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PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP QUALITY AND THE INFLUENCE ON SOCIOMETRIC VERSUS PEER-PERCEIVED POPULARITY

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**Parent-Child Relationship Quality and the Influence on Sociometric Versus
Peer-Perceived Popularity**

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to compare factors in the parent-child relationships of peer-perceived popular adolescents to those of sociometrically popular adolescents. Factors included autonomy, relatedness, and idealization. Participants were 71 8th grade adolescents. Results showed similarities in parent-child relationships between perceived popular and sociometrically popular adolescents for autonomy, relatedness, and idealization. Results suggest that future research should explore other factors, such as affection from mother and father and levels of psychological control behavior to differentiate perceived popularity from sociometrically popular adolescents.

Introduction

Parent-child relationships influence the development of later peer relations and the adolescent's adjustment to social settings. Research starting as early as the 1970's placed importance on healthy relationships in early development (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978), and has blossomed into current studies in peer relations. Methodologies, including sociometrics, have been formed and modified to quantitatively study adolescents' and their standing amongst their cohort. The most recent research, however, has found similarities and discrepancies amongst adolescents who are well-liked, disliked, and those who are assumed to be "popular." Above all, the distinct constructs correlate with factors from parent-child relationship formed early on.

Parent-Child to Peer Relationships

In the early stages of development, primary influence stems from the parent-child relationship. Often times, the parent's personality and self are reflected in the child's first years of life, especially in forming relationships. When children interact with a parent, the relationship provides some of their first exposure to verbal and physical communication, and as such, the behaviors of the parent become custom to the infant. An empathic, responsive parent teaches the child the reciprocity of empathic relationships, a prosocial characteristic of their future relationships (Elicker, Englund, & Sroufe, 1992). The supportive relationship also aids in internalizing self-worth and efficacy consequently encouraging positive affect (Parker, Rubin, Price, & DeRosier, 1995). These characteristics lead to the child's comfort in exploring their environment, and, resultantly, advancing cognitive development (Ainsworth, 1978). All of these qualities—curiosity, enthusiasm, positive affect, advanced cognitive development—contribute to

later identity and relationship development. However, positive correlations exist between an unsupportive home environment and aggressive behavior. Patterson and colleagues developed a social interactional model showing antisocial behavior beginning with negative parent-child interactions (Dishion, 1991). Early interactions with unresponsive, insensitive parents create an unpredictable environment for the child and a feeling of unworthiness. The insecurity created in such situations prevents the child from exploring their environment, developing aggressive behavior and anxiously shying away from beneficial activities including peer play (Parker et al., 1995).

Early parent-child relationships and the resultant behaviors and personalities that are developing have implications for future peer relationships. The characteristics of children in secure parent-child relationships are desirable to peers, increasing the child's peer acceptance as early as preschool and on (LaFreniere & Sroufe, 1985; Elicker et al., 1992; Grossman & Grossman, in press). Being kind, trustworthy, cooperative, and sociable are common characteristics of peer-accepted children (Cillessen and Mayeux, 2004). Children who are rejected by peers in school, or are disliked most, generally engage in more reactive aggression and withdrawn behavior, as seen earlier in development (Salmivalli, Kaukianinen, & Lagerspetz, 2000). These children are less sociable and cognitively skilled than average children and have higher instances of depression and anxiety. Social anxiety results from the child's attempts to impress peers, and their self-doubt in an ability to do so (Newcomb, Bukowski, & Pattee, 1993). Although, at times, peer-rejected children engage in physically aggressive behavior, they have shown a desire to be accepted. However, they had not obtained the confidence and prosocial skills of their peer-accepted counterparts in early parent-child interactions. Rejected children show plasticity of self-presentation based on their current environment rather than a static self-

identity. In an unfamiliar environment, the children act with uncertainty and engage in embarrassing behaviors, a cyclical pattern identifying their peer-rejection (Schlenker and Leary, 1982).

Perceived-Popularity

Conflicts arise in defining “popularity” in adolescents because of its defining characteristics (Parkhurst & Hopmeyer, 1998; Rodkin, Farmer, Pearl, & Van Acker, 2000). Originally, sociometric research found the most popular adolescents to be those with the highest amount of “most liked” votes from peers; typically, the adolescents who embodied prosocial characteristics (Newcomb et al., 1993). More recent sociological research suggests the “popular” group is actually cool, dominant, voted “most popular,” but not necessarily liked by most of their peers (Adler & Adler, 1998). An apparent conflict arose in validity. As a result, two distinct constructs developed: sociometrically popular and peer-perceived popular groups (Lease, Kennedy, & Axelrod, 2002).

Sociometrically popular children are well-liked among their peers, but they are not usually recognized as members of the popular group (Cillessen and Mayeux, 2004). The peer-perceived popular group is recognized by many of their peers, but the group is both disliked and liked by many. These high levels of recognition refer to controversial status (Parkhurst & Hopmeyer, 1998). As such, peer-rejected and peer-perceived popular groups share some stunted level of acceptance. An important factor to consider is a significant relationship between relational aggression and peer rejection (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Crick, 1996). Perceived popular groups, however, have characteristics that separate them from the rejected group and the accepted group. Peers recognize traits to identify “popular” children such as athleticism, being

cool, and dominance—especially through relational aggression (LaFontana & Cillessen, 2002; Parkhurst & Hopmeyer, 1998; Rodkin et al., 2000; Rose, Swenson, & Waller, 2004).

The use of gossip and manipulation covertly puts others down, thereby creating relationships that lack desired prosocial behavior and reciprocity of sociometrically popular adolescents' relationships. Rather, as a consequence of rejective behavior from family and peers, relationally aggressive adolescents show externalizing and internalizing problems—social and emotional maladjustment (Casas et al., 2006; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Crick, 1996). There is little overlap between sociometric popularity and peer-perceived popularity (Cillessen & Mayeux, 2004). Peer-acceptance and social dominance are both desires of young adolescents but their distinction has a weak correlation (Parkhurst & Hopmeyer, 1998). The perceived-popular group creates a façade of acceptance through social dominance because of their peers' unwillingness or inability to defend themselves with any type of reciprocal aggression (Parkhurst & Hopmeyer, 1998). Acceptance of the group is not questioned by peers. Instead, it is understood. The dominant group is able to “play popular” because of their immunity from social ridicule (Weisfeld, Bloch, & Ivers, 1984); their social success resulting from relational aggression and the responding behaviors of the rejected and accepted groups.

Parent-Child Relationship Factors

Specific factors from parent-child relationships have influence on the development of peer-relationship quality, including quality, relatedness, autonomy, and idealization.

Autonomy

Autonomy should be understood as self-governance and self-reliance, opposite to control by influences outside of the self (Ryan & Lynch, 1989). Generally, it can be assumed to be a natural, inevitable vicissitude of normal development, gradually forming in mid-adolescence. Healthy parent-child relationships involving early support and sensitivity create a healthy balance of dependency and autonomous functioning (Freitag, Belsky, Grossman & Grossman, & Scheuerer-Englisch, 1996).

However, lax parenting, lacking support and acceptance, may push adolescents away to form dependence on peers. Developmental implications arise, interfering with identity formation and self-concept. Low self-concept is also related with depression, low self-esteem, irritability anxiety, and aggressive impulses (Bachman, 1970; Rosenburg, 1985; see also review by Rosenburg, 1986), behaviors typical of a peer-rejected adolescent.

As discussed, peer-rejection stems from an absence of supportive parenting, especially resulting in a lack of solid identity with low self-concept, but also a dependency on peers (Levpušček, 2006). Negative correlations exist between autonomy of parents and autonomy of peers, leaving children who are autonomous in their families to be susceptible to social influence (Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986; Ryan & Lynch, 1989). Seeking some acceptance, behavior of peer-rejected adolescents is dependent on the situation because of a desire for peer-acceptance without a solid identity, leaving them dependent and susceptible to peers. Crick & Ladd (1993) found the rejected group to be the most stressed about their social situation, providing motivation to learn new, acceptable social skills. Unfortunately, the group has not been provided with such knowledge and is left isolated from necessary socialization to develop those skills.

Yet, less salient is the arguable dependency of perceived-popular adolescents. In actuality, their social status is vulnerable because it develops from dominance, not acceptance. Relational aggression is a covert tactic to place perceived-popular adolescents at the top of their social hierarchy. Without the ability to put others down, the “popular” group could not be dominant, leaving them dependent on peers for development of top status. Although the group does not appear susceptible to peer influence, their behavior is swayed strategically by the threat of others’ social status. However vulnerable, this dominant, controversial group has members who are the least stressed about their social situation (Crick & Ladd, 1993), having formed an accepted façade of dominance and popularity through the means necessary.

Peer-perceived popular adolescents, therefore, share some type of maladjusted social skills with peer-rejected adolescents. As such, it is likely that the two groups also share some parental rejection. The discrepancy originating the two separate constructs may evolve from the type of rejection at hand. Whereas rejected adolescents experience the brunt of neglect at home, perceived popular adolescents may be experiencing psychological control behavior—a maladjustive, but effective social skill to form the dominance dependent on peers, but not necessarily a sense of closeness.

Specifically, we hypothesize that the rejection from parents will create higher levels of autonomy in parent-child relationships for perceived popular youth. Well-liked social status will show higher levels, too, as seen in previous research.

Relatedness

Relatedness is a feeling of connection with others, having inherent implications on other aspects of adolescent life. Positive relatedness with parents especially creates a feeling for an adolescent of having a safe base to retreat to, encouraging their exploration of environment and

interactions. In addition to the side effects of learning prosocial behaviors, relatedness is a factor in peer relations, school performance, and relations with teachers and other adults. In that case, relatedness shows itself as central to development of self-esteem (Furrer & Skinner, 2003) as well as a condition for self-system processes (Connell, 1990; Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000; Grolnick & Ryan, 1992; Skinner, 1995). The effects on these factors form trends familiar of the sociometric categories described previously.

Children reporting a higher sense of relatedness showed high engagement emotionally and behaviorally (Furrer & Skinner, 2003), as would be seen by peer-accepted adolescents. In line with the peer-rejected adolescents, however, low relatedness is associated with social isolation and dropping out of school (Hymel, Comfort, Schonert-Reichl, & McDougall, 1996; Sage & Kindermann, 1999; Wentzel, 1999).

Autonomy and relatedness intertwine to some extent, especially in adolescents' struggles to maintain strong connections with parents while developing autonomy (Allen, Insabella, Porter, Smith, Land, & Phillips, 2006). "Autonomous-relatedness" is a term referring to the optimal balance of a parent-child relationship in which the adolescent has achieved autonomy while maintaining a strong connection (Allen, Aber, & Leadbeater, 1990; Hill & Holmbeck, 1986; Steinberg, 1990).

Although difficulties and lack of family support have led to adolescent depression (Joiner, 2000; Price, Sloman, Gardner, Gilbert, & Rohde, 1994), people have a pervasive desire for creating significant interpersonal relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). With a desire for relatedness to some extent, autonomy plays another role in interpersonal connections. Negative correlations of autonomy from parents versus peers may show some evidence of adolescents reaching for some meaningful connectedness to others. If perceived-popular

adolescents are exhibiting negative peer relations (relational aggression), there may be a link to negative relatedness with parents. The façade of popularity through dominance creates a shallow replacement for desired connectedness, trading relatedness with parents for autonomy and creating dependency on peers. Even possibly, having learned poor social skills in an unsupportive parent relationship, perceived-popular children may only know primarily maladaptive skills to developing peer-relatedness. Resultantly, the dominance social tactics place them at the top of their social hierarchy.

Therefore, we hypothesize perceived popular youth will show lower levels of relatedness because of the factors involved in developing it. Well-liked youth, however, will show higher levels.

Idealization

The trade of dependency on parents for the dependency on peers also has effects on the idealization of parents (Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986). Idealization results from autonomy of parents and individuation; the transitory period of adolescence forms knowledge that parents are not all knowing (Esman, 1980; Josselson, 1980). Developing such autonomy would naturally result in a lowered view of parents from the original ideal. A linear increase of de-idealization, autonomy, and individuation traces a positive correlation of the three separate constructs through middle to late adolescence—around 12 to 16 years of age (Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986; Belgium, Beyers, & Goossens, 1999; Beyers, Goossens, & Baldi, 1999; Levpušček, 2006). Higher idealizations and dependency on parents tends to lead to higher dependency on friends later, leaving the noticeable association of autonomy and relatedness between parents and friends. Insecure parent-child relationships, however, may result in an accentuated fear of losing relationships with friends. Results have also shown that less success in developing autonomy

with relatedness in relationships with parents developed higher idealization of friends. Overall, the middle school years are a time of less self-differentiation from friends (Levpušček, 2006).

Because of evidence in previous research and the association of idealization with autonomy and relatedness, we hypothesized perceived popular youth would show lower levels of idealization of parents. However, research also shows that the sociometrically popular youth should show higher levels of idealization.

Relationship Quality

Parent-child relationship quality clearly impacts adolescent development of peer relationships wherein, for example, secure adolescents seek similar relationships at school (Sroufe, 1992; Sroufe & Fleeson, 1986). Specifically, these adolescents seek empathic, responsive peer relationships (Sroufe & Fleeson, 1986), and the searching behavior can be generalized to adolescents with negative parent-child relationships. Insecure relationships embodying hostility and unmet needs are reflected in those adolescents' peer relationships (Cassidy, Kirsh, Scolton, Parke, 1996; McFadyen-Ketchum, Bates, Dodge, & Pettit, 1996). Negative relationships can include those that neglect or reject adolescents that normalize behaviors for future neglect/rejection by peers (Dodge, Coie, & Brakke, 1982; Dodge, Coie, Pettit, & Price, 1990). All of these internalizing and externalizing behaviors are seen as early as preschool (Sroufe & Fleeson, 1986; Wood, Emmerson, & Cowan, 2004) because they are familiar and, therefore, comfortable (Sroufe & Fleeson, 1986). There is little question that these early behaviors and consequential attachments are carried through to adolescence as well. In studies of adolescents, attachment predicted peer acceptance and rejection (Weinfield, Ogawa, & Sroufe, 1997).

Relational aggression, as discussed earlier, also shows evidence of existence in psychological control behavior from the parent (Barber, 1996; Becker, 1964). With knowledge that behaviors learned early on are carried through to adolescence, perceived popular adolescents are likely to be adapting relational aggression from early parent-child attachment. A link can be drawn between the type of parent-child relationship quality and later peer relations with relationally aggressive behavior.

Therefore, we hypothesize that negative interactions are positively correlated with perceived popularity and negatively correlated with well-liked social status.

Methods

Participants

Participants in this study included 71 eighth grade adolescents (females= 45 and male= 26) who were participating in a larger study examining the transition from middle to high school. The ethnic composition of the participants was as follows: 96% European American, 3% Latino American, and 1% from mixed ethnic backgrounds. All participants in this study attended public school in a small northeastern town with a population of 6,900 and a median household income of \$61,173. Approximately 13% of students qualified for free/reduced lunch.

All eighth grade students were invited to participate in the data collection. Consent forms were mailed to the families of each participant explaining the study, of which 87% were returned (n= 87). Eighty-three percent (n =72) of those returned gave consent for their child's participation. One student did not complete all of the questionnaires due to absenteeism and was not included in the data analysis, giving a final sample of 71 participants.

Procedure

A letter explaining the study and a consent form were mailed to all of the 8th grade class. The adolescents were asked to return the consent forms regardless of whether or not their parents decided to grant them consent to participate in the study. During the Spring of 8th grade, questionnaires were administered over the course of two days. Those students who participated received a small token of gratitude (e.g. a key chain). One grand prize (e.g. iPod), and two \$50 gift certificates were raffled off to three students who had participated in both days of the data collection.

Measures

Mother-father-peer scale. The MFP assesses retrospective attitudes, of the participant, about their parent's autonomy granting (MFP; Epstein; 1983). The instrument consists of 68 items, 34 for the mother, and 34 for the father. The questions are the exact same for both the mother and the father. There are four dimensions addressed; encouragement of independence, rejection, acceptance, and overprotection. For the purposes of this study only the encouragement of independence ratings were used as a measure of autonomy. Examples of questions addressing this dimension include; "when I was younger my mother/father encouraged me to make my own decisions", "when I was younger my mother/father encouraged me to try things my way", and "when I was younger my mother/father helped me learn to be independent". The ratings occur on a five-point Likert scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .85.

Psychosocial functioning. Self-reports of depressive symptoms were obtained using the Children's Depression Inventory at Times 1 (CDI; Kovacs, 2003). The CDI includes 26 different items that assess affective, cognitive, motivational, and somatic symptoms of depression.

Children choose one of three statements, scored 0 through 2, for each of the items. The following are examples of some of the items; “I am sad once in a while, I am sad many times, I am sad all the time” and “I feel like crying every day, I feel like crying many days, I feel like crying once in a while”. The scores chosen by the students reflect their level of depressive symptoms over the prior two weeks. Mean scores were computed for each student, and higher scores reflected greater levels of depressive symptoms. In the current sample, Cronbach’s alpha was .92.

The Multidimensional Anxiety Scale for Children (MASC; March, Parker, Sullivan, Stallings, & Connors, 1997) was used to measure adolescents’ self-reported anxiety at both time points. The form that was used contains 14 items focusing on physical symptoms, harm avoidance, social anxiety, and separation anxiety. Some sample items are; “I feel restless and on edge”, “I feel sick to my stomach”, and “I get nervous if I have to perform in public”. The adolescents responded to each item on a four-point scale. Mean scores were computed for each student, averaging across the items, with higher scores indicating greater anxiety. Cronbach’s alphas for the current sample were .70.

Sociometrics. Participants completed sociometric ratings as a measure of social acceptance and perceived popularity. Adolescents were provided with a roster of all students in the 8th grade class, listed alphabetically by first name. Adolescents were asked to circle an student they “like the most”, “like the least”, or thought to be “most popular”, and “least popular.” Nominations allowed were unlimited. Nominations were summed for each student, and a difference score between “like most” and “like least” was computed for a re-standardized score of *social preference*—high scores indicated greater peer acceptance and low scores indicated greater peer rejection (Coie & Dodge, 1983). A similar difference score was computed

for “most popular” and “least popular” nominations for each student. Re-standardized scores defined *perceived popularity*—high scores indicated more perceived popularity and low scores indicated lower perceived popularity.

Results

Parenting Factors Based on Perceived Popularity and Well-Liked Status

Perceived Popularity

This study was designed to examine the differential association between parent-child relationship qualities amongst well liked and perceived popular adolescents. We hypothesized perceived popular adolescents would demonstrate a higher level of autonomy and lower relatedness (measured through “social support”). In addition, due to the distance in the parent-child relationship, the adolescent would exhibit low idealization of both parents. To test these hypotheses a series of Analysis of Variance, ANOVA, with follow up post hoc testing for significant results, and correlations were run.

Based on sociometric nominations by participants, four perceived groups were formed: unpopular ($n = 10$), average ($n = 42$), neglected ($n = 4$), controversial ($n = 2$), and popular ($n = 12$). Controversial refers to perceived popularity and popular refers to well-liked status. Table 1 shows the differences between parenting factors based on these statuses. Significant differences were seen for acceptance from mother, and autonomy from father, as well as felt social support from mother and father. Other factors did not show significant results. More specifically, significant differences appeared in acceptance by mother, $F(3, 67) = 4.07, p < .01$, with perceived popular youth ($M = 4.75, SD = .19$) scoring higher than perceived unpopular youth ($M = 3.77, SD = 1.17$). Perceived average youth ($M = 3.99, SD = .49$) exhibited higher levels of autonomy from father than perceived unpopular youth ($M = 3.47, SD = .70$), $F(3, 65) = 3.06$,

$p < .05$,. While, sensed mother social support, $F(3, 70) = 3.31$, $p < .05$, was higher amongst perceived popular youth ($M = 4.16$, $SD = .61$) then perceived unpopular ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 1.14$) youth.

Well-Liked Status

Research shows that sociometrically popular adolescents have found an optimal balance of autonomy and relatedness in parent-child relationships. Therefore, we hypothesized there should be raised levels of both autonomy and relatedness (measured through social support). There should also be a higher level of idealization. To test these hypotheses a series of Analysis of Variance, ANOVA, with follow up post hoc testing for significant results, and correlations were run.

Based on sociometric nominations by participants, five status groups were formed: rejected ($n = 6$), neglected ($n = 9$), controversial ($n = 2$), average ($n = 41$), and popular ($n = 11$). Controversial refers to the perceived popular group while popular refers to the well-liked group. Table 2 shows the results found for these status groups. A trend appeared for acceptance by mother, and negative interactions with the mother also showed trends. Autonomy by both mother and father were the lowest for the controversial group. Autonomy by mother and father gradually increased for the rejected group, then neglected, average, and finally well-liked. Autonomy by mother was seen least in the rejected group and gradually increased in neglected, then controversial, then average, and popular. Significant differences in autonomy from mother, $F(3, 68) = 2.87$, $p < .05$, were seen between average ($M = 3.87$, $SD = .49$) and neglected ($M = 3.08$, $SD = .93$) as well as between average and rejected ($M = 3.00$, $SD = .81$). Other significant differences showed for autonomy from mother, including: well-liked ($M = 3.96$, $SD = .42$) was different than neglected ($M = 3.08$, $SD = .93$) and different than rejected ($M = 3.00$, $SD = .81$).

Rejected ($M = 3.00$, $SD = .81$) was different than well-liked (M , SD) and also different than average ($M = 3.87$, $SD = .49$). Neglected ($M = 3.08$, $SD = .93$) showed differences from average ($M = 3.87$, $SD = .48$) and well-liked ($M = 3.96$, $SD = .42$). All other results did not show significance.

Pearson correlations based on Perceived Popularity and Well-Liked Status

Pearson correlations were run to examine the associations between popularity status and parent-child relationship factors. We had anticipated that popularity would be positively correlated with autonomy, but negatively correlated with relatedness and idealization. We expected well-liked status to be negatively correlated with negative interactions, but perceived popularity to be positively correlated with negative interactions. As seen in Table 3, correlations illustrated a positive association between perceived popularity and each factor: acceptance by mother ($r = .38$, $p < .001$), autonomy from mother ($r = .33$, $p < .01$), autonomy from father ($r = .27$, $p < .05$), idealization of mother ($r = .33$, $p < .01$), idealization of father ($r = .29$, $p < .05$), support by father ($r = .35$, $p < .05$), and support by mother ($r = .305$, $p < .01$). Negative interactions were positively correlated, but results were not significant. These findings indicate that increased popularity is associated with acceptance as well as independence from parents. In addition, the adolescents' increased idealization of their parents and sensed support are associated with higher popularity.

According to previous research, sociometric popularity is positively associated with autonomy, relatedness, and idealization. Well-liked adolescents seem to have a secure parent-child relationship with an optimal balance of autonomy and relatedness. Because of the secure relationship, there are resultant high levels of idealization. Results from Pearson correlations are

indicated in Table 3. Results were surprising. Similar to findings of the perceived popular group, positive correlations appeared for all of the same factors except idealization. Being well-liked was positively correlated with acceptance by mother ($r = .41, p < .001$), autonomy from mother ($r = .39, p < .001$), autonomy from father ($r = .34, p < .01$), sensed support from father ($r = .34, p < .01$), and sensed support from mother ($r = .40, p < .001$). Therefore, higher sociometric popularity is associated with acceptance from the adolescent's mother, but also autonomy and sensed social support from their parents. Significant correlations also appeared between well-liked status and negative interactions with father ($r = -.31, p < .01$) and also with negative interactions with mother ($r = -.37, p < .01$). These results support previous research that well-liked adolescents have a balanced, secure relationship with their parents.

Discussion

This study was designed to examine the parent-child relationship factors that contribute to the emergence of perceived popularity and was designed to determine how these factors may differ from those that contribute to being well liked. Although the results were contrary to the associations that we hypothesize, the findings of this study did suggest some interesting and important implications.

Research to date suggests that sociometric and perceived popular children have adapted two distinct styles of creating interpersonal relationships among peers; however, the findings of this study indicate that they demonstrate similar patterns of parent-child relationships. Notably, both adolescent groups demonstrated similar levels of autonomy, relatedness, and idealization within their parent-child relationships. The ability to develop autonomy is an important developmental task during adolescence and is reflective of healthy development. Similarly,

adolescents' capacity to form autonomous parent-child relationships while maintaining a sense of relatedness is reflective of adaptive development. While idealization of parents is considered maladaptive – the commonality of this approach to parent-child relationships in early adolescence and its similarity amongst many youth suggest it may not be prognostic of negative adaptation. Therefore, the similarities in these parent-child relationships fail to explain how differing trajectories of social adjustment may emerge for well-liked versus perceived popular youth. Negative interactions with parents were also considered as a contributing factor to separate social statuses. If an adolescent has spent their life learning maladaptive socialization techniques from their parents, they may carry on those lessons to later peer relationships. Results show significance that as negative interactions decrease, well-liked social status increases. Therefore, the well-liked youth may be showing prosocial behaviors from early parent-child relationships as expected. However, negative trends appeared between negative interactions and perceived popular youth as well. While well-liked adolescents may have adapted prosocial behaviors from a healthy parent-child relationship, it is unclear what parent-child relationship factors may contribute to the emergence of the relationally aggressive behaviors that are demonstrated by and used by perceived popular adolescents in attaining this status. This suggests that perhaps another factor in the parent-child relationship may contribute to these different pathways of development.

We speculate that psychological control within the parent-child relationship may be an important factor for future research. Some parenting shows evidence of tactical domination known as *psychological control behavior*. These manipulative tactics fuel children's unhealthy level of desire to comply with their parents and contribute to the development of relational aggression (Barber, 1996; Becker, 1964). Specifically, parents' usage of guilt induction,

possessiveness, protectiveness, love withdrawal, and erratic emotional behavior (Casas, Weigel, Crick, Ostrov, Woods, Jansen Yeh, & Huddleston-Casas, 2006) to control their children may contribute to similar tactics and mechanisms being used in later adolescent peer relationships. Love withdrawal gives ultimatums based on the behavior of the child: ex. “If you keep crying, I’m not going to love you anymore.” Erratic emotional behavior describes the parent’s transient feelings, shifting dependant on the child’s submissiveness. Love withdrawal and erratic emotional behavior are especially connected with mother-child hostility, neglectful parenting, (Stocker, 2000) and learned relational aggression in adolescents—especially girls (Laible, Carlo, Torquati, & Ontai, 2004).

Several limitations of this study must be noted. The sample used in these analyses was relatively small and, therefore, differences in parent-child relationship factors may have been difficult to ascertain due to power. In addition, the parent-child relationship characteristics that could be considered were limited to those constructs that had been measured in this data set. Given that this research project was not originally designed to examine the questions included in this study, there were other factors such as psychological control that may be most relevant to the research question examined in this investigation. Including more indices of adolescent parent-child relationships and measuring these in a larger sample would be important future directions.

In addition to psychological control, an additional important factor to consider is adolescents’ time spent with their parents. The time spent with either parent as well as the type of relationship with that parent should be considered. An adolescent who spends little time in their daily routine interacting in an insecure relationship may not suffer the consequences that another adolescent would suffer from longer exposure. A secure relationship with a second parent may even be mediating for the damage of an insecure relationship. Similarly, research

has found mentoring to be a buffering factor for many adolescents in difficult environments (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002; Hall, 2003; Jekielek, Moore, Hair, & Scarupa, 2002; DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005). More specifically, the behavior within the relationships should be considered—different factors contribute to developing a secure or insecure parent-child relationship.

Future studies, might also examine the level of affection in parent-child relationships. Disciplinary styles and abuse have been evidence for negative outcomes in adolescent development, but level of affection from parents is often overlooked. Children's prosocial behavior is positively correlated with parental warmth, including affective behavior (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998; Zhou, Eisenberg, Losoya, Fabes, Reiser, & Guthrie, 2002). Parents' negative behavior also correlated negatively to children's prosocial behavior (Deater-Deckard, Dunn, O'Connor, Davies, & Golding, 2001).

In conclusion, our study contradicted our original hypotheses. Well-liked and perceived popular adolescents showed similarities in autonomy, relatedness, and idealization in parent-child relationships. The unexpected results, however, suggest important directions for future research, highlighting the need to examine other parent-child relationship factors such as affection from parents and psychological control behavior. These factors may contribute to the development of well-liked and perceived popular social status.

Table 1. Differences in means between parenting factor means based on perceived statuses.

Variable	Acceptance by Mother	Acceptance by Father	Autonomy from Mother	Autonomy from Father	Sensed Social Support from Mother	Sensed Social Support from Father	Idealization of Mother	Idealization of Father	Negative Interactions with Mother	Negative Interactions with Father
Perceived Popular (n = 12)	4.75	4.61	4.00	3.97	4.16	4.05	3.53	3.46	1.77	1.82
Perceived Unpopular (n = 10)	3.77	4.08	3.24	3.47	3.10	2.90	2.83	2.87	2.30	2.45
Perceived Average (n = 44)	4.40	4.29	3.73	3.99	3.80	3.65	3.13	3.11	2.14	2.07
Perceived Neglected (n = 3)	4.13	4.30	3.31	3.67	3.34	3.48	3.19	3.29	2.25	2.22

Note: N = 69

Table 2. Differences in means between parenting factor means based on sociometric statuses.

Variable	Acceptance by Mother	Acceptance by Father	Autonomy from Mother	Autonomy from Father	Sensed Social Support from Mother	Sensed Social Support from Father	Idealization of Mother	Idealization of Father	Negative Interactions with Mother	Negative Interactions with Father
Well-Liked (n = 12)	4.65	4.68	3.96	3.39	4.00	3.89	3.31	3.34	1.72	1.68
Rejected (n = 10)	3.58	4.48	3.00	3.42	2.95	3.10	2.83	3.24	2.84	2.60
Average (n = 42)	4.41	4.19	3.87	3.96	3.87	3.64	3.23	3.13	1.96	2.08
Neglected (n = 4)	4.16	4.22	3.08	3.85	3.38	3.40	2.76	2.71	2.67	2.26
Controversial (n = 2)	4.76	4.70	3.23	3.39	3.67	3.64	3.64	3.50	2.42	2.08

Note: N = 70

Table 3. Pearson correlations between parent-child relationship factors and perceived popularity versus well-liked status

Variable	Perceived Popularity	Well-Liked
Acceptance by Father	.22	.13
Acceptance by Mother	.38**	.41***
Autonomy from Father	.27*	.34**
Autonomy from Mother	.33**	.39***
Idealization of Father	.29*	.19
Idealization of Mother	.33**	.24
Support by Father	.35**	.34**
Support by Mother	.31**	.40***
Negative Interactions with Father	-.23	-.31**
Negative Interactions with Mother	-.22	-.37**

Note: $N = 68$

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

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