

PEER RELATIONSHIPS:
NEGLECTED AND REJECTED CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

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REJECTED AND NEGLECTED CHILDREN

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Recent advances in knowledge of children with peer relationship problems is discussed. The discussion has three main focuses: (a) sociometric assessment of low status children, (b) behavioral correlates of peer rejection, and (c) intervention techniques for peer rejected children. Sociometric assessment will include discussion of peer nomination and peer rating techniques. The distinction between rejected and neglected children will be introduced. The review on behavioral correlates of peer relationship problems will distinguish between the unique differences between the problems of rejected and neglected children. Intervention techniques will be discussed with a focus on methods which have been utilized for increasing the social status of rejected children.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Over the past decade there has been increased interest in the role of peer relations and the contributions they have in the development of social competence. The relationship children have with their peers serve a variety of functions. For example, Freud and Dann (1951) established that children provide each other with emotional support in unfamiliar or threatening circumstances. Children also provide direct instruction in various social, physical, and cognitive skills (Allen, 1976).

Research examining the negative effects of inadequate peer relations has clearly demonstrated the importance of peer relations. Various correlational studies suggest that early problems in peer relations are related to a variety of adjustment problems in later life. These include mental health problems (Cowen, Pederson, Babigian, Izzo, & Trost, 1973), dropping out of school (Ullmann, 1957), delinquency (Roff, Sells, & Golden, 1972), and "bad conduct" discharges from military service (Roff, 1961). Deprivation studies with animals have shown that the

absence of contact with age-mates during the first few months of life gravely alters subsequent relations with other animals (Harlow, 1969). Such deprivation studies cannot for ethical reasons be carried out with humans,

Considering the significance of peer relations, it is necessary to establish methods of identifying children who have difficulty relating to peers and then develop methods for determining the reasons for the difficulties and remediating those problems.

Sociometric assessment has been shown to be a valid and reliable method for identifying children as "at risk" in their peer relations (Asher & Hymel, 1981). Two distinct populations of children who exhibit difficulty with peer relations can be identified using sociometric nomination procedures. Neglected children have few friends, but are not disliked by their peers. They receive few positive nominations and few negative nominations. Rejected children are those who have few friends and are actively disliked by others. They receive many negative nominations and few, if any, positive nominations (French & Tyne, 1982).

Studies indicate a distinct difference in the behavioral profile of neglected and rejected children. Neglected children are often labeled as shy by their

peers (Coie, Dodge, & Coppotelli, 1982), display less aggression than rejected children (Coie & Kupersmidt, 1983), and engage in more solitary play than other children (Dodge, 1983). Neglected children also show less status continuity than rejected children and are likely to improve their status over time (Coie & Dodge, 1983). Furthermore, there is little evidence that neglected children are at risk for later disorders (Asher & Wheeler, 1985; Coie & Dodge; French & Tyne, 1982; French & Waas, 1985; Kratochwill & French, 1984).

Problems associated with rejected status include antisocial behavior (Hartup, 1983), hyperactivity (King & Young, 1981), and academic disabilities (Bryan, 1976). Rejected children in naturalistic and analogue settings exhibit high levels of aggression (Dodge, 1983; Dodge, Coie, & Brakke, 1982), task inappropriate behavior (Coie & Kupersmidt, 1983; Dodge et al., 1982), and solitary activity (Ladd, 1983). Longitudinal research suggests that the rejected status is relatively static and does not change as the children advance through school (Coie & Dodge, 1983). These children are also at risk for a variety of adolescent and adult adjustment problems (Asher & Wheeler, 1985;

Cowen et al., 1973; Roff, 1961; Roff et al., 1972; Ullmann, 1957).

In reviewing the research on peer relations one can conclude that rejected children exhibit more severe behavior problems than neglected children. This conclusion is supported by comparisons of behavior ratings of these children. Rejected children generally obtain more deviant scores than neglected children even on dimensions tapping withdrawal and shyness (French & Wass, 1985). On certain behavioral dimensions, neglected children are seen as exhibiting more problem behavior than popular children, but are generally indistinguishable from average status children. This pattern is apparent on peer ratings of aggression and withdrawal, and teacher ratings of behavior problems (Virtue & French, 1984), and on self-rating of loneliness (Asher & Wheeler, 1985).

In order to assist rejected children with interpersonal relations identification of their social behavior patterns had to be investigated. Gronlund and Anderson (1957) reported rejected children as having reputations of not being good-looking, untidy, not likable, restless, and talkative. Roff, Sells, and Golden (1972) have suggested that the majority of

rejected children display aversive and domineering behavior toward peers. Others may be characterized by poor conduct toward authority figures, extreme and somewhat hostile social withdrawal, and/or seriously disturbed behavior. Patersen and Moe (1984) identified bossing, arguing, tattling, invading personal space, and denial of the above as behaviors of a rejected child. Waas and French (1984) established rejected children are more external in locus of control than popular children. Coie and Dodge (1983) reported that rejected children have a tendency to be aggressive and disruptive. Cantrell (1983/1984) ascribed rejected children as aggressive, nervous, withdrawn, and inattentive. Gelb (1984) reported rejected children as more immature, inappropriate, aggressive, insulting, and less likely to comply to rules than popular children.

Relatively few intervention programs have been developed specifically for improving the social functioning of rejected children. Although this group appears to be the most seriously impaired it has not been given the attention it warrants (French & Tyne, 1982). French and Tyne (1982) recently reviewed five studies designed specifically to train rejected

children with interpersonal skills to aid in peer acceptance. Four of the five studies reported success although it is difficult to make an overall judgment about their relative effectiveness. In three studies there is a question as to how accurately the rejected subjects were identified. A second problem was the number of intervention methods used in each of the studies make it difficult to discern which facet of the program actually accounted for treatment gains.

The above studies all dealt with skills training of behavioral deficits in rejected children. An issue which was not addressed was whether rejected children exhibit behavioral excesses as well as behavioral deficits. Gelb (1984) reported that behavioral excesses such as rule breaking, noise making, and insults were all highly salient and aversive behaviors which contributed to the poor reputations of rejected children.

Over the past decade there has been an increase in interest in rejected children and the interpersonal difficulties they have. It has been estimated that between 5% and 15% of elementary school children experience significant interpersonal relationship problems (French & Tyme, 1982). The American

educational system has been negligent in regard to the monitoring and instruction of interpersonal skills these children need. The traditional educational approach has focused almost entirely on academic-related behaviors. Often referred to as the "hidden curriculum", affective, social-emotional, and social skills education in schools is often talked about but rarely implemented (Michelson & Wood, 1980). In the chapters that follow, reliable and valid methods of identifying children who have difficulty relating to peers, the reasons for those difficulties, and methods of remediating those problems will be discussed.

Chapter II includes a review of methods used to assess children who have peer relationship problems. Chapter II also includes a review of the behavioral correlates of rejected children and an in-depth review of recent approaches to improve interpersonal skills of children which may be applicable to rejected children.

Chapter III is a synthesis of the literature cited in Chapter II. Conclusions have been drawn from the literature reviewed in Chapter II with respect to identification, causes, and treatment of socially rejected children.

Chapter IV discusses the usefulness of the conclusions drawn in Chapter III to our educational system. Specific recommendations for changes in our current educational practices are sighted.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATUREIntroduction

The review of literature on peer relations will focus on three aspects: sociometric assessment of low-status children, behavioral correlates of peer relationship problems, and social intervention techniques for rejected children. Sociometric assessment will include discussion of peer nomination and peer rating techniques. The distinction between rejected and neglected children will be introduced. The review on behavioral correlates of peer relationship problems will distinguish between the unique differences between the problems of rejected and neglected status. Intervention techniques will be reviewed with a focus on methods which have been utilized for increasing the social status of rejected children.

Sociometric Assessment of Children

Sociometric methodology has been used widely to study children's peer relations (for reviews, see Asher & Hymel, 1981; Hymel, 1983). Sociometry is a procedure for measuring the attraction between individual members of a specific group. Several different types of

sociometric measures have been developed, each of which is designed to measure how well children are liked or disliked by their peers. Two major methods of sociometric assessment are nomination and rating-scale measures. In discussing sociometric measures Asher and Hymel (1981) do not include such techniques as the Guess Who technique (Hartshorne, May, & Maller, 1929) or the Class Play measure (Bower, 1960) which require children to indicate characteristics, traits, or roles of peers rather than to describe how much they like or dislike certain peers. Asher and Hymel (1981) content that Guess Who and Class Play are better thought of as peer-assessment measures than as sociometric measures (Asher & Hymel, 1981). Sociometric measures provide no information to identify the origins of children's social problems, or detecting the factors that currently maintain the problem (Burton, 1985).

Peer Nominations

The most common sociometric techniques used are peer nominations. Peer nominations were initially researched by Moreno (1934). There are two types of nomination procedures, positive and negative. In both cases children are asked to nominate a certain number of classmates according to specific interpersonal

criteria. Positive nominations are obtained by asking such questions as "Name your three best friends," or "Whom do you most like to play (work) with?" Negative nominations are obtained in a similar manner, with a member of a group being asked such questions as "Name three classmates you don't like very much?" Positive nominations are assumed to measure social acceptance, or the extent to which a child is valued as a companion by his/her peers. Negative nominations are taken as measures of peer rejection, and the extent to which an individual is shunned by the peer group (French & Tyne, 1982).

Despite the apparent simplicity of sociometric nominations, this technique appears to have good psychometric characteristics (Asher & Hymel, 1981). Temporal stability estimates of positive nominations in elementary school children have been reported to be as high as .84 when assessed over an 8-week period (Busk, Ford, & Schulman, 1973), and .40 when assessed over a 3-year interval (Sells & Roff, 1967). Preschool children's nominations have lower stability but it is still substantial, ranging from .68 (Hartup, Glazer, & Charlsworth, 1967) to .38 (Asher, Singleton, Tinsley, & Hymel, 1979). Test-retest reliability of negative

nominations are somewhat less than those of positive nominations, they are still in the acceptable range (French & Tyne, 1982). The validity of sociometric nominations has been established comparing students' relative social status with concurrent teacher judgments of behavior, and/or observations of peer interactions (Asher & Hymel, 1981).

Investigators have combined positive and negative nomination scores into a single social status score by subtracting the number of negative nominations from the number of positive nominations (e.g., Roff et al., 1972). There is data indicating that positive and negative nominations tap somewhat different aspects of children's social functioning, and should therefore be used independently. Evidence of the independence of the two dimensions come from correlational studies in which no or low significant correlation between positive and negative nominations have been reported (Asher & Hymel, 1981; Goldman, Corsini, & deUrioste, 1980; Gottman, 1977). Given these correlations and data that the behavioral correlates of accepted and rejected children differ, it appears positive and negative nominations tap different dimensions of peer functioning, the usefulness of each procedure may be

lost when the two scores are combined (French & Tyne, 1982).

Peer Ratings

Peer sociometric ratings differ from peer nomination techniques in both method and type of information they provide. With peer ratings children are typically given a list of their peers and asked to rate each child along some social or interpersonal dimension (Asher & Hymel, 1981). Tyne and Flynn (1979) demonstrated this procedure when they had each child in a class rate every classmate on a 6-point Likert-type social distance scale. The scale was anchored on the positive end by "One of my best friends" and on the negative by "Don't like them." By averaging the scores given each child a mean sociometric rating was generated.

Rating scales have several attractive features. First, they appear to be sensitive to subtle changes in scale criteria. Oden and Asher (1977) found that training low-accepted children social skills in a play setting led to a significant increase in the children's ratings by peers in response to a "play with" question but not a "work with" sociometric question. Second, The test-retest reliability of rating scales are

usually in the .70 to .80 range and are generally superior to nomination procedures (Oden & Asher, 1977; Asher & Hymel, 1981). Rating scales' higher temporal stability appears to stem from the greater number of peer judgments contributing to each students sociometric score (Asher & Hymel, 1981).

Although there is a high correlation ($r = +.68 - +.87$) between rating scales and peer nominations (Asher & Hymel, 1981; Justman & Wrightstone, 1961), there are data that indicate the two procedures tap somewhat different aspects of peer functioning (Oden & Asher, 1977). Asher and Hymel speculate that peer rating scales assess children's overall level of peer acceptance, while positive and negative nominations measure the extent to which the child is someone's best friend or worst enemy.

Classification Of Children Low-Status Children

Using sociometrics as a measure of social competence it is possible to distinguish subgroups of low-status children who experience peer-interaction difficulties. The distinction is made between children who are "neglected" by others and those who are "rejected" by their peers (Asher & Hymel, 1981). Most often this distinction is ignored. It is common to

refer to all children who are without friends as socially isolated, even though some of those children are openly rejected by their peers while others are indeed neglected (Asher & Hymel, 1981).

Identification of these two groups is typically made on the basis of combined results provided from positive and negative peer nominations. Neglected children receive few positive nominations, and few, if any, negative nominations; as such they are low on both peer acceptance and peer rejection. Rejected children receive few, if any, positive nominations, but a large number of negative nominations. They are termed low on peer acceptance and high on peer rejection (French & Tyne, 1982). Peer ratings can also be used to identify children who are rejected by their peers, but cannot be used to differentiate between rejected and neglected children (Asher & Hymel, 1981).

The utility of distinguishing between these two groups is supported by data indicating that there are behavioral and personality differences between rejected and neglected children. The differences were addressed in a recent study by Cantrell (1983/1984). Rejected children in grades three through six were rated by teachers and peers as more aggressive, more nervous and

overactive, less attentive and popular than neglected children. Teachers and peers were more inclined to rate neglected and socially adjusted children as similar on dimensions of behavior and different than rejected children. Rejected children were liked less and were more withdrawn than neglected children, who were in turn liked less and were more withdrawn than adjusted children. A study by Gronland and Anderson (1957) revealed similar results. Socially rejected children were described as being untidy, unattractive, not likable, and too talkative. Neglected children were rated as neutral personalities who were overlooked rather than disliked by peers. Researchers tend to agree that the rejected-neglected distinction is essential to the precise delineation of children's social status categories (Asher & Hymel, 1981; Burton, 1985; Cantrell, 1983/1984; French & Tyne, 1982; French & Wass, 1985).

There is little empirical documentation of the effect that sociometric testing has on children and their social interactions. Some parents and teachers fear that the use of negative nominations will implicitly signal to children that saying negative things about others is sanctioned. Another fear is

that in the process of naming a specified number of disliked peers the children will actually come to view certain children more negatively than they already do (Asher & Hymel, 1981). In the only research available, Hayvren and Hymel (1984) found that preschool children did not change their behavior toward either disliked or liked peers as a result of sociometric assessment which included negative nominations. These are encouraging findings which support claims that the benefits of sociometrics outweigh the risks (Asher, 1983; Moore, 1967). Nonetheless, more research is needed if researchers are to fully understand the consequences of sociometric testing.

Behavioral Correlates of Low-Status Children

Although many explanations have suggested to account for low social status, a behavioral perspective has predominated (Asher & Hymel, 1981; Putallaz & Gottman, 1981; Renshaw & Asher, 1982). The social skill deficit model (Asher & Renshaw, 1981) proposes that individual skillfulness is the crucial determinant of children's peer status. Asher and Renshaw (1981) hypothesized that low-status children are prevented from establishing effective peer relations because of their lack of social skills. A primary goal of researched

based on the social-skill model is the identification of skills that differentiate low-status children from children who are relatively more successful in their peer relations (Burton, 1985). The assumption is that once the critical skills are identified, a "correctional process" (Putallaz & Gottman, p. 2) can be implemented to aid the low-status children.

Literature on the social-skill correlates of sociometric status have focused primarily on children's overt behaviors (Asher & Renshaw, 1981). Generally low-status children have been found to exhibit less positive and less effective styles of social interaction than their high-status peers (Burton, 1985). Until recently, little research has been designed to assess the behavioral differences between rejected and neglected children. The results of some of these studies are reviewed next. In each of the studies reviewed status groupings were accomplished through the combined use of positive and negative sociometric nominations.

Peer and Teacher Assessment of Low-Status Children

A variety of behavioral assessment techniques have been used to study the interaction styles of rejected and neglected children. A number of researchers have

utilized peer and teacher assessment. Other researchers have relied more on direct observational methods.

One of the first studies to focus separately on the characteristics of rejected versus neglected children was conducted by Gronlund and Anderson (1957). Junior high school students in this study nominated peers who best fit a variety of personal characteristics. The mean scores for rejected and neglected children were then compared across the list of characteristics. Rejected children received the most nominations for being talkative, restless, and not likable, while neglected children received nominations only for being quiet.

In an update of the Gronlund and Anderson (1957) study, Coie, Dodge, and Coppotelli (1982) assessed the peer perceptions of elementary school children in terms of six specific aspects of social behavior: cooperates, acts shy, leads, disrupts, fights, and seeks help. The findings indicated that rejected children scored high on disrupts, fights, and seeks help. Neglected children only received high ratings on the acts shy category. A more recent study (Carlson, Lahey, & Neeper, 1984) also found that rejected elementary

school children were perceived by peers to behave in a more negative manner than either neglected or accepted children.

The results of these studies provide evidence that rejected and neglected children are indeed perceived differently by their peers. Classmates perceive rejected children as being antagonistic and aggressive while neglected children tend to be perceived as shy and quiet. The results of two additional studies (French & Waas, 1985; Green, Vosk, Forehand, & Beck 1981) suggest similar views are also held by teachers.

Green, Vosk, Forehand, and Beck (1981) compared social status groups of third-graders on teacher ratings of school behavior. Rejected children scored higher on such specific items as restless, excitable, disturbs, and demands teacher attention than neglected children. They also scored higher on items which assessed their lack of concentration and tendency to daydream.

In a study by French and Waas (1985) teachers rated socially rejected second- and fifth-grade children as having widespread behavior problems. The problems teachers attributed to rejected children included aggression, hostile isolation, task avoidance,

and manifest anxiety. Neglected children were reported as having more overall school behavior problems than popular children, but were not described as exhibiting any of the overt kinds of problems that were attributed to rejected children. This pattern fits with those of other studies of peer and teacher ratings. Among their classmates and teachers, rejected children appear to be hostile and disruptive. By contrast, neglected children tend to leave little clear-cut impression at all.

Direct Observations of Low-Status Children

In order to assess the actual interaction styles and behavioral patterns of rejected and neglected children direct observational methods have been used. These observations have made an integral contribution to research of the behavioral correlates of children's peer status. Dodge, Coie, and Brakke (1982) examined the interactions of third-grade and fifth-grade rejected, neglected, popular, and average children across two separate aspects of the school environment. Observations were made in the classroom during independent work and on the playground during recess. Analysis of the data indicated the rejected children exhibited more aggression than any other children and

engage in context-inappropriate behavior. For example, rejected children were frequently off-task during classroom work, daydreaming, wandering, or attempting to initiate contact with peers. They also spent significantly more time than other children interacting with the teacher (e.g., receiving directions, being reprimanded). Neglected children remained on task the most of any group of children and approached peers the least.

Dodge et al. (1982) speculated from their findings the peer-directed aggression and deviant social approach patterns may be important variables in the explanation of rejected and neglected status. Rejected children were aggressive and when they made prosocial approaches their timing was poor and they appeared disruptive. Neglected children were neither aggressive nor disruptive. The researchers (Dodge et al., 1982) warned though that their conclusions were drawn from observations of children who had already acquired rejected or neglected status. Whether specific behaviors cause the children's low status or whether the behaviors were a consequence of the low status remained unanswered.

The question of causality was addressed in a recent study by Coie and Kupersmidt (1983). In their study observations of the behaviors of children who had been placed in groups of previously unfamiliar peers were made. They compared these behaviors to the behaviors of the children interacting in groups of familiar peers.

Ten playgroups of fourth-grade boys were formed on the basis of the boys' classroom social status. Each group consisted of four children; one was a rejected child, one was neglected, one was average, and one was of popular status. Five of the groups were composed of boys who came from different schools (unfamiliar groups). The other five groups were composed of boys who came from the same school and were familiar with one another (familiar groups). The groups met once a week for 6 weeks.

Coie and Kupersmidt (1983) found that the children's classroom status scores were significantly related to final playgroup status scores. Rejected boys therefore tend to reestablish their rejected status position in new social situations. The rejected boys performed fully to their stereotypic social patterns. They exhibited significantly more antisocial

behavior than any other group and were highly interactive and talkative whether with familiar or unfamiliar peers. These findings reinforce earlier speculations (Dodge, 1983; Dodge et al., 1982) that peer directed aggression may contribute to the emergence and maintenance of rejected status.

Overall, the findings of recent studies on the behavioral correlates of peer relationship problems demonstrate important differences exist between rejected and neglected children (Burton, 1985). Rejected children tend to strike out and irritate their peers. Neglected children usually maintain a low-key social profile with behavior that minimizes the attention they receive.

Intervention Techniques for Rejected Children

Even without formal assessment, teachers and parents usually notice and become concerned when children lack friends in school. These concerns generally turn to questions of why the children are acting the way they do and what can be done to help them overcome their social problems. Research literature on social intervention techniques is expanding steadily. The relative effectiveness of some of the studies are questionable due to accuracy of

identification of rejected subjects and the breath of intervention methods used in individual studies. A key to successful intervention is the ability to match the nature of the intervention to the specific needs of the child (Burton, 1985).

Dodge et al. (1982) and Richard and Dodge (1982) have suggested that the maladaptive behavior patterns of rejected children stem from a lack of knowledge about effective interaction strategies. Based on the evidence that rejected children often lack knowledge of how to behave socially researchers have attempted to improve peer relations through direct instruction of social skills (Burton, 1985).

The basic instructional plan of many social skills training programs is three fold. First, low-status children are given verbal instruction on ways to make their peer interactions more productive. Following such instruction the children are given opportunities to practice the trained skills in either role-play or actual peer group situations. Finally, the children are encouraged to reflect on their performance in the practice sessions, and consider how their training can be used in day-to-day social interactions (for review of social skills training see, Gresham, 1981)

While coaching programs may remedy deficits in children's social skills, there are also other important reasons why rejected children display maladaptive social behaviors. Renshaw and Asher (1982) along with others (Cantrell, 1983/1984; Dodge et al., 1982; French & Waas, 1985; Gelb, 1984) report that rejected children frequently behave in a disruptive manner during classroom work periods and that this behavior contributes to the children's peer relationship problem. It is conceivable that the children are disruptive because they do not understand the rules of classroom social conduct. It is also plausible that the children are unable to successfully complete the assigned academic tasks and therefore behave disruptively. Data indicates that rejected children tend to experience substantial academic problems as compared to neglected children as a group (Green et al., 1981).

An intervention studied recently by Coie and Krehbiel (1984) examined the connection between rejected children's academic and social problems. Fourth-grade students who were both rejected by peers and deficient in basic academic skills were provided intensive academic tutoring. Matched control students

received either social skill training or received no intervention at all. The social status gains produced by academic tutoring were stronger than those produced by the social skills training. The tutored children were apparently able to increase their on-task work behavior and conducted themselves in a way that was more acceptable to classmates after overcoming their academic deficits. Teachers were also able to elicit more positive attention to the rejected children which undoubtedly helped enhance their reputations among peers.

Intervention techniques when successful have increased low-status children's prosocial behavior. Rejected children have a reputation that must be overcome if peer attitudes toward them are going to improve. Bierman and Furman (1984) argue that behavioral changes alone may not be sufficient to foster peer acceptance of low-status children. Their work documents the importance of combining skill training with structured opportunities for the trained children to make their competencies known to peers. This can be accomplished in a number of ways. In Oden and Asher's (1977) social skill training study, behavioral change activities were coupled with

peer-pairing. Low-status children were paired with higher-status children to practice the skills being taught. Bierman and Furman (1984) speculate that once higher-status children see that the low-status children can be rewarding play- or workmates it will assist the low-status children's entry into a broader segment of the peer group.

Cooperative group projects can also be helpful for low-status children to overcome reputational problems (Johnson & Johnson, 1983). Here, low-status children who are trained in social skills are also placed into small work or play groups with more popular peers. The group is assigned a task which can only be accomplished if all the members work together (e.g., staging a play). The cooperative goal gives the popular children a reason for interacting with the low-status children who they would normally avoid.

Despite the dramatic increase in concern over social skills training of children there is little empirical research dealing specifically with the problems of rejected children. More research is needed if this at-risk group of children are to receive the assistance they warrant.

CHAPTER III

INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

In this chapter the issue emanating from the discussions in the previous section are highlighted. The emphasis here parallels the general goal and purpose of this paper. This discussion will focus on (a) sociometric procedures used to identify and classify low-status children, (b) behavioral correlates of peer relationship problems, and (c) social intervention techniques for rejected children.

Assessment & Classification of Low-Status Children

While observational procedures and teacher judgements have been used to identify children with peer relationship problems, sociometric assessment techniques are the most frequently used identification method (French & Tyne, 1982). Several different types of sociometric measures have been developed, each which is designed to measure how well children are liked or disliked by their peers. Two major methods of sociometric assessment are nomination and rating-scale measures.

The most common sociometric techniques used are peer nominations. There are two types of nomination procedures, positive and negative. In both cases

children are asked to nominate classmates according to specific interpersonal criteria. Peer sociometric ratings differ from peer nomination techniques in both method and type of information they provide. With peer ratings children are typically given a list of their peers and asked to rate each child along some social or interpersonal dimension.

Although there is a high correlation between rating scales and peer nominations there are data that indicate the two procedures tap somewhat different aspects of peer functioning. Asher and Hymel (1981) have suggested that nomination and rating measures assess different aspects of interpersonal status. Nominations appear to be sensitive to specific friendships and negative relationships. Sociometric ratings assess overall reputations within the peer group.

Using sociometrics as a measure of social competence it is possible to distinguish subgroups of low-status children who experience peer-interaction difficulties. The distinction is made between children who are "neglected" by others and those who are "rejected" by their peers (Asher & Hymel, 1981). Most often this distinction is ignored. It is common to

refer to all children who are without friends as socially isolated, even though some of those children are openly rejected by their peers while others are indeed neglected (Asher & Hymel). Rejected children are not liked and are actively disliked by peers; neglected children are simply not noticed, or are overlooked by peers.

Behavioral Correlates of Peer Rejection

Although many explanations have been suggested to account for low social status, a behavioral perspective has predominated (Asher & Hymel, 1981; Putallaz & Gottman, 1981; Renshaw & Asher, 1982). The social skill deficit model (Asher & Renshaw, 1981) proposes that individual skillfulness is the crucial determinant of children's peer status. A primary goal of researched based on the social-skill model is the identification of skills that differentiate low-status children from children who are relatively more successful in their peer relations (Burton, 1985).

Literature on the social-skill correlates of sociometric status have focused primarily on children's overt behaviors (Asher & Renshaw, 1981). Generally low-status children have been found to exhibit less positive and less effective styles of social

interaction than their high-status peers (Burton, 1985). Until recently, little research has been designed to assess the behavioral differences between rejected and neglected children.

There is little support in the literature that peer neglected children experience significant adjustment difficulties. Neglected children for the most part were seen as exhibiting no more problem behaviors than popular or average children. Furthermore, there is little evidence that neglected children are at risk for later disorders (Asher & Wheeler, 1985; Coie & Dodge, 1983; French & Tyne, 1982; French & Waas, 1985; Kratochwill & French, 1984). The behavioral profile for rejected children is much different. The problems attributed to rejected children included antisocial behavior, hyperactivity, aggression, academic disabilities and task inappropriate behavior. Research has shown that rejected children are at risk for a variety of adolescent and adult adjustment problems (Asher & Wheeler, 1985; Cowen et al., 1973; Roff, 1961; Roff et al., 1972; Ullmann, 1957).

Research data provides convincing evidence of the necessity for distinguishing between rejected and

neglected children. Given the concurrent and long-term difficulties associated with rejected status and the absence of data demonstrating neglected children experience significant problems, teachers should concentrate on understanding and remediating the problems of rejected children.

Intervention Techniques for Rejected Children

Many researchers (Dodge et al., 1982; Richard & Dodge, 1982) have suggested that the maladaptive behavior patterns of rejected children stem from a lack of knowledge about effective interaction strategies. Based on the evidence that rejected children often lack knowledge of how to behave socially, researchers have attempted to improve peer relations through direct instruction of social skills (Burton, 1985). While social skills training may remedy deficits in children's social skills, there are also other important reasons why rejected children display maladaptive social behaviors. Renshaw and Asher (1982) along with others (Cantrell, 1983/1984; Dodge et al., 1982; French & Waas, 1985; Gelb, 1984) report that rejected children frequently behave in a disruptive manner during classroom work periods and that this behavior contributes to the children's peer

relationship problem. It is conceivable that the children are disruptive because they do not understand the rules of classroom social conduct or are unable to successfully complete the assigned work.

Academic tutoring of rejected children has been attempted as an intervention to help these children in the classroom environment (Coie & Krehbiel, 1984). The social status gains produced by academic tutoring have shown promising results. The tutored children were apparently able to increase their on-task work behavior and conducted themselves in a way that was more acceptable to classmates after overcoming their academic deficits. Teachers were also able to elicit more positive attention to the rejected children which undoubtedly helped enhance their reputations among peers.

Changes in rejected childrens behavior does not automatically accompany a change in the rejected children's reputation. In addition to changing the behavior of rejected children teachers must also make special effort to change their behavioral reputations (Gronlund & Anderson, 1957). Cooperative group projects can be helpful for low-status children to overcome reputational problems (Johnson & Johnson,

1983). In cooperative group projects low-status children who are trained in social skills are also placed into small work or play groups with more popular peers.

CHAPTER IV

ACTION PLAN

The results of this review provides convincing evidence of the necessity for identifying rejected children. Socially neglected children appear to be ignored or overlooked by their peers while socially rejected children are actively disliked. Given the evidence that the poor peer relations that rejected children have are predictive of serious concurrent and latter adjustment problems, teachers must actively attempt to help these children.

The identification of rejected children is critical considering their at risk status. Teachers who are concerned about the peer relations of their students may differeniante between rejected and other low-status children by administering positive and negative sociometric nominations (Asher & Hymel, 1981). The rejected children are those who receive few, if any, positive nominations, but a large number of negative nominations. Peer ratings may also be given to assess the rejected children's overall level of peer acceptance. Comparisions of pre- and post-treatment peer ratings are helpful in assessing the effect of interventions.

Once identified, improving the social acceptance of rejected children is necessary. In order to help these children it is necessary to change the characteristics causing the rejection. Observations should be made to identify the specific features of the child's behavior that appear to cause the rejection. In many cases interventions in the classroom can be successful (Oden & Asher, 1977). In some severe cases though individual counseling, or other outside help, may be necessary to modify the behavior of rejected children (Gronlund & Anderson, 1957).

For the rejected child whose classroom behavior is disruptive, aggressive, or restless, academic tutoring has been shown successful in modifying their behavior (Coie & Krehbiel, 1984). These children are apparently able to increase their on-task work behavior and conduct themselves in a way that is more acceptable to classmates. Teachers themselves are then able to elicit more positive attention toward the rejected children which will aid in the rejected students acceptance.

For rejected children who appear to be deficit in their social skills it will be necessary to intervene with direct social skills training (Gresham, 1981).

Once again direct observations and interviews should proceed the training to pin point the specific skills that the children are lacking and the environments which pose the greatest difficulties. A multi-component treatment package, using modeling, coaching, feedback, and practice, should be used to treat these children (Kratochwill & French, 1984). The multi-component format is likely to lead to greater treatment strengths, and facilitate generalization than any single format.

Teaching general cognitive and social problem skills have also been taught to children on the assumption that these abilities will translate into increased social effectiveness (Kratochwill & French, 1984). Various programs have been developed to teach self-control (Kendall & Braswell, 1982) and social problem solving skills (Spivack & Shure, 1982). In general these types of programs have not been applied to peer rejected children. Furthermore, research has not shown that rejected children in fact exhibit deficits in social-cognitive skills (Kratochwill & French, 1984).

In addition to changing the behavior of rejected children, teachers must also make special efforts to

change the rejected children's reputation among his peers (Bierman & Furman, 1984). Children who were once thought of as not likable remain not likable until experience proves otherwise. Since rejected children are usually avoided they need the opportunity to demonstrate their new skills to their peers. Seating the rejected children near those who reject them least will aid the rejected children in establishing themselves as valued peers (Gronlund & Anderson, 1957). The results of the sociometrics will be valuable in identifying the students whom the rejected children should be seated next to. Small group or cooperative learning excersicexs will also help the rejected children gradually be integrated into the larger group (Johnson & Johnson, 1983). Causal comments by the teacher, concerning the improved behavior of the rejected children may also help. It should be recognized that the classroom teacher cannot give the rejected children social acceptance by their peers. Teachers can only help theae low-status children develop the characteristics, and arrange for the necessary social interaction that lead to social acceptability.

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