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**An Observational Exploration of the Friendships
of Withdrawn and Non-Withdrawn Children**

by

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**This thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
Department of Human Development and Applied Psychology
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the
University of Toronto**

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to examine the friendship quality of children considered to be socially withdrawn. Withdrawn children were identified through peer nominations, using a subscale of the Revised Class Play (RCP, Masten, Morrison, & Pellegrini, 1985). Friendship quality was measure using behavioural observations and a coding system developed by Kern, Klepac and Cole, (1996). Friendship dyads comprised of both withdrawn and non-withdrawn children were observed while engaged in a structured building task and a colouring task. Multivariate analysis indicated that the interactions of withdrawn children do not differ from those of average children for many of the variables typically thought to be elements of friendships. They did however, experience less competitiveness in their interactions and made fewer utterances than their more outgoing peers.

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The Importance of Peer Relations

The importance given by many researchers to the behavioural styles and peer relations of children can be traced back to the theories of early developmentalists such as Piaget. According to Piaget, the decline in egocentric thinking of the preoperational stage is due in large part to social interaction. The management of inevitable conflicts with peers, and resulting negotiation, help the child to develop an understanding of the perspectives of others. With this understanding, the child begins to develop more mature social thinking, leading to socially appropriate behaviour, which fosters more positive future peer relations (Piaget, 1928). The assumption that positive peer relations are essential for normal cognitive and behavioural development raises a crucial question: What is the fate of the child who participates in fewer interactions, or in less skilful interactions?

Many studies have demonstrated a link between early aggressive behaviours with peers and later maladjustment (e.g., Moskowitz & Schwartzman, 1989; Parker & Asher, 1987). Clinicians have believed for some time that social withdrawal and inhibition also reflect serious disturbances and are worthy of attention in terms of prevention and treatment (e.g., Rubin & Asendorpf, 1993). Consequently, social withdrawal and inhibition are addressed in most psychopathology textbooks (e.g., Lewis & Miller, 1990), although they have not been studied as widely as aggressive behaviour.

The Study of Shyness

Rubin, Stewart and Coplan (1995) offer some reasons for the relatively short history of shyness research. Internalizing problems such as anxiety, fear, depression and

social withdrawal are easy to ignore, because their indicators are less salient than those of externalizing problems. It is, therefore, easier to identify externalizing problems at an early age. In a practical sense, a teacher dealing with a large class is more likely to focus on the disruptive and possibly violent student than on the quiet student whose problem is only visible when he or she is reluctant to participate. In some ways, the shy/withdrawn child may be considered a model student because he or she is not disruptive, generally follows instructions, and hands work in on time to avoid attracting unwanted attention.

Stability of Social Withdrawal

The issue of the stability of social withdrawal has been debated extensively in the past. It has been suggested that, unlike aggression and low peer acceptance, social withdrawal is episodic and non-cumulative (Kolberg, Lacrosse & Ricks, 1972; Parker & Asher, 1987). This has been offered as an explanation for the lack of sound follow-up research establishing a link between child inhibition and later psychopathology (Parker & Asher, 1987). When looking back into the childhood of pathological adults, it is easier to identify some transitory episode of social withdrawal than it is to trace a stable or consistent behavioural style forward from early childhood to adulthood in a follow-up study (Parker & Asher, 1987).

In contrast with the earlier assumption that social withdrawal is transitory and episodic, some recent studies have cautiously supported the opposite view. Moderate stability for social withdrawal was found by Moskowitz, Schwartzman and Ledingham (1985) over a three year period in a study in which initial assessments were made in grades 4 and 7. As research into social withdrawal continued, various subtypes of social

withdrawal were identified, and it was argued by some that stability may depend on subtype. Rubin and Mills (1988) found that social withdrawal was manifested in different ways. Children for whom social isolation was the result of social anxiety and negative self perceptions were described as passive isolates, whereas other children whose social isolation was more related to aggression and impulsivity were termed active immature. Passive isolation was found to be stable from Grades 2 through 5, whereas active immature isolation was found to occur infrequently and to be episodic in nature. Morrison and Masten (1991) found that children identified by their peers as sensitive-isolated in third to sixth grade were less likely to be socially competent and accepted by their peers when followed up seven years later. When including extreme groups only (i.e., children identified as extremely withdrawn), Rubin found that most subjects, from age 5 years to 11 years, identified as socially withdrawn in one school year were similarly identified in subsequent years (Rubin et al., 1995). Based on their review of the research on stability, Rubin and his colleagues concluded that "social withdrawal tends to persist across time (p. 175)."

Prediction of Maladjustment from Social Withdrawal

In a comprehensive review of the prediction literature by Parker and Asher (1987), virtually all studies reviewed were found to be deficient in some way. As a result, it was concluded that no evidence supported a predictive link between childhood shyness and any of the outcome measures traditionally considered. These measures have typically included dropping out of school, juvenile delinquency, adult crime, and adult psychopathology.

Subsequent longitudinal studies, however, have supported the hypothesis that childhood social withdrawal is predictive of later developmental difficulties. Early social withdrawal has been found to predict poor achievement in school and negative self-appraisal in adult life (Moskowitz & Schwartzman, 1989). In the same study, females identified as socially withdrawn were found to be twice as likely to have an abortion during adolescence. Caspi, Elder and Bem (1988) found that men with histories of childhood shyness were found to be significantly delayed completing most life transitions. These men were found to be "off time" in marrying, having children, and establishing successful careers. It should be noted that these subjects reached adulthood during the 1940's, a time when traditional gender roles put more pressure on the male to initiate courtship. At that time marrying later in life was more exceptional than it is today. Since social withdrawal has long been thought to reflect internalizing problems such as anxiety and depression, it makes intuitive sense to look to these areas for possible outcomes of social withdrawal in children. In a longitudinal study by Rubin and Mills (1988), passive anxious withdrawal in Grade 2 was found to be moderately predictive of non-clinical depression measured in Grade 5. It was also found that a negative self-perception of social competence was a strong predictor of later depression.

When considering the child's perspective regarding his or her social abilities, Hymel, Woody and Bowker (1993) found that withdrawn children reported lower self-concepts in the areas of athletic competition and peer relations than did average and aggressive unpopular children. Hymel, Rubin, Rowden and LeMare (1990) observed a predictive link between early social withdrawal and later negative self-regard. It was not

clear if this was a causal relationship. Hymel et al. (1990) acknowledged that early social withdrawal and a lack of rewarding social interactions may contribute to a lower self perception in terms of social ability or, conversely, that social withdrawal may reflect already-established perceptions of social incompetence.

Extending this research, Rubin and colleagues (1995) conducted a longitudinal study demonstrating that passive withdrawal, anxiety, and negative self-perception of social competence at age 7 were significantly associated with measures of depression, loneliness, and anxiety at age 11. In the study by Hymel et al. (1990), social difficulties in Grade 2 were found to predict problems of an internalizing nature in Grade 5. Thus, as research continues in the area of childhood social withdrawal, a predictive link is emerging between withdrawal and various types of maladjustment later in life.

Subtypes of Shyness and Their Implications for Maladjustment

Social withdrawal in children has long been viewed as cause for concern by parents, clinicians and researchers. The search for empirical support for this concern, has been a long one, and only in recent years have studies provided modest support for this view. Harrist and associates (Harrist, Zaia, Bates, Dodge & Pettit, 1997) suggest that these results stem from a changing concept of social withdrawal. Although social withdrawal was once viewed as a unitary phenomenon, a more contemporary view suggests that social withdrawal is multidimensional (Asendorpf, 1990; Harrist et al. 1997; Rubin & Mills, 1988). Only some of the subtypes are thought to be associated with maladjustment across the lifespan.

Asendorpf (1990, 1993) conceptualized social withdrawal as an artifact of two

opposing motivations: social avoidance and social approach. He identified three types of social withdrawal. Unsociable children were described as less involved with their peers due to a low approach motivation. These children were seen as content playing on their own and have been described as object oriented. Shy children were seen as being trapped in an approach-avoidance conflict and often displayed behaviour that was a compromise between the two motivations. A third group was described as avoidant, and typically demonstrated high levels of both aggression and shyness.

Rubin and Mills (1988) identified two forms of social withdrawal: passive-anxious and active-immature. This study provided a clear distinction between withdrawal from the group based on anxiety and fearfulness and isolation based on rejection by the group. Passive-anxious isolation was related to peer rejection, internalizing problems, and negative social self-perception. Active isolation was often associated with aggression and other externalizing difficulties. The results of this longitudinal study suggested that passive-anxious withdrawal, which appeared to be the more stable type of social withdrawal, may be associated with future anxiety, loneliness and depression.

Harrist et al. (1997), using cluster analysis of teacher ratings, were able to isolate four subtypes of social withdrawal. Three of these were similar to groups identified by Asendorpf, Rubin and colleagues (unsociable, active isolated, and passive anxious subtypes). Asendorpf (1990) described unsociable children as being less involved with their peers due to a low approach motive, rather than a fear of novel or social evaluative situations. Active isolated children have been characterized as exhibiting aggressive and

immature behaviour, leading to social isolation (Rubin & Mills, 1988; Younger & Daniels, 1992). Rubin and Mills (1988) and Asendorpf (1990) described passive anxious children as being caught in an approach/avoidance conflict and being fearful of social interactions. The fourth group identified in the Harrist et al. (1997) study was described as sad/depressed. The emergence of this fourth group supports findings previously described by Rubin (1988), that passive-anxious isolates (in Kindergarten) were depressed in Grade 5. Harrist and associates observed that it is not clear if these children were depressed in Kindergarten or if they became depressed as they progressed in school. The children in the Harrist study were rated by their teacher over four years. They found that the unsociable and passive-isolated groups displayed competent patterns of information processing and few social problems as identified by their teachers. This finding runs counter to the contentions of Rubin and Mills (1988), who suggested a prognosis of internalizing problems for passive isolates. In explaining this discrepancy, Harrist et al. cited research (Rubin, Stewart & Coplan, 1995; Younger, Schwartzman & Ledingham, 1985) indicating that passive isolation leads to peer rejection in later years when reticent behaviour is more likely to be viewed as atypical by the group, but not earlier. The participants in the Harrist et al. study were identified in Kindergarten and followed over the course of four years. It may be that these subjects were too young for their reticent behaviour to be identified by their peers as atypical.

Because passive isolation may be atypical behaviour when a child enters the middle childhood years, and one which often leads to peer rejection, there may be a connection between social withdrawal and peer acceptance (Rubin, 1993; Rubin et al.,

1995; Younger et al., 1985). Whereas the two constructs have been confounded in the past (and in some instances considered to be synonymous), more recently they have been conceptualized as distinct but related aspects of a child's social world (Furman & Robbins, 1985; George & Hartmann, 1996). In a meta-analysis, Newcomb, Bukowski, and Pattee (1993) examined the relationship between social withdrawal and non-acceptance. They concluded that rejected children were more aggressive and/or withdrawn than average children. Rejected children scored higher on measures of depression, anxiety, and a composite withdrawal variable, and scored lower on a variety of sociability variables. Thus, social withdrawal and acceptance cannot be equated, but they may be associated in some manner.

Measurement of Shyness

Early observational research into behavioural styles and the identification of shy or socially withdrawn children simply considered the number or rate of interactions a child engaged in, the assumption being that shy children would engage in fewer interactions than would more capable children (Allen, Hart, Buell, Harris & Wolfe, 1964). When evaluating this approach to assessment, Asher, Markell and Hymel (1981) found the validity of the method to be weak and recommended that more emphasis be placed on the quality of a child's interactions and the extent of peer acceptance.

In an effort to learn about the quality, rather than the quantity, of peer interactions, both peer and teacher assessments have been used as well as direct observation. There has been debate surrounding whether peer nominations are more accurate, and therefore preferable to teacher nominations (Ollendick, Oswald & Francis,

1989; Parker and Asher, 1987; Realmuto, August, Sieler, & Pessoa-Brandao, 1997).

Parker and Asher argued that teachers may be biased by the child's level of academic success, gender and social class. Teachers may also be hampered by the small sample of interactions that they are able to observe and the context in which they occur. Parker and Asher (1987) concluded that teacher assessments are less accurate than peer assessment in identifying children's behavioural styles.

Research by Younger, Schwartzman and Ledingham (1986) compared child and adult perceptions of maladjustment. These researchers suggested that behaviours are more likely to be identified and recalled if they conform to a defined social schema of a specific trait. It was hypothesized that the social withdrawal schema does not emerge until late childhood, after schemas for more salient behavioural styles are established. Results supported this hypothesis in that social withdrawal did not appear to emerge until after the emergence of a schema for aggression. It was also found that passive withdrawal (shyness) was less likely to be identified than active isolation (rejection by the group).

With increasing age (10-11 years), Younger et al. (1986) found that social withdrawal became more salient and eventually became as well established as aggression. Based on these results, it appears that a young child is less likely to identify and recall behaviour reflective of social withdrawal due to the child's incomplete social withdrawal schema. These results suggested that the use of peer nominations to identify social withdrawal, which has been recommended by others (Ollendick et al., 1989; Parker & Asher, 1987), may not be prudent when dealing with younger children. Rubin

and Mills (1988) conclude that from middle to late childhood, "peer perceptions provide a better estimate of long-term stability because they are drawn from more sources of information and, hence, are more sensitive to the day to day consistencies of social withdrawal" (p. 922).

Bukowski, Newcomb and Hartup (1996) recommend the use of direct observation as well as peer and teacher nominations. They argue that observations made by a neutral observer can contribute an added dimension to what we know about children's friendships. Others have emphasized the importance of observational data and have identified the need for researchers to develop new and better techniques to be used in learning how friends behave (Schneider, Wiener & Murphy, 1994).

Shyness and Friendship

As reviewed earlier, research on shyness has indicated that both active and passive isolation often result in low acceptance by the group. Active isolates are perceived negatively by the group at an early age and passive isolates are increasingly rejected as they enter middle childhood (Rubin, Stewart & Coplan, 1995; Younger & Daniels, 1992). Whether children are reticent to join their peers due to anxiety and a high avoidance motive, or are rejected by the group due to inappropriate and perhaps aggressive behaviour, the result is a group of children who are socially isolated from the group, denying them the many opportunities for development it affords.

As discussed above, some but not all of the low-accepted children in these studies were probably withdrawn. Of particular interest is the fact that the isolation is far from complete. In fact, current research indicates that low accepted children generally do

have friendships, and in many cases have at least one best friend (Asher & Parker, 1989; George & Hartmann, 1996; Parker & Asher, 1993). Of particular interest for the present study are the most recent indications that, although low accepted children do have friendships, the quality of their friendships appear to differ from the friendships of better accepted children (Parker & Asher, 1993). These results, however, may not apply specifically to the sub-group of unaccepted children who are withdrawn. Through an understanding of the qualitative differences in the friendships of socially isolated children, insight may be gained into the social world of children who have difficulty developing rewarding peer relations. This knowledge may, in turn, point to appropriate interventions that could be offered to children whose social status puts them at risk of future maladjustment (McCendie & Schneider, 1993).

To learn about the friendship quality of low accepted and socially isolated children requires a departure for researchers in terms of both research design and research instruments used. Schneider and associates (Schneider, Wiener & Murphy, 1994) discuss the challenges ahead, if the discipline is to make the giant step from focussing on peer acceptance to learning about friendship quality, and suggest that researchers need new tools to find friends and study their relationships. They state that "friendship researchers can make judicious use of a variety of observational, interview, sociometric and self report techniques, as well as discourse analysis and a variety of qualitative methods (p. 335)."

Many authors have identified the various functions friendships serve in a child's development (Asher & Parker, 1989; Bukowski & Sippola, 1996; Hartup, 1996;

Murphy, 1990; Newcomb & Bagwell, 1996; Schneider et al., 1994). Through friendships, children become socially competent, begin to understand the point of view of others, and develop a sense of empathy, loyalty, compassion, and altruism (Asher & Parker, 1989). A friendship offers a child the opportunity to learn about cooperation and supports cognitive development (Hartup, 1996). A best friend can provide a sense of emotional security by "being there" as a child goes through new, and often threatening, stages of growth (Asher & Parker, 1989). When children enter into friendships they begin to learn about the needs and feelings of others. It has been suggested by some (e.g., Bukowski & Sippola, 1996) that this process is a first step toward developing an understanding of concepts like justice, courage, and care. Friends are more likely to share their resources in an effort to help, as opposed to simply being fair or expecting to be repaid (Bukowski & Hoza, 1989). A childhood friendship very often provides the first opportunity to enter into this type of equal and supportive relationship (Newcomb & Bagwell, 1996). As pointed out by Asher and Parker (1989), "with a friend, children gain access to a familiar, willing partner and playmate, someone who likes to spend time with them and who gladly joins them in collaborative activities mundane or otherwise (p.12)".

In light of the potential benefits of close friendship, there is reason for concern regarding the socially withdrawn child, to the extent that their withdrawal from large group interaction is mirrored by a lack of close friends or friendships of an inferior quality. Withdrawn children may suffer either immediate or long term distress as a result of having fewer opportunities to interact intimately with friends.

Measurement of Friendships

In some instances, friendships have been studied through the use of essay-type narratives written by children describing their friendships (Bigelow & LaGaipa, 1975). This method may offer insight into how a child perceives the friendship and how the friendship makes the child feel, but as suggested by Schneider et al. (1994), observation of the relationship itself may be a more appropriate method for learning about friendships.

Sociometric techniques are best used to identify children who are popular within a group. In the past researchers have used reciprocal sociometric nominations to identify "friends". This method of identifying friendship status has been criticized in recent literature (Schneider, Wiener & Murphy, 1994), and several weaknesses have been identified. Superficial acquaintances with similar interests (playing on the same sports team) may nominate each other, even though there may be no real depth to their friendship. It is also conceivable that children with close friends who are not a part of the social group being studied may be falsely labelled as friendless. It is possible to be popular yet not have any intimate friendships (Parker and Asher, 1988). It has been suggested that the study of peer relations should include more than group acceptance and should consider behavioural style and self report measures to identify children with social difficulties (Asher & Parker 1989; Furman, 1996; Parker & Asher, 1987; Schneider et al., 1994). Furman (1996) maintained that researchers must look beyond peer acceptance and employ observational coding systems, questionnaires, and interviews to more fully understand interpersonal relationships. By doing this, Parker

and Asher (1987) suggest that it is possible to learn what the child is like versus whether the child is liked.

Because friendship is dyadic in nature as opposed to popularity, which is a group phenomenon, it seems appropriate that information pertaining to friendship should be acquired through the study of friendship pairs. As a child develops, very often a behaviour emerges before a child is likely to report it when asked about his/her friendship.

Rationale for the Present Study

The purpose of this study was to learn more about the friendships of shy and socially withdrawn children. Whereas the benefits of friendship have been discussed by many (Asher & Parker, 1989; George & Hartmann, 1996; McCendie & Schneider, 1994; Schneider et al., 1994), the notion that friendships may play a significant role in the lives of shy children is relatively new. As described earlier, children identified as low-accepted or unpopular do in fact have friends, although they may differ qualitatively from the friendships of other children. Therefore, a study of friendships of shy children is needed, as there appears to be no previous study looking directly in the friendships of children who are socially withdrawn.

It was expected that results of behavioural observations would reveal several differences. First, it was hypothesized that dyads that included at least one socially withdrawn child would be characterized by less criticism and less intimacy than dyads including two average children. Because it was believed that withdrawn children might be less inclined to assert themselves, it was expected that there would be less conflict

between the dyad members when one or both was socially withdrawn. Similarly, when a dyad included one withdrawn member, and one non-withdrawn member, it was anticipated that this would lead to a less equitable balance of power. Parker and Asher (1993) found less reported validation and caring, less conflict resolution and less intimate exchange in dyads containing at least one withdrawn members. Based both on these results and an understanding of the strong avoidance motivation (Asendorpf, 1990) experienced by many passive isolates, it was expected that dyads including at least one socially withdrawn child would display less responsiveness, less competitiveness, and less mutual reward than dyads with no withdrawn members.

Method

Participants

Subjects were recruited in 1993 as part of a larger project, and parental consent was obtained. The subjects were grades 3 and 4 students attending eight schools in a middle class suburb of Toronto. Same sex dyads were formed consisting of 43 male dyads and 49 female dyads. Mixed sex dyads were not formed because they represented only 2% of the children's friendship choices. Dyads were formed based on the results of various sociometric and friendship assessments.

A modification of the Friendship Interview was administered three different times (Fall, Winter, Spring) to track the stability of friendship nominations. Children were asked to nominate those children they considered to be their friends. They were also asked to nominate three boys and three girls in their class whom they would most like to

play with and least like to play with. When possible, dyads were formed with partners who mentioned each other first in their list of good friends ($n = 47$). In some cases it was necessary to select the second ($n = 28$) or third ($n = 16$) person on their list of friends, however, participants were not asked to list their friends in any particular order. The final sample consisted of 92 dyads (43 male dyads and 49 female dyads).

Assessment Instruments

For the purpose of this study, 17 participants were identified as socially withdrawn based on a cut off of one standard deviation above the mean on a peer assessment instrument. For this purpose, a cluster of 4 items from the Revised Class Play (RCP; Masten, Morrison, & Pellegrini, 1985), a measure of peer reputation were used. These items were previously found to identify children described as passive-anxious withdrawn (Rubin, 1993). They include "someone who would rather play alone", "someone whose feelings get hurt easily", "someone who is very shy", and "someone who is usually sad". The remaining items of the original Sensitivity-Isolation factor, ("someone who has trouble making friends" "a person who is often left out" and "someone who can't get others to listen") seem to indicate peer rejection or isolation by the group, and may not pertain specifically to shyness (Rubin, 1993). Consequently, they were not employed in this study. Fourteen of the dyads included a child identified as withdrawn matched with a non-withdrawn friend and three dyads consisted of friends who had both been identified as withdrawn. In some of the analyses, the dyads containing one or more withdrawn participants were compared to dyads without any withdrawn participants using a behavioural observation coding system.

Tasks

Dyads were individually videotaped by graduate students as the participants completed assigned tasks within an established time limit. The first task was designed to assess the dyad's interactions during a competitive task and involved the construction of a prescribed scene with provided Lego pieces and a set of instructions. The participants were taken to a room by a graduate student where they were asked to sit at a table across from each other. They were told they had 12 minutes to complete as much of the task as possible. Because each child was provided a complete set of Lego pieces, they had the option to work independently, with little or no interaction, if they preferred. During this task the graduate student remained in the room, but was instructed to interact as little as possible with the participants.

In the second task the children were required to colour a picture while sitting at a table across from each other. A graduate student instructed the participants to colour as much of the picture as possible, while sharing one set of crayons, and the participants were cautioned not to break the crayons. During this task the graduate student remained in the room, but was instructed, again, to interact a little as possible with the participants.

Behavioural Observation Coding

Videotapes were coded by graduate students using a system described more fully by Kerns, Klepac and Cole (1996). The goal of the behavioural observation was to learn more about the interactions between friends, so the individuals were not rated in terms of their individual behaviours. Instead, one molar rating was assigned for each dyad as they

completed their assigned task. The categories rated were, criticism, responsiveness, intimacy, balance of power, competitiveness, positive reinforcement, and observer agreement.

Criticism was defined as any negative evaluation of another, including the dyad partner. Both the number and intensity of negative comments were considered in this category, and a score was assigned on a 3-point scale. Responsiveness was determined based on the degree to which the dyad members attended to, acknowledged, and responded to one another. A score was assigned on a scale from 1 (low responsiveness) to 5 (high responsiveness). Intimacy was defined operationally as the disclosure of information of a personal nature about the self or others. Intimacy was scored on a 5-point scale with 1 being (low intimacy) and 5 (high intimacy). Balance of power was scored based on the degree to which one member of the dyad controlled the interactions or whether power struggles occurred during the activity. These scores were assigned on a 3 point scale. A score of 1 was assigned when one member of the dyad was dominant and 3 represented an even balance of power. Positive reinforcement was scored by the assignment of a molar rating based on the amount of praise or reinforcement observed as the tasks were completed. These scores were assigned on a 3 point scale. Conflict was also scored by the assignment of a molar rating for both the amount and intensity of conflict that occurred within the dyad. These scores were assigned on a 3 point scale.

Verbal communication is a fundamental component of most friendships and, therefore, the total number of utterances was also recorded for each dyad during each structured activity. Coders were not informed of the withdrawn status of the dyad

members. Inter rater reliability was calculated, and Kappa exceeded .70 for all categories, with an average value of .84.

Results

Behavioural Observations

Dyadic data were used in the major analysis. To use individual scores would risk confounding a subject's behavioural style with the responsive and dependent nature of dyadic relationships, since the behaviour of one member of a dyad is strongly influenced by the other (Kenny, 1995).

The analysis tested whether dyads that included at least one child identified as withdrawn (passive isolated) based on the results of the Revised Class Play differed from dyads that did not include a withdrawn subject in terms of: (a) their levels of criticism (b) responsiveness (c) intimacy (d) balance of power (e) competitiveness and (f) mutual reward in observed behaviour during a structured play activity. It had been predicted that dyads including withdrawn children would be characterized by less criticism, intimacy and competitiveness than dyads including no withdrawn children and further that they would display a less equitable balance of power.

Descriptive statistics are displayed in Table 1. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) revealed a significant difference between dyads based on withdrawal status (multivariate $F(2, 88) = 2.26, p < .01$). As shown in Table 1, univariate analysis revealed no significant differences based on the withdrawal status of dyad members for measures of criticism, responsiveness, intimacy, balance of power,

and mutual reward. Our predictions that withdrawn dyads would display less competitiveness was supported, however.

Multiple comparisons (Tukey HSD) revealed that dyads including one or two withdrawn members differed significantly in their competitiveness, from dyads including no withdrawn members. However, dyads with one withdrawn member did not differ significantly from dyads with two withdrawn members.

As indicated in Table 2, there were fewer utterances in dyads including one or two withdrawn members than in other dyads. A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant effect for the composition (i.e., in terms of numbers of withdrawn children) in dyads: $F(2,88) = 8.743$; $p < .01$. Based on multiple comparisons (Tukey HSD), it was found that dyads containing one or two withdrawn members differed significantly from dyads containing no withdrawn members, however, dyads containing one or two withdrawn members did not differ from one another.

Paired t-tests indicated that in the 22 dyads containing one withdrawn and one non-withdrawn participant, the withdrawn participant made significantly fewer ($M = 3.18$, $SD = 1.92$) utterances than the non-withdrawn friend ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 2.20$); $t(21) = 2.76$, $p < .05$.

These results suggest that, based on behavioural observations, the social interactions of withdrawn children do not differ from those of average children for many of the variables typically thought to be elements of a friendship. They do however, seem to experience less competitiveness in their friendships and make fewer utterances than their more outgoing peers.

Discussion

These results do not support the view that socially withdrawn children cannot develop and maintain meaningful and satisfying relationships. In most areas, the friendships of withdrawn children did not differ substantially from the friendships of average children. They seemed to display, similar to more outgoing children, elements of criticism, responsiveness, intimacy, balance of power and positive reinforcement. In the past, these characteristics of friendship have been identified as critical to a child's development (Asher & Parker, 1989; Bukowski & Sippola, 1996; Hartup, 1996; Schneider et al., 1994).

Our data, which indicate no significant difference between levels of criticism observed in withdrawn dyads and average dyads, suggest that withdrawn children learn to offer and accept criticism through their friendships, as do average children. Similarly, our responsiveness scores suggest that withdrawn children respond to, and are responded to in a fashion similar to average children. In their friendships, they also appear able to achieve an appropriate balance of power with their partners. These abilities can be seen as the building blocks to a more general social competence, which has been described by Parker and Asher (1989) as one of the benefits of participating in childhood friendships. The intimacy of a close friendship serves many purposes. Through intimate mutual exchange, children learn about the feelings and concerns of others, share their most personal thoughts, and develop a sense of empathy and compassion as described by Parker and Asher (1989). Our results also suggest that friendships involving withdrawn

children include a level of positive reinforcement similar to average children's friendships. If a childhood friendship offers an important first opportunity for a child to enter into an equal and supportive relationship (Newcomb & Bagwell, 1996), it seems, based on the positive reinforcement scores in our study, that socially withdrawn children enjoy a level of positive reward in their friendships, similar to average children.

Results indicated that dyads including at least one withdrawn participant were characterized by less competitiveness than average dyads. It is not clear why these dyads experienced less competition. Beyond the conclusion that withdrawn children are less competitive, one should consider the possibility that others may view withdrawn children differently and therefore have different expectations of them. Peers may perceive withdrawn children as less interested in competing and for that reason they may initiate fewer competitive activities. It may also be that peers observe a withdrawn child interacting less frequently than average children, and are unsure of how the withdrawn child would respond to a competitive overture. This may, in fact, be intimidating to the non-withdrawn child, who is only just learning about socially appropriate competition.

How lower levels of competitiveness may affect a child's development is not clear. Developmentalists, such as Piaget, have long seen competition as just one of the ways children interact with their environment, and that the resulting accommodation and assimilation are essential to the moral and intellectual development of the child (Piaget, 1928). Sullivan (1953), on the other hand, suggested that competition could, in fact, have a negative effect on development. Sullivan contrasted intimacy and competitiveness, and although he considered competitiveness to be natural, he felt it could negatively affect

personality development if it becomes an enduring interactional style. If one is to accept the notion of an optimal level of competitiveness among peers, more knowledge is needed if we are to understand the importance of less competitiveness in the friendships of withdrawn children. Perhaps moderately lower levels of competitiveness are, in fact, beneficial with regard to personality development, but one should try to establish how much is enough. Hartup (1992) discusses the ratio of agreement and disagreement within a friendship and makes the point that either type of interaction, when considered as either affirmation or disaffirmation, is only of value to the developing child when considered in relation to the other. Only through both types of interaction (agreement and disagreement) can a child can learn about both the common ground and the areas of disagreement they experience with those around them.

There were fewer utterances in the conversations of withdrawn friendships than in the conversations of other children. Dyads with either one or two withdrawn children made significantly fewer utterances than dyads with no withdrawn members, but did not differ from one another. Previous research has provided similar results. For example, Asendorpf, (1992) found that for both adults and latency aged children, measures such as the age of first utterance, percentage of speech, and length of pauses when in conversation with unfamiliar adults were all highly correlated with observer ratings of shyness.

Others have studied the nature of discourse among withdrawn children and their verbal ability using more formal methods (Landon & Sommers, 1979; Van Kleeck & Street, 1982). In a review of this research, Evans (1993) concluded that "children who

across time are less socially outgoing in kindergarten and nursery schools perform less well on a wide variety of formal language measures of syntax and semantics” (p. 99). According to Evans, these children not only speak less, they appear to speak less competently, based on the results she reviewed. Evans (1993) suggested that, although anxiety may partly explain the apparent verbal fluency deficit in withdrawn children, a fuller explanation may be more complex and may involve past communicative experiences of the shy child and the expectations and behaviours of others. Although the current study considered only the quantity of utterances, it does support previous research in that the withdrawn dyads made significantly fewer utterances than non-withdrawn dyads. As suggested by Evans (1993), future research should focus on how shy children interact with their friends and attempt to understand the link, if any, that exists between social withdrawal status and linguistic and communicative skills.

It must be stated that, although the results of this study further what is known about the friendships of withdrawn children, it has limitations. As the participants in this study were selected from a middle-class Canadian school, these results cannot be generalized to other cultures or even other socio-economic groups in North America. As previously discussed, a child's schema for social withdrawal as a behavioural style, and how the child perceives withdrawn peers, changes with age. The participants in this study were Grade 3 and 4 students, and this is in the age range described by Younger et al., (1986) as the developmental period when children begin to view withdrawal as behavioural style. Consequently, these results may not apply to either younger or older children. Our small sample size prevented us from considering a

gender by withdrawn status effect, as well as the effect of one withdrawn child in a dyad a opposed to two withdrawn children in a dyad. Because observational data were used, we cannot surmise how our participants felt about their friendships. This limitation prevents us from attributing observed behaviours to cognitive and emotional processes experienced by the child.

Through the use of self-reports of friendship quality, future research could help us to better understand not only how withdrawn children feel about their friendships, but how they are viewed by their more outgoing peers. With the benefit of a larger sample size, future research could consider gender differences with regard to withdrawn status. In a society where gender roles continue to influence both human behaviour and the expectations of others, it would seem that social withdrawal might be experienced and perceived differently for boys than for girls. Similarly, societal norms, in the area of human interactions, may vary from one culture to another. Future cross-cultural research could examine how these differences effect the lives of socially withdrawn children.

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Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Observed Friendship Quality in Dyads Containing Withdrawn and Non-Withdrawn Participants

	<u>Univariate</u>	<u>Non-Withdrawn</u>		<u>Withdrawn (1)</u>		<u>Withdrawn (2)</u>	
	<u>F-Value</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Criticism	.66	1.87	.69	1.77	.69	1.57	.79
Responsiveness	.92	3.06	1.32	2.64	1.14	3.0	1.29
Intimacy	.07	3.11	1.19	2.23	1.15	3.14	1.22
Balance of Power	.58	2.18	.74	2.0	.69	2.0	.82
Competitiveness	11.45*	2.26 _a	.70	1.64 _b	.65	1.29 _b	.49
Positive Reinforcement	.20	1.92	.80	2.05	.84	2.0	1.0

* $p < .001$

Note: The difference between means with different subscripts is statistically significant.

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations for Number of Utterances in Dyads based on Withdrawn Status of Dyad Members

<u>Withdrawn Status</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
No withdrawn members	12.76 _a	6.27
One withdrawn member	7.68 _b	3.51
Two withdrawn members	7.14 _b	2.70

Note: The difference between means with different subscripts is statistically significant.