment in their life. the activity will last five minutes, then they will regroup and voluntarily share with the group what they have learned from their partner.

2.- Definition of the skill: Explain why it is important to greet a new person, to introduce oneself. identify the steps and have the students repeat them:

- Physically approach the new person you wish to meet and stand about four feet away.
- Make eye contact with the new person and speak clearly
- Say "Hello" or "Hi"; wait for the person to look at you
- Say "My name is (state name)." Wait for the person to respond to your greeting
- If the person responds positively, provide him/her with some general information about yourself

3.- Role playing: The students will be given two different situations and then they will take a role to practice with their partner. Roles will switch after five minutes.

Situation #1: while eating lunch, you see a new student whom you'd like to meet. You know this student is in your grade. How would you introduce yourself?

Situation #2: You are playing in a park with two friends. A young person about your age is watching you and seems interested in playing but doesn't say anything. You and your friends decide that having another playmate would add to the game. What would you say and do?

4.- Modeling: a randomly selected pair will be called to demonstrate each situation for the entire class. After they role play their parts, the counselors will request interventions from the other students.

5.- Homework: Suggest that students observe others, either live or on TV, and evaluate how they introduce themselves to new people.

SESSION TWO

Skill: Making positive self-statements

Objective: Without boasting, the student will be able to make a positive statement about a personal characteristic or skill.

- 1.- Ice breaker: Distribute cards with matching numbers, ask the students to write something special about themselves and then find the other person with the same number on their card and share their personal characteristics.
- 2.- Definition of the skill: The topic for the lesson is how can the students share special things about themselves with other people. They will practice saying nice things about themselves without sounding like they are bragging.
- 3.- Role play: using two situations ask the students to take turns in acting them up.

Situation #1: You played an excellent game and helped your team win. When you get home, you see a neighborhood friend. What do you tell him about the game and your efforts?

Situation #2: Because of your artistic skills, you have been asked to help your teacher with the hall bulletin board. You want to share this information with your friends. What do you say?

- 4.- Modeling: Same as previous session.
- 5.- Homework: Give the students the following list and ask them to complete it and to use it with their family members, neighborhood friends, and classmates.

I'm happy with myself because.....

I feel proud when I

I feel good about myself when

One characteristic of mine that is good is

SESSION THREE

Skill: Initiating conversation with peers.

Objective: The student will be able to approach a peer and start a conversation with her/him.

1.- Ice breaker: The students will be requested to complete the following chart with names of only the children in their classroom. They will walk around the class asking questions trying to find as many names as possible in ten minutes.

Find a friend who...

Friend's Name

...is an only child

...has been to a foreign country

...can operate a computer

...likes to eat spicy food

...has two sisters

...was born in March

...has earned a trophy

...can play a musical instrument

...has broken a bone

...has a bird for a pet

...is the oldest in the family

...wears the same shoe size as you

...has one brother

...is the youngest in the family

...likes to fish

...can whistle through his/her fingers

...has a cat

...was born the same month as you

Find a friend who...

Friend's Name

...likes to play baseball

...takes dancing lessons

2.- Definition of the skill: The lesson for today is about on how to start a conversation. Conversation as a way to get to know people, learn new things, and share feelings.

3.- Role play:

Situation #1: You are back at school after a holiday break. You see a peer, who has occasionally played with you during recess, waiting for the school bus. What do you do?

Situation #2: Your are riding your bike to the park on a Saturday in Spring. You see two kids who went to your school last year, but moved to another neighborhood. What do you say?

4.- Modeling: Same as previous sessions.

5.- Homework: Use the chart provided in class to find new characteristics about their friends.

SESSION FOUR

Skill: Accepting peer's suggestions for group activities

Objective: The student will accept a peer's suggestions for group activities by listening, asking questions, verbalizing acceptance of the peer's ideas, modifying the idea, or offering alternative ideas.

1.- Ice breaker: The students will work in groups of three. distribute cards with the numbers 1, 2, and 3 in different colors and ask the children to find the numbers that have the same color. There should be as many colors divided by three as the amount of students in the class.

2.- Definition of the skill: Accepting peer's ideas or suggestions for group activities, such as playing, working, or going somewhere, by listening to these ideas, asking questions, verbalizing acceptance of a peer's idea, modifying the idea or offering alternative ideas.

3.- Activity: Each member of the group will receive a set of lego blocks. Each one will have a different color of lego blocks. They will have to comply with the following instructions:

"With the blocks that you have, you need to develop a group project. You can make anything you want. You can only touch the lego blocks that belong to you. For example, if you have the red blocks, you are the only one in your group who can place the red blocks on the project you are making. The final product should have all the colors of the group together. You have ten minutes to complete your project."

4.- Group Discussion: The counselors will walk around the classroom identifying the skills mentioned on the Step 2 that are present in the group being observed. At the end of the ten minutes period, each group will share

their project and talk about how they reached a consensus and what type of problems they encountered.

5.- Homework: Have students self-monitor for one week occurrences of accepting peer's ideas or suggestions. Encourage them to note the what, when, where, and how of their performance.

SESSION FIVE

Skill: Compromising in conflict situations with peers or adults by changing ideas to reach agreement.

Objective: The student will compromise in conflict situations with others by changing an opinion, modifying actions, or offering alternative solutions.

1.- Ice breaker: A list of words written on cards will be distributed to the students. Each student will receive half of one word. They have to find the other student that has the other half of their word, put it together and jointly find the correct definition which will be shared with the entire group. The list of words is as follows: compromise, negotiate, alternatives, listening, opinions, agreement, argument, disagreement, respect, conflict, solution, and suggestion.

2.- Definition of the skill: The topic for today's lesson is about compromise. The students will learn ways to get along with others when they disagree with them. Ending disagreements or arguments with others by offering alternative ideas, actions, or suggestions.

3.- Role play: The situations for today role play will be provided by the students. The counselors will ask them for examples of situations in which they have experienced disagreements with their classmates or friends. Once the situation is appropriately described, the students will role play the solutions by implementing the following steps:

- recognize that you are in a situation that has the potential for conflict.
- identify what the main source of disagreement is and why the other person is upset.
- listen to what the other person is saying.

- calmly present your side and see how the other person reacts to them.
- offer a compromise.
- if the other person accepts your compromise, enact the compromise.
- if the other person does not accept your compromise, offer another solution or ask the other person for alternatives.
- negotiate alternative solutions to the problem, and implement the agreed-upon solution.

4.- Modeling: Same as previous sessions.

5.- Homework: Ask the students to pay attention to different popular sit-com TV shows and decide which ones demonstrate good conflict resolution and which ones are inappropriate.

SESSION SIX

Skill: Controlling temper in conflict situations with peers.

Objective: The student will control his/her temper in conflict situation with peers.

1.- Ice breaker: Complete a chart with the following statements: When I am angry I; To calm down I Then walk around the classroom and find students with similar statements as their own.

2.- Definition of the skill: The topic is about ways to control your temper.

3.- Activity: Using the response from the ice breaker, develop a list of appropriate strategies implemented by the students. Teach the students the following ABC's of controlling their temper:

A: Consider the event that is making them Angry.

B. Consider their Behavior

C: Consider the Consequences of remaining in Control.

4.- Group discussion: Identify different ways in which people solve conflicts. Prompt students to brainstorm different ways in which they might control their temper.

5.- Homework: Ask the students to self-monitor their behavior and to attempt to implement at least one new strategy when confronted with a problem.

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