

**Peer Relations in Preadolescence: Associations between Friendship Quality,  
Peer Acceptance, and Parental Management in Peer Relations**

**by**

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**Abstract**

**Objective:** The associations between friendship quality, peer acceptance, and parental management in preadolescence were investigated, in order to provide discernment about the situation of preadolescents, which would be beneficial in assisting those children who were in need of intervention. **Method:** 322 fifth and sixth graders from a local school were recruited for the study. They completed a questionnaire comprised of the Friendship Qualities Scale in measuring quality of friendship, items in measuring parental management, and the sociometric nomination procedure in assessing peer acceptance. **Results:** Popular children had higher friendship quality than rejected children, but no difference was found between them in parental management. Positive correlation was detected between friendship quality and parental management. Within parental management, mothers were found to be more knowledgeable and involved in their children than fathers were. **Discussion:** Possible explanations and implications of the findings were discussed, and future work was suggested.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

### *1.1 Introduction*

Peer relations has been a prevalent topic since 1980s for researchers who are interested in children's development, believing that peer relations in preadolescence may portend later adjustment, throughout adolescence and adulthood (Asher & Parker, 1988; Bagwell, 2004; Coie, Christopoulos, Terry, Dodge, & Lochman, 1988; Dunn, 2004; Kupersmidt, Coie, & Dodge, 1990; Newcomb & Bagwell, 1996; Parker & Asher, 1987). Antecedent of the importance of preadolescent peer relations was Sullivan (1953), who revealed that peer networks and close friendships were substantially prominent for children aged around eight to ten, so important that they were "irreplaceable as a context of social development". Both peer acceptance (AC) and friendship quality (FQ) are essential determinants of short- and long-term social development and emotional adjustment (Coie, 1985; Furman & Robbins, 1985), and they may contribute in different ways to children's well-beings (Schneider, 2000). Although both constructs, AC and FQ, are conceptually and empirically distinct, they do have overlapping aspects in functions and implications (Gifford-Smith & Brownell, 2003; Lansford, Criss, Pettit, Dodge, & Bates, 2003; Parker & Gottman, 1989).

There has been evidence to prove that children's experiences with parents as well as peers have occupied a crucial role in human development, particularly in socialization (Ladd, 1992; Mills & Rubin, 1993). It has been well reckoned that parents are influential in their children's relationships with peers and friends (Attili, 1988; Doyle & Markiewicz, 1996; Dunn, 2004; Erwin, 1993; Pettit, 1998; Pettit, Bates, & Dodge, 1997). This concept stems from Freud's core significance of mother-child relationship and Bowlby's



attachment theory. Many researchers studied the linkage between peer relations and parent-child relations or attachment style in the past decades. However, relatively not as many have examined parental management (PM) with children's AC and FQ.

Since vast amount of researchers have been investigating into AC and FQ, this study aims at identifying the relationships and differences between preadolescents' AC and FQ. Furthermore, it also aims at examining PM in preadolescent friendships, and its relationships with AC and FQ, because such associations seem to receive less attention than the associations of parent-child attachment or parenting style with AC and FQ.

Preadolescents are chosen for this study instead of younger children, because young children seldom interpret friendship the same as adult do though they understand "friend" and "friendship". They tend to omit the central features of friendship, such as reciprocity and commitment (Dunn, 2004; Hartup, 1989). Also, according to Sullivan (1953), true friendships do not form until around the age of eight.

Both AC and FQ in preadolescence are justified as precursors of those in later stages of life, which seem to have long-term consequences (Fullerton & Ursano, 1994). Thus, if there is any maladjustment in psychological or social context, or any delinquency from an individual, it is better to be detected and being remedied earlier (Ialongo, Vaden-Kiernan, & Kellam, 1998; Parker & Asher, 1987). The implication of this study is to provide psychologists, educators, and parents some discernment about the situation of preadolescents. It is beneficial in nurturing and assisting the children in the best possible ways for psychosocial development, and in providing imperative intervention, training and counseling for those who are in necessity.

### *1.2 Friendship and Friendship Quality in Preadolescence*

Friendship is defined as specific, affectionate attachment between two individuals, which carries expectations (Bukowski, Newcomb, & Hartup, 1996). It is developed from two powerful pathways – mother-child attachment, and sibling relationship (Dunn, 2004). However, friendship is different from the attachment to parents, as friendship is voluntary and can be terminated at anytime (Bukowski et al., 1996). Children as young as preschoolers often use the word “friend”, but they seldom understand the underlying features of friendship (Hartup, 1989). Preadolescence, probably around the age of eight, is a time when the concept of friendship begins to sprout (Dunn, 2004). Children at this developmental stage start to lessen their attachments with parents and siblings, and extend their attachments to friends (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992). They begin to expand their composition of friendships with the four main features: reciprocity, commitment, cooperation, and sharing (Hartup, 1989). These features have variations in good or bad, which determine the quality of friendship.

Friendship quality is defined as the degree of excellence in friendship taken together both good and bad dimensions (Berndt, 1996). Yet, there is another definition of friendship quality, related to the *effects* of friendship. It has been found that high friendship quality is the one contributed positively to children’s social and psychological well-being, whereas low friendship quality is contributed negatively. Anyhow, the evidence for this definition is fairly weak. It is more widely accepted that high friendship quality is marked by high frequency of positive and low frequency of negative interactions; whereas low frequency of positive and high frequency of negative interactions imply for low friendship quality (Berndt, 1999).

Friendship is a supportive relationship that involves mutuality. It is a specific, dyadic, and bilateral relationship (Bagwell, 2004; Bukowski & Hoza, 1989). Nonetheless, the support that one provides to another in the dyadic relationship does not always equal to the support receives (Berndt, 1996). Therefore, in assessing friendship quality, this asymmetry must be tolerated and considered.

Children tend to make friends with the other children who are similar to them in various aspects, such as demographic variables (e.g. age, sex, race and socioeconomic factors), reputation (e.g. popularity and academic achievement), personalities, activities, beliefs, and attitudes (Aboud & Mendelson, 1996; Dunn, 2004; Epstein, 1989; Erwin, 1993; Gifford-Smith & Brownell, 2003; Hallinan, 1981; Hartup, 1996a). Similarity between friends is reinforcing for at least three reasons. Firstly, it involves consensual validation. Secondly, it involves companionship in the same activities (Aboud & Mendelson, 1996). Thirdly, it can reduce dissonance or conflict and increase chance of agreement (Erwin, 1993; Schneider, 2000).

Having friends and having high friendship quality are the intrinsic needs of children in preadolescence (Sullivan, 1953). They serve numerous important developmental and social functions (Hartup, 1996a), which are antecedents for later romantic and marital relationships (Asher & Parker, 1988). Seven main functions from friendships identified by Asher & Parker (1988) are: *(a)* serve as ego support and self-validation, *(b)* serve as sources of intimacy, *(c)* provide instrumental aid and guidance, *(d)* provide sense of reliable alliance, *(e)* serve as an emotional buffer in providing security particularly in threatening situations, *(f)* provide companionship, and *(g)* foster the growth and development of social competence. Additionally, more functions of

friendships are identified by subsequent researchers. It has demonstrated that friendships may also stimulate exploration and learning (Bukowski, 2001), provide opportunities to learn emotional regulations (Parker & Gottman, 1989), contribute to cognitive development (Hartup, 1996b; Newcomb & Bagwell, 1996), protect from depression or anxiety (Dunn, 2004), and last but not least, contribute the resilience especially for those at risk (Schneider, 2000). However, these functions are not the same at different points in development (Parker & Gottman, 1989), and their significances may vary from individual to another (Hartup, 1996a).

Albeit that these functions or effects are important in preadolescence, they cannot be the determinants of friendship quality as previously stated. Friendship quality is determined by the good and bad dimensions taken together, so that the dimensions must be clearly identified. Based on the investigation by Bukowski, Hoza, & Boivin (1994), five conceptually meaningful aspects of friendship quality are recognized and distinguished – they are companionship, closeness, help, security, and conflict.

Companionship is defined as proximity (Epstein, 1989), children voluntarily spend time together for fun or for activities. It involves mutual preferences between dyads. Children are known to be friends when they prefer particular partners and seek them for interactions as well as maintaining the proximity (Howes, 1996).

Unlike companionship that may be seen in very young children, closeness often arises and becomes more intense in middle childhood or early adolescence (Berndt & Perry, 1986; Buhrmester, 1990; Schneider, 2000; Sullivan, 1953). It is characterized by intimacy, self-disclosure, and sharing of feelings. A reason why closeness does not exhibit in younger childhood's friendship is that it requires communication among

friends, and the sophisticated linguistic skill is not yet equipped with younger children (Howes, 1996). Emotion is also involved, intense emotional experiences of friendships and emotional demands tend to increase with age in childhood and preadolescence (Newcomb & Bagwell, 1996). The closeness of friendship quality can contribute positively to children's self-esteem (Bukowski & Hoza, 1989; Sullivan, 1953), and psychological adjustment (Bowker, 2004).

As the old proverb says, "A friend in need is a friend indeed." Help is an important element in the process of developing and maintaining friendship, it stands for a crucial part of children's evaluation of friendship. Friends are seen to help more among each other than acquaintances do (Azmitia & Montgomery, 1993). Help actually consists of two smaller components – aid and protection from victimization (Bukowski et al., 1994). Aid refers to the mutual help and assistance among friends. Protection from victimization refers to the willingness of children to come to a friend and stand up for him or her when the friend is being bothered by others. It has been shown that the give-and-take interpersonal relationship in help can sustain friendship (Azmitia & Montgomery, 1993).

Security comprises of two components. One is the feeling or impression of children that their friendships are being secure, and even capable to maintain with conflicting situations, known as transcending problems. The other component is the belief of children in their mutual trust, namely, reliable alliance. Friends are more likely than acquaintances in having trust and loyalty. In other words, friends have greater security than acquaintances do (Azmitia & Montgomery, 1993).

Conflict is known to be some kind of disagreement which is discouraged for friendship formation. It consists of opposition between two individuals, usually fight or argument. Friends have conflicts just as many as acquaintances do, but the underlying properties are quite different. Firstly, the conflicts between friends are less intense than those between acquaintances. Secondly, friends engage more in conflict resolution than acquaintances do, and they have greater commitment to resolve conflicts by methods such as negotiation and compromise. Quite different resolution strategies are used between friends and acquaintances, because friends are not willing to put their friendships at risk if failing to resolve conflicts. The resolution is usually followed by restored proximity for friends, which may not be necessary for acquaintances (Hartup, 1989; Newcomb & Bagwell, 1996).

Laursen (1996) argued that conflict did not always carry negative outcome to friendship, it could result in neutral or even beneficial outcome. Occasional conflicts are proven to be important and constructive to friendship by other researchers as well (Azmitia & Montgomery, 1993; Nelson & Aboud, 1985; Shantz & Hobart, 1989), because children can learn to practice using constructive strategies in handling conflicts, which is known to be “true cooperation”. Through this process, social relations are enhanced. Conflict and support may even be seen as part of the same dimension of preadolescent friendship (Berndt & Perry, 1986).

In summary, high friendship quality is marked by high frequency of positive and low frequency of negative interactions between friends; whereas low frequency of positive and high frequency of negative interactions imply for low friendship quality.

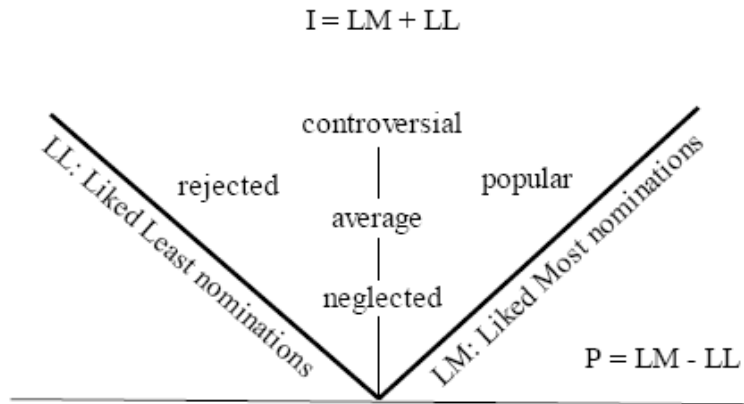
### *1.3 Social Acceptance*

#### *1.3.1 Social Preference and Social Impact*

Social acceptance has been used as an indicator of social success or social competence. It is often operationalized in terms of sociometry, to measure an individual's level of acceptance or popularity (Coie, 1985; Erwin, 1993). A crucial assumption in sociometry is that "human beings cannot like or love each other in equality" (Schneider, 2000). Therefore, sociometry is the study of one's "choices" for affiliation with others, based on preferences among peers (Kindermann, 1998). Preadolescents with various levels of sociometric status imply how socially successful they are related to their peers (Asher, Parker, & Walker, 1996). Moreover, sociometry is used to predict future development (Kindermann, 1998), to identify individuals who are at risk for later psychological problems (Putallaz & Gottman, 1981), and to provide information for clinical purposes (Cairns, Xie, & Leung, 1998).

Sociometry gives information about an individual's position of social status within one's peer group (Cillessen & Ferguson, 1988), based on the social preference and social impact. Social preference represents whether an individual is liked or disliked by their peers, and social impact is characterized by how noticeable an individual is within the peer group (Schneider, 2000). The nomination method developed by Coie, Dodge, & Coppotelli (1982) is widely used to assess people's positions of sociometric status. In assessing social competence by using this nomination method, preadolescents are being classified into five sociometric groups – popular, rejected, controversial, neglected, and average.

*Figure 1.* Location of Sociometric Status Groups on the Social Preference and Social Impact Dimensions (Maassen et al., 2000).



The nomination method requires peers to nominate each other within a group, such that they would identify whom they like most (LM) and like least (LL). Social preference is derived from the score of  $LM - LL$ , and social impact is derived from  $LM + LL$ . Figure 1 shows the classification of sociometric groups based on these two dimensions. Popular, rejected, and average groups are corresponded to the first dimension of social preference; whereas controversial, neglected, and average groups are corresponded to the second dimension of social impact (Maassen, Van der Linden, Goossens, & Bokhorst, 2000).

Popular children receive many positive nominations from their peers and few negative nominations; rejected children receive few positive but many negative nominations; controversial children receive many positive and many negative nominations; neglected children receive few position and few negative nominations; average children receive an average number of position and negative nominations (Asher & Parker, 1988). Popular and rejected children can be easily distinct by their social



preference. Controversial, neglected, and average children are different by the level of social impact. Controversial children are highly visible who receive numerous nominations as both liked and disliked by peers, average children receive average number of nominations, and neglected children receive very few nominations of liked and disliked by peers.

### *1.3.2 Sociometric Status Groups*

Popular children are those who receive many positive nominations and few negative nominations from their peers. They are at high level in both social impact and social preference. Popular children are seen as socially competent, who display high frequencies of prosocial behaviors (Coie, 1985; Dodge, 1985). They are normally described as outgoing, helpful, cooperative, supportive, kind, and enthusiastic, and their behaviors are well-liked by their peers. They also tend to be more knowledgeable about how to make friends and more skillful in communication tasks than unpopular children (Erwin, 1993).

Another sociometric group of rejected children is quite the opposite of the popular group. Rejected children receive few positive nominations and many negative nominations from their peers, they are at high level of social impact but low level of social preference. They are socially incompetent, who display high frequencies of antisocial behavior, such as physical and verbal aggression, and are more likely to engage in delinquency (Coie, 1985; Coie & Kupersmidt, 1983; Dodge, 1985; Dodge, Coie, & Brakke, 1982), to have learning difficulties (Putallaz & Gottman, 1981), and to drop out of school (Parker & Asher, 1987). They are usually described as disruptive, short-

tempered, argumentative, aggressive, immature, and not friendly. Rejected children reported to have fewer friends (Attili, Vermigli, & Schneider, 1997), and greater feeling of loneliness and social dissatisfaction (Asher & Wheeler, 1985). Their social awareness appears to be much lower than of the popular children, and with fewer talents and social skills (Hallinan, 1981).

Investigations by Schneider (2000) showed that at least half of the rejected children were aggressive, and there was so much overlap between rejection and aggression. However, they are distinct not only by the conceptualization, but also by the outcome. Aggression is found to be a stronger predictor in later maladjustments than rejection. Parker & Asher (1987) demonstrated that rejection was more closely linked to dropping out of school, whereas aggression was more closely linked to delinquency. Evidence shows that not all aggressive children are rejected, some aggressive children may well be accepted by peers (Coie, Dodge, Terry, & Wright, 1991). Nevertheless, this study recognizes the rejected group as of preadolescents who have low sociometric status and low acceptance, the aggressive ones are inseparable from the rejected children.

The third sociometric group are preadolescents classified as controversial, who receive many positive as well as negative nominations from peers. They are at high level of social impact but low level of social preference just like the rejected children. They differ from rejected children in such a way that they are highly liked by some peers and at the same time highly disliked by others. They display both prosocial and antisocial behaviors (Erwin, 1993; Gifford-Smith & Brownell, 2003; Newcomb, Bukowski, & Pattee, 1993). On one hand, their disruptive antisocial behaviors cause rejection from peers. On the other hand, their prosocial behaviors buffer them from being rejected.

Although both controversial and rejected groups, are classified as socially incompetent (Coie et al., 1982), they are dissimilar in their features. Controversial children have peer-specific problems, whereas many rejected children have general interpersonal problems (Furman & Robbins, 1985). This discrepancy may be originated from the different aspects of social interaction, social cognitive skill, aggression, self-concept, and feeling of loneliness (Dodge, 1985).

The fourth sociometric group is the neglected group. It consists of preadolescents who are not liked but not disliked either by their peers. They receive few positive and few negative nominations. They are at low level of social impact and low level of social preference. Just as the label of the group, these children are being ignored by their peers. Neglected children show fewer social approaches to peers than the popular children (Coie & Kupersmidt, 1983; Dodge et al., 1982), and they are less talkative than popular children (Erwin, 1993), perhaps because of their lack of social skills (Patterson, Kupersmidt, & Griesler, 1990). As compared to the rejected children, neglected ones are less aggressive, and they display less inappropriate behaviors (Dodge et al., 1982). They are often characterized as shy or withdrawn, and are classified as socially incompetent, just like those rejected and controversial children (Coie et al., 1982). Neglected children, similar to controversial, also have peer-specific problems rather than general interpersonal problems (Furman & Robbins, 1985).

Preadolescents in both the controversial and neglected groups are less stable than other sociometric classifications. They seem to be relatively changeable with the changing circumstances (Coie & Kupersmidt, 1983). Therefore, they have less risk than

the rejected children in portending negative developmental outcomes (Gifford-Smith & Brownell, 2003; Newcomb et al., 1993).

The rest of the preadolescents are classified into average group. Children in the average group receive an average number of both positive and negative nominations. They are not so popular, but they are not rejected neither. These children may be liked and disliked by some of their peers. Average children differ from controversial children based on their social impact.

To summarize, social acceptance provides information about an individual's social status within a peer group. Children are classified into one of the five sociometric groups (popular, rejected, controversial, neglected, or average), based on social preference and social impact scores in the sociometry.

#### *1.4 Friendship, Friendship Quality, and Peer Acceptance*

Both friendship quality and peer acceptance are components of peer relations. They are important for preadolescent development (Sullivan, 1953), which can be considered as training ground for social development (Attili, 1988), and at the same time, as emotional buffer in providing youngsters with the sense of security (Berndt, 1982; Lansford, Criss, Pettit, Dodge, & Bates, 2003). Moreover, they carry long-term consequences throughout adolescence and adulthood (Dunn, 2004; Newcomb & Bagwell, 1996). Success in early peer relations is a reasonably good predictor for adult adjustments (Schneider, 2000). Youngsters who have stronger peer affiliations and better-quality friendships tend to exhibit fewer later behavioral problems (Lansford et al., 2003). On the other hand, failure in early peer relations is an indicator for adult adjustment problems

(Asher & Parker, 1988; Bagwell, 2004; Coie et al., 1988; Kupersmidt et al., 1990; Parker & Asher, 1987). Wanless & Prinz (1982) revealed that children being rejected or negatively evaluated by peers were at risk in displaying psychopathological disorders at later developmental stage. However, Newcomb & Bagwell (1996) argued that though children with low acceptance or low friendship quality may lead them to have some later maladjustment, only those who are *both* low in acceptance *and* without friends can lead to such maladjustment, because acceptance and friendship quality can offset one another (Asher et al., 1996). Hence, children with low acceptance can be compensated with high friendship quality, and vice versa, in order to minimize the risk of being portending later problems.

Both peer acceptance and close friendships are determinants of short- and long-term adjustments, they are distinct constructs in terms of conceptualization (Bukowski & Hoza, 1989), but with overlapping properties. Acceptance is the experience of being liked or accepted by the other members of an individual's peer group, it is a "general, group-oriented construct"; whereas friendship is the experience of having a close, mutual, dyadic relationship, it is a "specific, dyadic construct". The tie between them is liking, but they are distinct by the difference of unilateral and bilateral (Bagwell, 2004). Other researchers also agreed with this distinction between peer acceptance and friendship, on the difference of a global versus an intense phenomenon (Asher et al., 1996; Furman & Robbins, 1985; Parker & Asher, 1993). Furman & Robbins (1985) further investigated into the features of these two constructs, and derived with eight social provisions. Three of these provisions obtained more characteristically in friendship – affection, intimacy, and reliable alliance; one of them obtained solely in acceptance – sense of inclusion; and

the other four may be obtained in either friendship or acceptance – companionship, instrumental aid, nurturance, and enhancement of worth. Many skills can be developed from peer relations, there is a distinction that intimacy skills are likely to be developed only from close friendships, whereas leadership skills are likely to be developed only from group relationships. According to Sullivan (1953), peer acceptance and friendship are distinct by their different developmental timetables, different underlying motivational origins, and different elements of interpersonal skills. In spite of the dissimilarities between peer acceptance and friendship, they are similar in such a way that both are involved in peer relations, both contribute to preadolescents' well-beings (Schneider, 2000), and both predict social satisfaction (Asher & Wheeler, 1985; Asher et al., 1996).

Quite often, children who are popular or well accepted by peers have a greater likelihood in developing better friendship than those who are rejected or poorly accepted (Parker & Asher, 1993; Schneider, 2000), but the size of such association seems to decrease with age (Bukowski, Pizzamiglio, Newcomb, & Hoza, 1996). Nonetheless, rejected or poorly accepted children are not necessarily the ones without friends. On the other hand, popular or well accepted children may have no best friend in the peer group. Gest, Graham-Bermann, & Hartup (2001) found that 39% of rejected children have at least one mutual friend in the peer group, and 31% of popular children have no mutual best friend. This phenomenon has proven that rejected children may be able to form their own distinct “subculture” in the peer group, and being contented within it (Asher & Parker, 1988). Thus, poorly accepted or rejected children may have satisfactory, close friendships, while well accepted or popular children may have unsatisfactory or no close friendship (Furman & Robbins, 1985). For children who are not well accepted or having

problems with peers, successful friendship experiences may help them to offset some negative effects from peer experiences (Asher et al., 1996). Evidence shows that peer acceptance may not correspond to friendship quality. Therefore, the group of children with low acceptance is not the same group of children with low friendship quality, but there is an overlap between these two groups.

Although a certain number of rejected children have mutual best friendships similar to the ones of popular children, they do not seem to have as much satisfaction in their friendship quality. They tend to view their friendships as less supportive, less trust, less intimacy, less help, and less stable over time, and also report to have more difficulties in resolving conflict (Asher & Parker, 1988; Dunn, 2004). Consistent findings have been supported by Cillessen, Jiang, West, & Laszkowski (2005), that rejected children seem to have lower friendship quality than popular children, particularly in the dimensions of closeness and help.

To sum up, both friendship quality and peer acceptance in peer relations, are important in preadolescence. They are distinct constructs that cannot be interchangeable, yet they have overlapping features and can counterbalance each other in terms of contributions to social and psychological development. There is a positive association between friendship quality and peer acceptance, implying that popular children have higher friendship quality than those rejected children, irrespective of the directional impact.

### *1.5 Parental Management in Preadolescent Friendships and Peer Relationships*

Family, especially parents, represents a good starting point for children. The relationships between peers and friends are influenced by their own relationships with parents (Doyle & Markiewicz, 1996). This concept stems from Freud's core significance of mother-child relationship and Bowlby's theory of attachment. It has been further proven by the Romanian Adoptees Study, in which lack of the early loving relationship with parents is associated with later difficulty in making friends, because the early relationship grows out to develop responsiveness, sensitivity, and expectations to others (Dunn, 2004; Zimmermann, 2004). Furthermore, it serves as an important function in developing optimal socialization for children (Attili, 1988; Lansford et al., 2003; Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

Parents, in fact, can influence their children's peer relations and friendships in indirect or direct pathways. Very often, studies are carried out to investigate the influences on peer relations from parent-child relationships, parenting styles, or parental warmth, which are considered as the indirect pathway. Investigation into the direct influences from parents appears to be comparatively scarce. The most frequent issue in direct influences is monitoring which is considered as only one of the components within parental management.

The direct pathway is defined as the specific goal taken by parents who actively perform various activities in order to manage their children's access to peers or friends, and to promote their social skills and relationships (Ladd, Profilet, & Hart, 1992; Ladd, Le Sieur, & Profilet, 1993; Parke & Bhavnagri, 1989; Rubin & Sloman, 1984). Such direct influences from parents are proven to be negatively associated with children's



antisocial and delinquent behaviors (Bogenschneider, Raffaelli, & Tsay, 1998; Mounts, 2001).

According to Ladd et al. (1993), the direct modes of influence in children's peer relations are classified into four categories. Firstly, parents are *designers*, who actively seek and make choices in their children's social ecology, such as neighborhood, schools, community settings or any other environments that bring children into contact with peers. Secondly, parents are *mediators*, who act to influence on their children's opportunities with peer contacts. They may initiate and arrange play contacts, help in finding potential playmates, and regulate the activities. Thirdly, parents are *supervisors*, who monitor their children's ongoing interactions with peers. Such monitoring also includes the knowledge of their children's whereabouts, their friends, and their daily activities. Parents may be the participants of their children's interactive activities, or just being the observers. Lastly, parents are *consultants*, who give advices to children. It is often referred to as "decontextualized discussion". Parents and children are engaged in conversations about various aspects of the interactions between peers and friends, including how to initiate or maintain friendships, how to react to particular situations, and how to manage conflicts. These decontextualized discussions are meaningful in assisting children for interpersonal and social development.

As children grow older, parents become less involved in their children's interactive activities. Instead of being one of the participants, they may take the role to become more of an observer, and become more involved in decontextualized discussions. This progressive change begins around middle childhood or early adolescence (Lollis, Ross, & Tate, 1992). Therefore, parents of preadolescence take the role being less as

designers and mediators, but more as supervisors and consultants. In this developmental stage, monitoring seems particularly important, because it is positively associated with children's acceptance, social competence, and academic achievement (Bhavnagri & Parke, 1991; Burleson, Della, & Applegate, 1992; Mounts, 2002), and is negatively associated with delinquency and antisocial behavior (Ceballo, Ramirez, Hearn, & Maltese, 2003; Crouter & Head, 2002; Crouter, Helms-Erikson, Updegraff, & McHale, 1999; Pettit & Laird, 2002; Pettit, Laird, Dodge, Bates, & Criss, 2001). Research has indicated that low level of monitoring is related to externalizing behavioral problems, whereas high level of monitoring may be a protective factor for such problem (Pettit, Bates, Dodge, & Meece, 1999).

Many studies examining parental management in children's friendship quality or peer acceptance concentrate exclusively on the mothers' involvement and much less attention was paid to fathers' involvement. This is due to the sound evidence of strong mother-child bonding (Belle, 1989; Kerns, 1996; Schneider, Atkinson, & Tardif, 2001), or perhaps because mothers' parenting tend to be more consistent than fathers' parenting in associated with children's socialization outcomes (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Moreover, mothers spend more time with their children than fathers do (Collins & Russell, 1991), and mothers are more knowledgeable about their children's daily lives than fathers are (Bumpus, Crouter, & McHale, 2001; Crouter et al., 1999; Feiring & Lewis, 1993). Bhavnagri & Parke (1991) also found that mothers' involvement in preadolescent friendships and peer relationships was greater than fathers' involvement. Children view their mothers as more communicative, disclosing, and encouraging of connectedness, whereas fathers as more emotionally distant and encouraging of

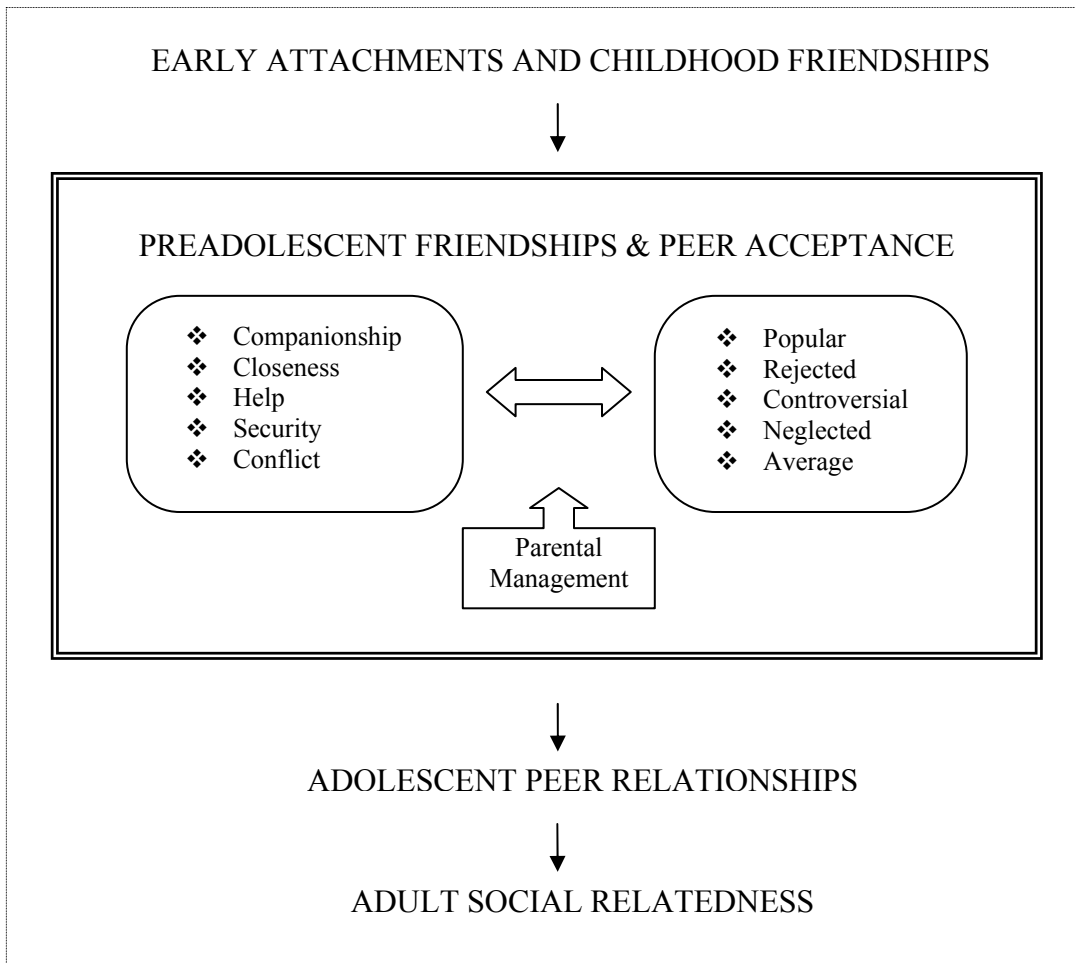
autonomy (Cooper & Cooper Jr., 1992; Youniss & Smollar, 1985). Nevertheless, Collins & Russell (1991) illustrated that the mother-child and father-child interactions did not appear to be similar. Mothers were more frequently involved in caregiving and routine daily tasks, whereas fathers were more frequently involved in play and recreational activities.

Overall, the parental management in preadolescent friendships and peer relationships vary greatly from family to family (Ladd et al., 1993) due to many reasons, including childhood social experiences, beliefs, goals (Ladd et al., 1992), parents' own childhood experiences (Putallaz, Costanzo, & Klein, 1993), marital relationships, and economic factors (Ladd, 1992).

### *1.6 Associations between Friendship Quality, Peer Acceptance, and Parental Management*

There has been evidence on the role of parents exerting direct influences in their children's friendships and peer relationships (Bogenschneider et al., 1998; Ladd & Pettit, 2002; Parke & Bhavnagri, 1989). Parental management is seen as supportive and carrying positive influences to friendship quality, peer acceptance, and the preadolescents' well-being (Bhavnagri & Parke, 1991; Cui, Conger, Bryant, & Elder Jr., 2002; Franz & Gross, 2001; Mounts, 2001). The foregoing literatures in friendship quality, peer acceptance, parental management, and their associations in related to developmental significance are illustrated in Figure 2, based on the figure adapted from Fullerton & Ursano (1994). It demonstrates the framework of this study and how its significance narrates to later developmental stages.

*Figure 2. Preadolescent Friendships, Peer Acceptance, and Parental Management as one of the Developmental Precursors of Adulthood.*



### *1.7 Siblings Contribution to Friendship Quality*

As abovementioned, family represents a good starting point for a child, and very often family includes not only parents, but also siblings. It is likely that children are influenced by their parents as well as siblings (Ladd, 1992; Mills & Rubin, 1993). Having a sibling can be seen as part of the social and emotional development. It can be contributed to friendship quality, as the sibling relationships enable children to understand other people's thoughts and emotions (Dunn, 2004). The difference between

relationship with siblings and friends is that there is no choice in the sibling relationship, a child is faced living with his or her brother(s) or sister(s); whereas there is a choice in friendship, a child can terminate his or her friendship with the other person. Anyhow, both siblings and friends can provide children with companionship, intimacy, and emotional support (Buhrmester, 1992; Updegraff & Obeidallah, 1999). As children grow older, they report more intimacy with friends than with siblings (Updegraff, McHale, & Crouter, 2002).

Furman & Buhrmester (1985) identified four dimensions in the sibling relationships – closeness, relative status, conflict, and rivalry, of which two of them (closeness and conflict) were also recognized in friendships. Based on the grounds of attachment theory and social learning theory, a positive association is found between the quality of sibling relationship and friendship (Cui et al., 2002). Nonetheless, the sharing of parental love and rivalry between siblings may reject such an association (Cutting & Dunn, 2006). According to the compensatory model, a child who is lacked of certain social experiences within a relationship can be compensated from the other type of relationship (Updegraff & Obeidallah, 1999). Therefore, findings suggest that the links between sibling relationships and friendships are inconclusive.

### *1.8 Gender Differences in Friendship Quality*

Gender differences in preadolescent friendship quality have been demonstrated in several aspects. Girls have more intimate friendships than boys (Berndt, 1982; Berndt & Perry, 1986; Dunn, 2004; Erwin, 1993; Fullerton & Ursano, 1994; Laird et al., 1999; Richard & Schneider, 2005; Sharabany, Gershoni, & Hoffman, 1981), and they are more

likely to report help, care, and security (Bukowski, Gauze, Hoza, & Newcomb, 1993; Parker & Asher, 1993). Furthermore, girls are found to have less aggression and competitiveness than boys (Erwin, 1993; Ialongo, Vaden-Kiernan, Kellam, 1998). These differences are normally explained by the patterns of play or activities. Boys engage more often in larger cluster size of competitive activities, e.g. football, whereas girls engage more often in smaller cluster size of cooperative or sharing activities, which involve turn-taking (Benenson, Apostoleris, & Parnass, 1998; Erwin, 1993; Fullerton & Ursano, 1994). A research by Crick & Grotpeter (1995) discovered that girls used just as much aggression as boys did, but boys usually engaged in physical form of aggression, while on contrary, girls usually engaged in non-physical form of aggression, such as exclusion, negative gossip, and verbal threats. In spite of the gender differences found in friendship quality, Erwin (1993) argued that the differences have been overemphasized, there were also a great deal of similarities between boys and girls that have been overlooked.

### *1.9 Gender Differences in Parental Management*

Dunn (2004) discovered that fathers were in fact more involved in sons, whereas mothers were more involved in daughters in middle childhood and adolescence. Similar findings are detected that fathers tend to be more knowledgeable about sons, while mothers are more knowledgeable about daughters (Crouter et al., 1999). So, children seem to be more likely to disclose to the parent of the same sex. As discussed earlier, the parental management in preadolescent friendships and peer relationships vary greatly from family to family (Ladd et al., 1993), and vary even within family between father and

mother (Bhavnagri & Parke, 1991; Cooper & Cooper Jr., 1992; Youniss & Smollar, 1985).

### *1.10 Summary*

Both friendship quality and peer acceptance are important in preadolescence, contributing to children's well-being, in short- and long-term. These components of peer relations are distinct, yet they have overlapping features and functions, and are discerned with associations. Parental management is recognized to be influential in preadolescent friendships and peer relationships, which carries positive effects to children's social development. The parental management in related to friendship quality and peer acceptance interact to determine its significance in preadolescent development, and the consequence persists throughout adolescence and adulthood.

### *1.11 Formation of Hypotheses*

Based on the foregoing research findings in friendship quality, peer acceptance, and parental management, four hypotheses are formulated for testing in the present study.

Although rejected children may have mutual best friendships, they report to have less satisfactory and lower friendship quality than popular children (Asher & Parker, 1988; Cillessen et al., 2005; Dunn, 2004). Therefore, the first hypothesis of the study is *popular children have higher friendship quality than rejected children*.

Research findings from Bhavnagri & Parke (1991), Burleson et al. (1992), and Mounts (2001, 2002) revealed the positive association between parental management-peer acceptance, and parental management-friendship quality. Accordingly, the second

and third hypotheses of the study are formulated that *popular children receive greater parental management than rejected children*, and *preadolescent friendship quality is positively correlated with parental management*.

Lastly, mothers are found to spend more time with their children than fathers do (Collins & Russell, 1991), and they are more knowledgeable and more involved in their children than fathers are (Bhavnagri & Parke, 1991; Bumpus et al., 2001; Crouter et al., 1999; Feiring & Lewis, 1993). Thus, the fourth hypothesis is *maternal management in children's friendships is greater than paternal management*.

In addition, this study also attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there any sociometric group difference in friendship quality?
2. Is there any sociometric group difference in parental management?
3. Is there any gender difference in friendship quality?
4. Is there any gender difference in parental management in terms of knowledge and involvement in their same-sex children?
5. Is there any difference in friendship quality between preadolescents who have siblings and those who are singles?



## **CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY**

### *2.1 Design*

The main scope of the study was to explore preadolescent friendship quality, its relationships with sociometric status, and parental management in the youngsters' friendships. Before conducting the main study, a pilot study was carried out in order to examine the format, wordings from translation, and length of time for completion of the questionnaire. The main study was then conducted with the target sample of fifth and sixth graders in a local school.

### *2.2 Participants*

Altogether 322 students in fifth and sixth grades (167 boys and 155 girls) from a local primary school were recruited for this study, among which there were four classes of fifth graders ( $n = 142$ ) and five classes of sixth graders ( $n = 180$ ). The mean age of participants was 10.59.

### *2.3 Procedure*

After getting permission from the principal of the school, all participants were gathered in their own classrooms after lunch. The teachers distributed a set of questionnaire to each student, and explained to them how to use the 5-point rating scale and how to complete the questionnaire. Before students started to fill in, the teachers informed them of confidentiality, and commanded them not to discuss their answers with classmates. The instructions for teachers who involved in the administration of the

questionnaire is attached in Appendix A. Students were given as much time as to complete the questionnaire, all students managed to complete within 20 minutes.

#### *2.4 Measurement*

The measurement was a self-report questionnaire, incorporating four sections (Appendix B). The first section was designed to obtain demographic data, among which one of the questions was used to screen out unsuitable respondents for measuring parental management, such as those who were from a single or no parent family. The other three sections embraced a scale measuring preadolescent friendship quality, a scale comprising questions adopted from home and telephone interview to measure parental management in preadolescent friendships, and the nomination method in measuring sociometric status. All items from the three sections were originally in English, they were first being translated into Chinese by the author, and back-translation was being done by two persons, one was a medical doctor with knowledge in psychiatry but not in psychology, and another was a qualified social worker with master degree who had basic psychology knowledge. The finalized Chinese version of the questionnaire was tested in a pilot study, in order to review the suitability of comprehension for fifth and sixth grade reading level.

##### *2.4.1 Friendship Qualities Scale*

The Friendship Qualities Scale (FQS) was designed by Bukowski, Hoza, & Boivin (1994) to measure children's and early adolescents' relationships with their best friends. It consisted of 23 self-report items in five dimensions: companionship (4 items), closeness (5 items), help (5 items), security (5 items), and conflict (4 items). Alpha

coefficients for each subscales were .68 (companionship), .69 (closeness), .73 (help), .71 (security), and .77 (conflict). The FQS indicated high level of validity and internal consistency. It was chosen for the study to measure preadolescent friendship because its 23 items would be easily manageable by fifth and sixth graders. The FQS aimed to obtain an index of preadolescents' representation of their relationship with the person they regarded as best friend, according to the actual current state, but not the way they wanted it to be. By using the Likert scale, each item was to rate with the lowest "1" and highest "5" representing extreme values, in which "1" indicated that the item was not true and "5" indicated that the item was really true. Two of the 23 items were not directly translated into Chinese, due to the cultural differences in school settings. For example, "If my friend had to move away, I would miss him/her" was changed and translated into Chinese as "If my friend had to *study in another school*, I would miss him/her"; and another "If I forgot my lunch or needed a little money, my friend would loan it to me" was changed and translated into Chinese as "If I forgot my *stationery* or needed a little money, my friend would loan it to me". Scores of 23 items in this scale were summed up to identify the participants' friendship qualities. Four items in the conflict domain and one item in the security domain were reversely scored. The higher overall score indicated higher friendship quality, and vice versa. Appendix C shows the original items of FQS.

#### *2.4.2 Parental Management in Preadolescents' Friendships*

This scale comprised of eight items, of which four were related to mothers and four were related to fathers, to assess the parental management in preadolescents' friendship. The items "my mother/father really knows who my friends are" were adopted

from a study by Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch (1991), which on parental involvement in adolescents' competence, including peer relations. These items were adopted in this study to assess maternal knowledge and paternal knowledge about preadolescents' friendships. The other items from this scale were adopted from Updegraff, McHale, Crouter, & Kupanoff (2001) to measure parental direct involvement in adolescents' peer relations. The items, originally being invited to answer by parents during home or telephone interview, had been transformed into a self-report 5-point Likert scale. Wordings had been adjusted to answer by children instead. For example, "I spend time talking with my son/daughter about his/her friends" had been rephrased into "my mother/father spends time talking with me about my friends"; and "I talk to the parents of his/her friends" had been rephrased into "my mother/father talks to my friends' parents". Cronbach's alphas primordially before rephrasing were .75 for both mothers and fathers according to Updegraff et al. (2001). However, the whole of the eight items adopted from two discrete studies had not been justified with internal reliability from previous research. The four items related to mothers were summed up, with an overall higher score indicated higher maternal management in preadolescents' friendships. The other four items related to fathers were also summed up, with an overall higher score indicated higher paternal management in preadolescents' friendships.

#### *2.4.3 Sociometric Status*

This section adopted a well known nomination method developed by Coie, Dodge, & Copotelli (1982), from which participants would be classified into five groups according to their popularity or likeability – popular, rejected, neglected, controversial,

and average. This measure of status had reasonably good stability across time and across situations (Coie & Dodge, 1988). Participants were asked to nominate three classmates of either sex whom they like most to play with, and three classmates of either sex whom they like least to play with. However, since negative peer nomination had been quite concerned in ethical issues about its negative impact on participants (Schneider, 2000), participants were required first to answer “yes or no” whether they could identify such “like most” and “like least” peers, and they were asked to nominate classmates only if they answered “yes”. For those participants who did not identify any classmate whom they liked most or least to play with, they were not required to put down any nomination. Each participant received a score which was the number of nominations from classmates. The scores for like most (LM) and like least (LL) were standardized across classrooms, in order to identify the social status groups. Social preference score was obtained from  $LM - LL$  whereas social impact score was yielded from  $LM + LL$ . Students who had social impact score within the 50% midrange were classified into average group, students at the lowest quartile were classified into neglected group, and students who had score at the highest quartile required to further examine in the social preference score. Student with preference score of +3 or above ( $LM - LL \geq 3$ ) was assigned to the popular group, those with preference score of -3 or below ( $LM - LL \leq -3$ ) were classified as members of the rejected group, whereas children with preference score between -2 to +2 were categorized into the controversial group.

## CHAPTER THREE: RESULTS AND FINDINGS

### 3.1 Descriptive Statistics

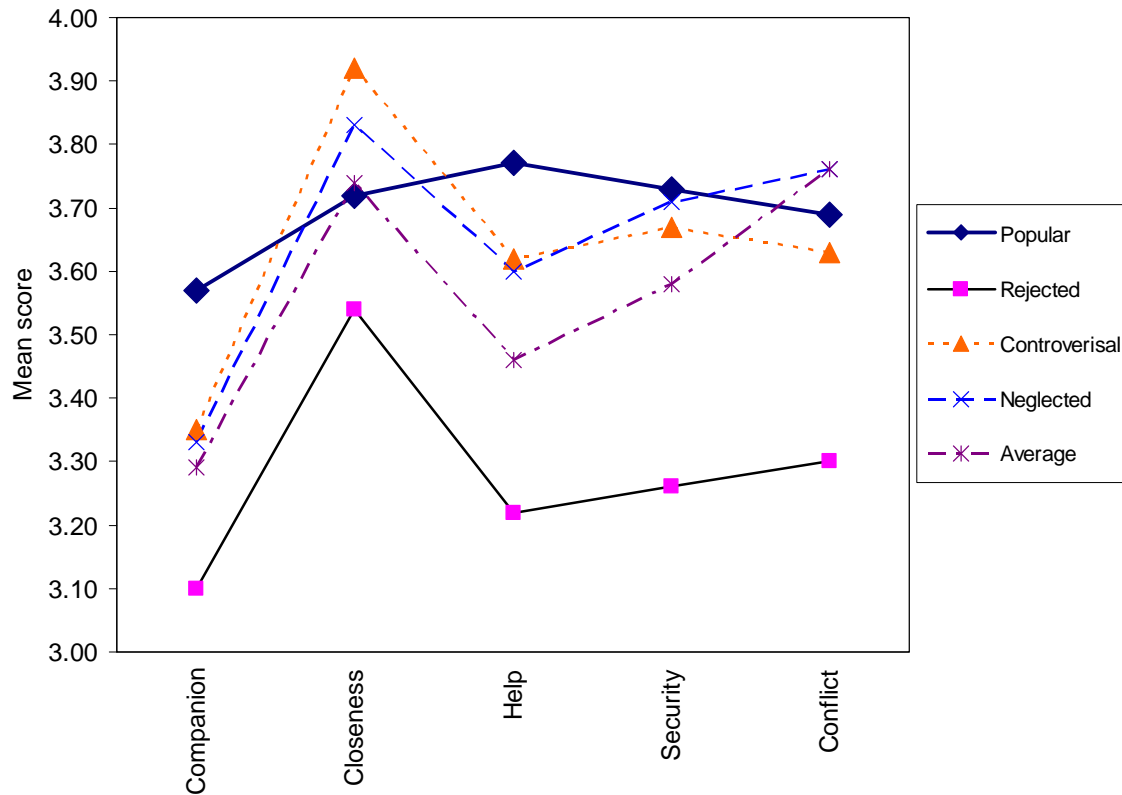
Descriptive statistics obtained for friendship quality (FQ) and each domain are presented in Table 1. The higher the score indicated better friendship quality. Mean score of the overall FQ was 82.78, ranging from 32 to 113, and mean scores for the five domains were ranged from 13.31 (in companionship) to 18.77 (in closeness).

All 322 respondents were being classified into five sociometric status groups, of which 14.6% ( $n = 47$ ) were popular, 7.8% ( $n = 25$ ) were rejected, 8.1% ( $n = 26$ ) were controversial, 19.2% ( $n = 62$ ) were neglected, and 50.3% ( $n = 162$ ) were average. The profiles of five sociometric status groups in FQ are presented in Figure 3, indicating that the line for popular children was above the line for rejected children in all domains, but intersected with the lines for controversial, neglected and average children.

*Table 1.* Means and Standard Deviations in Friendship Quality.

		<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Friendship Quality		281	82.78	14.28
	Companionship	313	13.31	2.92
	Closeness	320	18.77	4.07
	Help	314	17.64	4.51
	Security	311	18.04	4.18
	Conflict	299	14.81	3.60

Figure 3. Profiles of the five Sociometric Status Groups in Friendship Quality.



### 3.2 Differences in Friendship Quality between Popular and Rejected Children

In order to testify the first hypothesis that popular children have higher friendship quality than rejected children, mean scores of friendship quality and its components were compared by *t*-tests. Table 2 presents the means and *t*-values of the popular and rejected children in FQ and each domain. Between group comparison results indicated that popular children had higher overall FQ mean than rejected children (85.12 vs 75.64;  $t(61) = 2.27, p < .05$ ). In the domains of FQ, significant differences were found between popular group and rejected group in companionship ( $t(69) = 2.61, p < .05$ ), help ( $t(68) = 2.42, p < .05$ ) and security ( $t(67) = 2.02, p < .05$ ). However, no significant difference was

Table 2. Means, Standard Deviations, and *t*-values in Friendship Quality of Popular and Rejected Children.

	Popular		Rejected		<i>t</i> -value	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Friendship Quality	85.12 (41)	14.28	75.64 (22)	18.38	2.27	*
Companionship	14.26 (47)	2.49	12.38 (24)	3.51	2.61	*
Closeness	18.62 (47)	4.14	17.68 (25)	4.91	.86	<i>ns</i>
Help	18.83 (47)	4.27	16.09 (23)	4.82	2.42	*
Security	18.62 (45)	4.24	16.29 (24)	5.12	2.02	*
Conflict	14.74 (43)	2.98	13.18 (22)	4.68	1.64	<i>ns</i>

\* $p < .05$ .

Note: Number in bracket is the number of participants in each group.

indicated between popular and rejected children in the domains of closeness ( $t(70) = .86$ , *ns*) and conflict ( $t(63) = 1.64$ , *ns*). Therefore, the first hypothesis was partially confirmed.

### 3.3 Differences in Parental Management Received between Popular and Rejected Children

Means of popular and rejected children in their perceived parental management (PM) were compared to examine the validity of hypothesis that popular children receive



Table 3. Means, Standard Deviations and *t*-values in Parental Management of Popular and Rejected Children.

	Popular		Rejected		<i>t</i> -value
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Overall Parental	20.34 (44)	5.86	19.09 (22)	7.34	.75 <i>ns</i>
Maternal	11.21 (47)	3.38	11.09 (23)	4.37	.13 <i>ns</i>
Paternal	8.91 (44)	3.87	8.13 (23)	3.81	.79 <i>ns</i>

Note: Number in bracket is the number of participants in each group.

greater parental management than rejected children. As revealed in Table 3, no significant differences in PM was indicated between popular and rejected children ( $t(64) = .75, ns$ ). Moreover, no significant difference was found between these two groups of children in both maternal management and paternal management. Thus, the second hypothesis was rejected in this study.

#### 3.4 Association between Friendship Quality and Parental Management

To examine the relationship between preadolescent friendship quality and parental management, Pearson's correlation coefficients were calculated. As shown in Table 4, a positive and significant correlation coefficient was indicated between FQ and PM ( $r = .27, p < .01$ ). Also, the correlation coefficients between FQ and maternal

management, and FQ and paternal management were  $r = .25, p < .01$  and  $r = .22, p < .01$ , respectively. Among the five domains of FQ, all were positively correlated with PM, except for conflict ( $r = .02, ns$ ), which indicated no significant correlation. In addition, both maternal and paternal management were positively correlated with FQ in companionship, closeness, help, and security, but not in conflict. As a result, hypothesis three was confirmed, except in the conflict domain of friendship quality.

*Table 4.* Pearson's Correlation Coefficients between Friendship Quality and Parental Management.

	Overall Parental		Maternal		Paternal
Friendship Quality	.27 ** (254)		.25 **		.22 **
Companionship	.24 ** (281)		.23 **		.16 **
Closeness	.22 ** (288)		.22 **		.18 **
Help	.27 ** (282)		.24 **		.24 **
Security	.19 ** (280)		.17 **		.15 *
Conflict	.02 <i>ns</i> (271)		.00 <i>ns</i>		.02 <i>ns</i>

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

*Note:* Number in bracket is the number of participants in each group.

### 3.5 Differences between Maternal Management and Paternal Management in Preadolescent Friendships

Means and *t*-values in maternal and paternal management are presented in Table 5. *T*-test results indicated that maternal management ( $M = 11.53$ ) in preadolescent friendships was greater than paternal management ( $M = 8.72$ ),  $t(288) = 12.99$ ,  $p < .001$ . There was also evidence that both maternal knowledge ( $M = 3.72$ ) and maternal direct involvement ( $M = 7.84$ ) were greater than paternal knowledge ( $M = 2.74$ ) and paternal direct involvement ( $M = 5.98$ ),  $t(301) = 11.77$ ,  $p < .001$  and  $t(290) = 11.17$ ,  $p < .001$ , respectively. All significant results confirmed the fourth hypothesis that maternal management on children's friendship is greater than paternal management.

Table 5. Means, Standard Deviations and *t*-values in Maternal and Paternal Management.

		Maternal		Paternal		<i>t</i> -value	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Overall		11.53	3.63	8.72	4.01	12.99	**
Management		(289)		(289)			
	Knowledge	3.72	1.31	2.74	1.47	11.77	**
		(302)		(302)			
	Direct	7.84	3.01	5.98	3.06	11.17	**
	Involvement	(291)		(291)			

\*\* $p < .001$ .

Note: Number in bracket is the number of participants in each group.

### 3.6 Other Findings

#### 3.6.1 Sociometric Group Differences in Friendship Quality

Note that only four of the five sociometric groups were shown with details, without information of the controversial group, because this classification comprised of children both popular and rejected with comparatively lower social impact than the children in popular group and rejected group, so that the presence of such classification derived no significance to the additional findings of the study. ANOVA was carried out to detect sociometric group difference in FQ. Table 6 presents the means, standard deviations, and *F*-ratios in FQ and each domain among different sociometric groups.

*Table 6.* Means, Standard Deviations, and *F*-ratios in Friendship Quality among Sociometric Groups.

	Popular		Rejected		Neglected		Average		<i>F</i> -ratio	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Friendship Quality	85.12 (41)	14.28	75.64 (22)	18.38	85.02 (53)	11.93	82.22 (144)	14.35	2.10	<i>ns</i>
Companionship	14.26 (47)	2.49	12.38 (24)	3.51	13.33 (61)	2.73	13.15 (156)	2.99	2.01	<i>ns</i>
Closeness	18.62 (47)	4.14	17.68 (25)	4.91	19.16 (61)	4.11	18.70 (161)	3.85	.90	<i>ns</i>
Help	18.83 (47)	4.27	16.09 (23)	4.82	18.00 (58)	4.28	17.32 (161)	4.67	1.87	<i>ns</i>
Security	18.62 (45)	4.24	16.29 (24)	5.12	18.54 (61)	3.84	17.89 (156)	4.18	1.59	<i>ns</i>
Conflict	14.74 (43)	2.98	13.18 (22)	4.68	15.04 (57)	3.37	15.02 (153)	3.68	1.36	<i>ns</i>

*Note:* Number in bracket is the number of participants in each group.

*F*-ratios showed insignificant group difference in the overall FQ ( $F(4, 276) = 2.10, ns$ ) and its five domains.

Although the *F*-ratios indicated insignificant group difference in FQ and in all its domains, the LSD test was carried out in order to identify the inter-sociometric group differences, from which the *t*-values are presented in Table 7. Results demonstrated that for the overall FQ, popular children (Pop) had higher quality than rejected children (Rjd),  $t(61) = 2.27, p < .05$ , but popular children did not show higher FQ than neglected (Neg) or average (Avg) children. However, rejected children showed lower FQ than neglected and average children,  $t(73) = -2.63, p < .05$  and  $t(164) = -1.93, p < .05$ , respectively. Thus,

Table 7. *T*-values in Friendship Quality and Each Domain among Sociometric Groups.

	Pop vs Rjd	Pop vs Neg	Pop vs Avg	Rjd vs Neg	Rjd vs Avg	Neg vs Avg	<i>F</i> -ratio
Friendship Quality	2.27 *	.04	1.14	-2.63 *	-1.93 *	1.27	2.10
Companionship	2.61 *	1.82	2.31 *	-1.33	-1.15	.41	2.01
Closeness	.86	-.68	-.13	-1.44	-1.12	.78	.90
Help	2.42 *	.99	1.98 *	-1.75	-1.18	.97	1.87
Security	2.02 *	.10	1.03	-2.21 *	-1.69	1.05	1.59
Conflict	1.64	-.45	-.45	-1.96 *	-2.11 *	.03	1.36

\* $p < .05$ .

the results conclude that rejected children had lower FQ than popular, neglected, and average children, and there was no significant difference in FQ among popular, neglected, and average children.

In the domain of companionship, results indicated that popular children had higher quality than rejected and average children,  $t(69) = 2.61, p < .05$  and  $t(201) = 2.31, p < .05$ , respectively. Similar findings were indicated in help domain, that popular children had higher quality than rejected and average children,  $t(68) = 2.42, p < .05$  and  $t(206) = 1.98, p < .05$ , respectively. In the security domain, rejected children had lower quality than popular and neglected children,  $t(67) = -2.02, p < .05$  and  $t(83) = -2.21, p < .05$ , respectively. In the conflict domain, rejected children had lower quality than neglected and average children,  $t(77) = -1.96, p < .05$  and  $t(173) = -2.11, p < .05$ , respectively, but rejected children indicated no difference than popular children in quality in the conflict domain ( $t(63) = -1.64, ns$ ). There was no significant difference among all sociometric groups in the domain of closeness.

### 3.6.2 Sociometric Group Differences in Parental Management

ANOVA was carried out to detect any significant sociometric group difference in PM. The means, standard deviations, and  $F$ -ratios are presented in Table 8, indicating that there was no significant difference among all four groups in parental management,  $F(4, 284) = .42, ns$ . Furthermore, no significant difference was detected among all groups in maternal management and paternal management.

Table 8. Means, Standard Deviations, and *F*-ratios in Parental Management among Sociometric Groups.

	Popular		Rejected		Neglected		Average		<i>F</i> -ratio	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Overall Parental Management	20.34 (44)	5.86	19.09 (22)	7.34	21.06 (54)	7.72	20.22 (144)	6.46	.42	<i>ns</i>
Maternal	11.21 (47)	3.38	11.09 (23)	4.37	11.69 (58)	3.85	11.57 (150)	3.54	.27	<i>ns</i>
Paternal	8.91 (44)	3.87	8.13 (23)	3.81	9.56 (57)	4.43	8.54 (151)	3.96	.86	<i>ns</i>

Note: Number in bracket is the number of participants in each group.

### 3.6.3 Gender Differences in Friendship Quality

Means and *t*-values in FQ between boys and girls are presented in Table 9. *T*-values indicated that there was significant gender difference in FQ ( $t(279) = -2.74, p < .01$ ), and in the domains of help ( $t(312) = -2.83, p < .01$ ), security ( $t(309) = -2.56, p < .05$ ), and conflict ( $t(297) = -2.69, p < .01$ ), but no gender difference was found in companionship and closeness. Overall, girls' FQ was better than boys' FQ ( $M = 85.18$  vs  $M = 80.57$ ). Similar trends were also found in the help, security, and conflict domains of FQ.

Table 9. Means, Standard Deviations, and *t*-values in Friendship Quality between Boys and Girls.

	Boys		Girls		<i>t</i> -value	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Friendship Quality	80.57 (146)	14.51	85.18 (135)	13.67	-2.74	**
Companionship	13.29 (162)	3.09	13.33 (151)	2.72	-.12	<i>ns</i>
Closeness	18.46 (167)	4.24	19.11 (153)	3.87	-1.43	<i>ns</i>
Help	16.96 (163)	4.65	18.38 (151)	4.25	-2.83	**
Security	17.46 (162)	4.12	18.66 (149)	4.16	-2.56	*
Conflict	14.28 (156)	3.81	15.38 (143)	3.27	-2.69	**

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

Note: Number in bracket is the number of participants in each group.

#### 3.6.4 Gender Differences in Parental Management

Table 10 presents the means and *t*-values in maternal and paternal management between boys and girls, indicating that there was no gender difference in receiving parental management ( $t(287) = 1.38, ns$ ). Furthermore, there was no gender difference in either maternal ( $t(302) = .56, ns$ ) or paternal management ( $t(298) = 1.88, ns$ ).



*Table 10.* Means, Standard Deviations, and *t*-values in Parental Management between Boys and Girls.

	Boys		Girls		<i>t</i> -value	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Parental Management	20.78 (147)	7.16	19.70 (142)	6.19	1.38	<i>ns</i>
Maternal	11.58 (156)	3.82	11.34 (148)	3.42	.56	<i>ns</i>
Paternal	9.19 (151)	4.29	8.32 (149)	3.69	1.88	<i>ns</i>

*Note:* Number in bracket is the number of participants in each group.

### *3.6.5 Differences in Friendship Quality between Preadolescents With and Without Siblings*

The means and *t*-values in Table 11 indicated no significant differences in FQ between preadolescents who have and those who do not have siblings,  $t(279) = .31$ , *ns*, and no differences in all domains.

*Table 11.* Means, Standard Deviations, and *t*-values in Friendship Quality for Preadolescents With and Without Siblings.

		With siblings		Without siblings			
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> -value	
Friendship Quality		82.94 (207)	14.36	82.34 (74)	14.13	.31	<i>ns</i>
	Companionship	13.24 (231)	2.93	13.50 (82)	2.89	.69	<i>ns</i>
	Closeness	18.94 (232)	3.97	18.32 (88)	4.32	1.23	<i>ns</i>
	Help	17.78 (228)	4.49	17.29 (86)	4.59	.85	<i>ns</i>
	Security	18.12 (225)	4.10	17.84 (86)	4.40	.53	<i>ns</i>
	Conflict	14.87 (218)	3.57	14.64 (81)	3.72	.48	<i>ns</i>

*Note:* Number in bracket is the number of participants in each group.

### 3.7 Summary of Findings

The results confirmed that popular children had higher friendship quality than rejected children, however, they did not receive greater parental management in their friendship than rejected children. Positive correlation was found between preadolescent friendship quality and parental management. Furthermore, maternal management in preadolescent friendship was greater than paternal management.

In addition, although popular children had higher friendship quality than rejected children, they did not have higher friendship quality than neglected and average children. On the other hand, rejected children were found to have lower friendship quality than neglected and average children. In parental management, no sociometric group difference was detected.

Gender differences were found in the overall friendship quality, and in the domains of help, security, and conflict. No gender difference was found in receiving maternal and paternal management, thus, mothers were not more knowledgeable and involved in daughters, and fathers were not more knowledgeable and involved in sons. And no difference was found between preadolescents who have and those who do not have siblings.

## CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION

### *4.1 Popular versus Rejected Children in Friendship Quality*

The first hypothesis of the study is confirmed that popular children have higher friendship quality than rejected children, which is consistent with the findings from Dunn (2004), Parker & Asher (1993), and Schneider (2000). Popular children are also found to have higher quality in the domains of companionship, help, and security, but not in closeness and conflict.

The insignificance in closeness domain may be illustrated by the “subculture” phenomenon postulated from Asher & Parker (1988), that rejected or low accepted children can form their own groups and being contented, in which they are able to find close friendships and satisfaction. Furthermore, intimacy, one of the distinct characteristics in closeness domain, is found to be most intense in adolescence but not younger, because it requires cognitive abilities and mature social skills (Erwin, 1998), therefore, the closeness in preadolescence is not as intense and so it is not easily distinguished between popular and rejected children. This probably explains the insignificance in closeness from the preadolescent participants of the study here.

In the conflict domain, the results suggest that popular children do not differ from rejected children in having conflicts. As Laursen (1996) has argued, conflicts may be constructive as well as destructive, which is being supported by Nelson & Aboud (1985) and Shantz & Hobart (1989) that conflicts can help to enhance social relations. An investigation done by Cillessen, Jiang, West, & Laszkowski (2005) suggests that adolescents who have aggressive reputation and being rejected in the peer group may still have high friendship quality, such findings may be implied with the results from the

preadolescents of this study. However, to investigate into the resemblance in conflict domain between popular and rejected children, further examination is required concerning the behaviors involved, such as physical or verbal aggression, competition, and the resolution strategies (French, Pidada, Denoma, McDonald, & Lawton, 2005; Tezer, 2001).

In the domains of companionship, help, and security, popular children have higher quality than rejected children. In other words, popular children have greater proximity, higher frequency of give-and-take interpersonal relationships in help, and stronger feeling or belief in reliable alliance and transcending problems than rejected children do. To sum up, popular children have higher overall friendship quality than rejected children, although the domains of friendship quality are not all accordant.

Furthermore, the value placed in friendship affects the need, expectation, and motivation of children to strive for high friendship quality. Asher & Parker (1988) explained that rejected or poorly accepted children might be the result of placing relatively little value on social relationship, from which they could still be satisfied with the limited close friendship, although they were not liked by the majority of the peer group.

The data of this study is taken within school, and participants are limited to nominate only their classmates, such that the peer acceptance of a child within school may not be the same as the peer acceptance of the same child within another peer group (Attili et al., 1997). Hence, rejected children at school may not be rejected outside school, say in other extracurriculum activities.

In summary, popular children have higher friendship quality than rejected children, and in its domains of companionship, help, and security, but there is no difference between them in closeness and conflict domains; because firstly, rejected children can have their own subcultures in which they find intimate close friendships, and secondly, popular children do argue as much as rejected children, as conflict and its resolution can be seen as constructive in enhancing social development.

#### *4.2 Popular versus Rejected Children in Parental Management*

The second hypothesis is not confirmed. Results indicate that popular and rejected children receive just as much parental management. This can be illustrated by the conception from Kerns (1996) and Schneider et al. (2001), that the parent-child relationship is more closely linked to friendship rather than the relationship in peer group. The bonding with parent is more similar to the trust and intimacy of close friendship, which is not necessary found in peer group relationship. Therefore, no association is found between peer acceptance and parental management, and hence, no significant difference in PM between popular and rejected children.

In addition, parental management varies greatly from family to family (Ladd et al., 1993). The present study measures parental management perceived by children in receiving from their parents, but the level of parental management itself is affected by many factors. Firstly, the early childhood social experiences have not been taken into account in the study, which may have influenced the parental management in preadolescence. Ladd et al. (1992) revealed that parents used different modes in managing their children's peer relationships which are dependent upon the children's past

performance in social interactions with others. Secondly, the values or beliefs of parents about their children's peer relationships would also cause the variation in parental management. These values, perhaps being developed from the parents' own childhood experiences (Putallaz et al., 1993), may be explicit or implicit, and lead parents into different degree of involvement in their children (Rubin & Sloman, 1984). Thirdly, parental management is influenced by marital relationship as well as parent–older-sibling relationship (Lewis, 1984). Fourthly, socioeconomic status of the family may have affect on the level of parental management. Last but not least, parents' educational level has not been taken into account. These indirect influences in parental management make the picture increasingly complex and the confounding factors are not distinguishable from the measurement.

To summarize, popular and rejected children are not different in receiving the level of parental management, since the restrained measurement in parental management of the study is closely related to the more specific dyadic friendships rather than the more general peer group relationships.

#### *4.3 Correlation between Friendship Quality and Parental Management*

Findings support the third hypothesis stating that there is a positive correlation between friendship quality and parental management. Positive correlations are also found in the domains of companionship, closeness, help, and security, but not in conflict. In other words, children with higher level of parental management feel greater companionship and closeness with friends, receive more help, and have higher sense of security among friendships. On the other hand, they do not necessarily have less fight or

argument with friends, and are not necessarily more competent in handling conflict resolution. Such findings are consistent with Newcomb & Bagwell's (1996) postulation that friends often argue and disagree with each other. An interesting finding from Cooper & Cooper Jr. (1992) revealed that adolescents, both boys and girls, exhibited more disagreement with friends but more connectedness with parents. Friendship involves the component of equality which allows them for freely expression, whereas the relationship with parent is not equal, with parent in the superiority, the freely expression is being suppressed or not allowed. Despite that such explanation is discordant with the more common speculation of argumentative teenagers with their parents, it demonstrates why youngsters have arguments with friends while having high level of parental management. Afterall, arguments or conflicts can be seen as part of development in learning effective communication skills (Bukowski & Hoza, 1989). Nonetheless, no other research has justified Cooper & Cooper Jr.'s (1992) findings for preadolescents. As in handling conflict resolution, it is also one of the social skills that learnt in preadolescence (Nelson & Aboud, 1985). Parental management is probably not the major influence on conflict resolution, but cognitive abilities, such as language development (Dunn, 2004), and social learning from peer modeling (Schneider & Byrne, 1985) and from parent modeling (Franz & Gross, 2001) also play a crucial role.

The positive correlation between friendship quality and parental management does not provide information in the cause and effect relationship, and it is in fact bidirectional, prompted by Ladd et al. (1992) and Putallaz et al. (1993). Although based on the attachment theory, one would assume that parental management as a cause which influences friendship quality as an effect, this is not the complete picture however,



parental management is constantly adjusted dependent upon children's progress in socialization and friendships (Ladd et al., 1992).

#### *4.4 Differences in Maternal and Paternal Management*

The fourth hypothesis is confirmed that there is significant difference in maternal and paternal management, and maternal management is found to be greater than paternal management. The result is accordant with the other findings from Bhavnagri & Parke (1991), Bumpus et al. (2001), Collins & Russell (1991), Crouter et al. (1999), and Feiring & Lewis (1993). Mothers do not just spend more time with their children than fathers do in terms of companionship, but they are also more involved in their children's peer relationships and friendships. Consequently, they are more knowledgeable about their children. The close mother-child relationship is linked to the maternal encouragement of connectedness and communication, whereas the less close father-child relationship is related to the paternal encouragement of autonomy (Cooper & Cooper Jr., 1992; Youniss & Smollar, 1985). In fact, parental knowledge in children's friendships is quite restrained because parents receive most information from their children's own disclosure. No matter how much effort parents put into managing their children's friendships, parental knowledge is controlled within the children's willingness and spontaneousness to disclose (Crouter & Head, 2002; Stattin & Kerr, 2000). Therefore, this explains how the indirect pathway, such as parent-child relationship and parental warmth, influences children's friendships always captures more emphasis than the direct pathway. In fact, the direct parental management is governed by some kind of indirect determinants. Furthermore, the level of parental management exerted from each parent is dependent

upon his or her own background, personality, and beliefs (Schaffer, 1996). Anyhow, the direct pathway does have its own implication, as the direct parental management can be voluntarily controlled and readjusted by parents contingently (Ladd et al., 1992), and moreover, the parent-child relationship and parental warmth are insufficient to bring out parental management (Fletcher, Steinberg, & Williams-Wheeler, 2004).

Research by Doyle & Markiewicz (1996) suggested a positive association between mothers' own friendship quality and their children's friendship quality. Mothers who had supportive friendships also tend to have children experiencing more intimate friendships, specifically in the areas of closeness and help. However, no such association was found between fathers' own friendship quality and their children's friendship quality. This demonstrates the differences between maternal and paternal influences in a rather indirect manner.

#### *4.5 Sociometric Group Differences in Friendship Quality and in Parental Management*

The findings suggest that rejected children have lower friendship quality than popular, neglected, and average children, and no significant difference in friendship quality is found among the popular, neglected, and average groups. This probably explains why the group of rejected children often captures the attention and concern of clinical psychologists and other professionals rather than the neglected group, because rejected children show significantly lower friendship quality, and are associated with other maladaptive functions or behaviors (Putallaz & Gottman, 1981). Besides, neglected children, though are withdrawn, may not be distinguished behaviorally from popular or average children. The neglected is the least stable group than the other sociometric

classifications. These children are relatively changeable with changing circumstances in terms of behavior (Coie & Kupersmidt, 1983), and thus, they have less risk than the rejected children in portending negative developmental outcomes (Gifford-Smith & Brownell, 2003).

Furman & Robbins (1985) argued that the quality of close mutual friendship might not be coherent with the quality of general peer group relationship. Some well accepted or popular children may not have good friendship, and some children with very good friendship may not be well accepted or even being disliked. Therefore, children with unsatisfactory or no friendship are not necessarily the same group of children who have poor peer relationship. It demonstrates that peer acceptance and friendship quality are distinct and cannot be interchangeable, yet they are overlapped and are associated (Gifford-Smith & Brownell, 2003; Schaffer, 1996). So, children who are rejected or poorly accepted are not necessarily having short- or long-term maladjustment, only those who are *both* rejected and without friends are in greater risk (Dunn, 2004; Newcomb & Bagwell, 1996).

For the sociometric group differences in parental management, findings suggest that there is no significant difference in parental management among all sociometric groups. Although there is evidence to support that the level of parental management is corresponded to children's social acceptance and competence (Parke & Bhavnagri, 1989), there is also evidence that counteract such argument. Ladd & Golter (1988) revealed that the more intervention from mothers would cause children failing in development of social competence which is an important element for friendship formation. These contradictory studies mainly focus in younger children, but it is a matter of fact that most parents of

preadolescents begin to use a less direct approach to manage their children's peer relationships. In preadolescence, the proportion of family-peer interrelated socialization system begins to change. Parent-child relationship which is seen as the vertical tie becomes less influencing, whereas the peer relationship which is seen as the horizontal tie becomes more intensifying. At the same time, parents begin to adopt a less direct style within parental management, such as monitoring and decontextualized discussion, and diminish to use directive intervention (Ladd & Pettit, 2002; Lollis et al., 1992). Therefore, with the less influence of parental management on preadolescents, it is not surprising that there is no significant sociometric group difference in parental management.

Nonetheless, the parental management effect on preadolescents cannot be eliminated, because parental management continues to be influencing even during adolescence (Dornbusch, 1989), but only perhaps at a different degree; it may be more influencing to some children and may be less to the others, dependent upon many others variables. One of which is parental responsiveness, for example, it may lessen the adolescents' orientation to peers (Bogensneider et al., 1998). The continuity model suggests the continued connection in attachment and social learning with parents, and in contrary, the compensatory model suggests the inadequate family relationships being compensated or replaced by peer relationships (Ladd, 1989). Both models interact to determine the degree of parental management effect on adolescence (Cooper & Cooper Jr., 1992), and on preadolescence as well.

The insignificance in parental management between sociometric groups suggests that parental management alone is insufficient to predict children's social acceptance,

some indirect influences to parental management, such as parental warmth and responsiveness, and parent-child connectedness, should also be taken in consideration.

In summary, sociometric group difference in friendship quality is only seen between popular and rejected children, and there is no difference between popular, neglected, and average children. Also, there is no significant difference in parental management between all sociometric groups. Rejected or poorly accepted children have significantly lower friendship quality than popular or well accepted children, but the level of parental management they receive is similar. There is no difference among popular, neglected, and average children in their friendship quality and parental management. Children who are rejected in their peer group are not necessarily the ones portending maladjustment, because their low acceptance can be compensated by good friendships. Only children who are both rejected and have no friendship would be at risk of maladjustment.

#### *4.6 Gender Differences in Friendship Quality and Parental Management*

In accordance with some past research, there is significant gender difference in friendship quality. Girls' friendship quality is higher than boys', in the aspects of help and security (Bukowski et al., 1993; Parker & Asher, 1993), and conflict (Erwin, 1993; Ialongo et al., 1998). Strough, Berg, & Meegan (2001) reasoned the gender difference in conflict that, girls had greater interpersonal concerns than boys, and thus, were more likely to engage in resolving conflicts, and leading to higher quality in the conflict domain.

Conventionally, girls' friendships are found to be more intimate and closer than boys (Berndt, 1982; Berndt & Perry, 1986; Dunn, 2004; Erwin, 1993; Fullerton & Ursano, 1994; Laird et al., 1999; Richard & Schneider, 2005; Sharabany et al., 1981), but in contrast, the finding from this study suggests that there is no significant gender difference in the closeness domain of friendship quality. McNelles & Connolly (1999) illustrated that though the quality of closeness was the same for girls and boys, in fact the underlying constituents of closeness formation were quite different. Girls' closeness was formed by affective intimacy and personal disclosure, whereas boys' closeness was formed by sharing of activities and conversations on nonpersonal issues. Therefore, the results and findings in gender differences of friendship quality from this study are coherent with some of the past researches but at the same time incoherent with others, so they are inconclusive, and further detailed investigations are required.

Previous researchers revealed that children had closer relationship with the same-sex parent, such that fathers were more knowledgeable and involved in sons, and mothers were more knowledgeable and involved in daughters (Crouter et al., 1999; Dunn, 2004), but such findings are not verified in this study. The results indicate that there is no gender difference in the overall parental management, maternal management, or paternal management, and thus, this research question cannot be concluded.

Other researchers also suggest that the gender differences should not be overemphasized (Erwin, 1993; Zarbatany, Conley, & Pepper, 2004), because the variability within group is being disregarded, such as personalities, attitudes, and personal values (Wright, 1988).

#### *4.7 Siblings in related to Friendship Quality*

From previous researches, some suggest a positive association between friendship quality and sibling relationship, and explain such relationship with the attachment theory and social learning conception (Cui et al., 2002; Dunn, 2004). The attachment theory asserts that children who are securely attached to their primary caregivers, mostly their mothers, would extend their secure attachment to their siblings, and also to their friends. Social learning theory pronounces that the skills in socialization learnt in the familial context, from parents and siblings, can be extended to friends. However, some researchers disagree with this explanation and adopt the compensatory model, suggesting that children who lack certain types of social experiences would pursue such experiences from other relationships. The present study does not attempt to investigate the quality of sibling relationship due to finite resources, but simply to identify whether there is an association in friendship quality for those with or without siblings. Findings indicate that there is no association between friendship quality and preadolescents having a sibling. This reveals that children who do not have siblings to practice the social skills can do just as well as those who have siblings in socialization, and have high friendship quality. On the other hand, children who have siblings do not acquire better social skills for higher friendship quality, because the experiences from sibling relationships can be compensated by experiences from friendships. Thus, the findings seem to support the compensatory model. Nonetheless, with the theories and research findings taken together, a more complex picture is derived, because the attachment and social learning must still be influential in a certain degree. There is no single pattern of the sibling-friend relationship, the numerous patterns of different cross relationships may be determined by

the nature of relationships as well as individual differences (Updegraff & Obeidallah, 1999).

#### *4.8 Implications of Study*

The present study identifies the associations between preadolescent friendship quality, peer acceptance, and parental management, which being influenced by childhood experiences, and in turns, affect later psychosocial well-being in adolescence and adulthood. These associations are used to detect the children who are at risk of maladjustments, so that intervention can be administered on them. A child with both low friendship quality and acceptance is more likely than another who has low friendship quality/high acceptance or high friendship quality/low acceptance to demand for intervention. Though most of the interventions are designed and executed by psychologists or educational experts, e.g. coaching and social skills training, some interventions induced from peer influences are also regarded effective, including cooperative learning, peer reinforcement, and peer modeling (Furman & Gavin, 1989). However, the effectiveness of the intervention is seen merely in the more general aspect of acceptance, the usefulness in enhancing friendship quality is in question (Asher & Renshaw, 1981; Ladd & Asher, 1985). There has been very limited intervention offering to help youngsters in enhancing friendship quality directly, because friendship quality is recognized as being enhanced through the improvement of acceptance. Additionally, intervention may not facilitate the enhancement in friendship quality, due to the reciprocity of this relationship, whereas no reciprocity is expected in acceptance. Church, Gottschalk, & Leddy (2003) proposed 20 ways to enhance preadolescents' and



adolescents' social and friendship skills in classroom settings, though this program also does not directly handle with friendship quality. The learning environment particularly in classroom provides children with many opportunities for developing higher friendship quality (Searcy, 1996).

Moreover, the associations between preadolescents' friendship quality, acceptance, and parental management can be utilized to raise the awareness of parents for their influential role in determining their children's future well-being, so as to promote more parent-child communication and parental involvement. Preadolescence is a crucial period for parents to build good communication with their children, before they reach the stage of "storm and stress", when the youngsters become engaged in some delinquent behaviors, such as smoking, drug use, alcohol consumption, and teenage sex (Blake, Simkin, Ledsky, Perkins, & Calabrese, 2001; Kelly, Comello, & Hunn, 2002). Some statistics show that children begin to be exposed to these behaviors as early as twelve years old, and the number of youngsters engaged has been dramatically increasing (Office of Applied Studies, 2005; Teen Drug Abuse, 2003), mainly because of peer influence (Leung, 2002; Maxwell, 2002). Therefore, parents need to prevent the delinquency of their children by adopting some effective meaningful communication and involvement (Benshoff & Alexander, 1993). This study has its implication to capture parents' attention and to raise their awareness of the importance of parental involvement or management.

#### *4.9 Limitations of Study and Future Direction*

The assessment of acceptance does not examine across different situations and ages, some social skills are depended on specific situation or particular age (Attili, 1988). Beyond the level of acceptance that this study examines, in order to further investigate the quality of peer acceptance, there is a need to identify which specific social skills, such as perspective-taking, altruism, and sharing, are related to better friendship quality. So that intervention can be designed according to those specific skills.

For the parental management in friendship or peer relationship, there are some vivid and well recognized definitions for childhood, but whether these definitions are applicable to preadolescence is in dispute, because both children and parents are expected to transcend into a different stage where the level of parental management should be altered, and the degree of alteration varies greatly between families (Ladd et al., 1993). Moreover, at this developmental stage, parents may be involved more indirectly and less engaged in parental management from the direct approach (Lollis et al., 1992). Among abundant researches in friendship and peer relationship, parental management for younger children is usually measured by the direct involvement in children's activities, whereas the parental management for older ones in adolescence is usually measured by the knowledge and monitoring of parents about their children's daily whereabouts and activities. There is a lack of existing measurement scale for measuring preadolescent parental management, intending to assess parental knowledge and involvement in a broader perspective. Future direction may consider to construct a measurement scale comprising both the parental management features for childhood and adolescence, since parental management in preadolescence concerns with a wider degree of variation, and takes into consideration of such variation between families. In addition, beyond the direct

involvement of parental management, the indirect approach such as parental warmth and parenting styles may be taken into account.

The present study identifies the relationships between friendship quality, peer acceptance, and parental management, but no direction of causation is established. Also, the stability of friendship and friendship quality are seen as mutually influencing (Berndt, 1999; Dunn, 2004). Future work may attempt to verify the direction of causation by longitudinal studies, and at the same time, take into consideration of the assessment of friendship stability.

#### *4.10 Conclusion*

The interrelationships between friendship quality, peer acceptance, and parental management are examined. Though numerous researchers have been investigating into the associations between friendship quality and peer acceptance, and the indirect involvement from parents, e.g. parenting style and parent-child relationship, relatively small number of researchers has been studying the direct impact of parental management on friendship quality and acceptance. The results of the study demonstrate that parents' direct management of their children's peer relations is seen associated with children's quality of friendship. However, no association is found with peer relationship. This implies that the relationship between parent and child is more closely related to the relationship between child and friend, as in the sense of intimacy and security, but the relationship between child and peer is different of which no intimacy and security need to be involved. Furthermore, rejected children have significant lower friendship quality than popular, neglected and average children. Nevertheless, among those who are being

rejected, not all are at risk of psychosocial adjustments, only those who are both rejected and have no friend would be at risk, because some rejected children can be buffered with good friendship.

Gender difference is found in friendship quality, showing that girls' friendship quality is higher than boys' in domains of help, security, and conflict. Companionship and closeness are the same for girls and boys. No gender difference is detected in parental management. Moreover, having a sibling does not mean that a child has higher friendship quality.

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## **Appendix A: Notes to Teachers for Administering the Questionnaire**

Target participants are all P5 & P6 students.

Students must enter their *class* and *student number* on the very top of the questionnaire.

Students are asked to choose a classmate whom he/she regards as his/her best friend to answer the questions in Section A. They are to be sure that they rate their friendship according to its current state (the way it is now) and not according to how they want it to be.

If students say they have no best friend, then direct them to perceive “best friend” as a classmate whom he/she spends most of the time with.

Students need to be instructed how to use the five point rating scale, in which “1” means the item is not true and “5” means the item is really true, with the lowest and highest numbers representing extreme values.

Students are informed of the confidentiality of the responses, and are commanded not to discuss the answers with classmates.

**Appendix B: Chinese Version of the Questionnaire**

班別: \_\_\_\_\_

學號: \_\_\_\_\_

年齡: \_\_\_\_\_

性別: 男 / 女 (請圈出正確答案)

家庭成員: (請在適當方格內加上√)

父親 ☐ 母親 ☐ 兄弟姊妹 ☐

甲部:

以下句子是關於你的一位好朋友與你的關係. 有些句子可能形容得非常準確, 但有些可能並不準確. 請細心閱讀並圈出合適的數字. 那些句子是沒有正確或錯誤的答案.

“1” 代表句子完全不準確,

“2” 代表可能準確,

“3” 代表間中準確,

“4” 代表十分準確,

“5” 代表極之準確.

* 請注意甲部份的每一句句子都是與一位最要好的朋友有關	完全不準確	可能準確	間中準確	十分準確	極之準確
1. 我的朋友和我空閒時都會花時間在一起.	1	2	3	4	5
2. 我的朋友和我會一起做些活動.	1	2	3	4	5
3. 假如有其他同學煩擾我, 我的朋友會幫我.	1	2	3	4	5
4. 我的朋友和我小息時會一起玩.	1	2	3	4	5
5. 當我遇到困難時, 我的朋友會幫助我.	1	2	3	4	5
6. 假如我的朋友要轉讀另一間學校的話, 我會很想念他/她.	1	2	3	4	5
7. 當我在某一件事上做得好的時候, 我的朋友會替我高興.	1	2	3	4	5



	完全不準確	可能準確	間中準確	十分準確	極之準確
8. 有時候我的朋友會為我做些事情或使我感覺特別.	1	2	3	4	5
9. 當我有一段時間沒有和我的朋友在一起, 我會很想念他/她.	1	2	3	4	5
10. 我會和我的朋友爭執.	1	2	3	4	5
11. 假如有另一個同學令我感到困擾的話, 我的朋友會幫我.	1	2	3	4	5
12. 假如我在學校或家裏遇到問題, 我都可以把問題告訴我的朋友.	1	2	3	4	5
13. 就算我請我的朋友不要煩擾我, 他/她都仍會繼續煩擾我.	1	2	3	4	5
14. 假如我忘記帶文具或需要些少金錢的話, 我的朋友都會借給我.	1	2	3	4	5
15. 假如我和我的朋友爭吵完後我向他/她道歉, 他/她都仍會鬍怒於我.	1	2	3	4	5
16. 在週末或放學後我的朋友和我會到對方的家中.	1	2	3	4	5
17. 我的朋友和我會經常爭吵.	1	2	3	4	5
18. 假如有事情困擾着我而我又不能告訴其他人, 我都可以告訴我的朋友.	1	2	3	4	5
19. 假如我或我的朋友做了些事情令對方感到煩擾, 我們都能容易地和解.	1	2	3	4	5
20. 我的朋友會在我需要幫忙的時候幫助我.	1	2	3	4	5
21. 我的朋友和我在很多事情上會意見不合.	1	2	3	4	5
22. 假如我和我的朋友爭執或吵架, 我們可以說聲對不起, 事件就能平息.	1	2	3	4	5
23. 當我和我的朋友一起時我感覺愉快.	1	2	3	4	5

乙部:

以下句子是關於你的父母. 有些句子可能形容得非常準確, 但有些可能並不準確. 請細心閱讀並圈出合適的數字. 那些句子是沒有正確或錯誤的答案.

	完全不準確	可能準確	間中準確	十分準確	極之準確
1. 我母親確實知道誰是我的朋友.	1	2	3	4	5
2. 我母親會花時間與我談及關於我的朋友.	1	2	3	4	5
3. 我母親會與我朋友的家長交談.	1	2	3	4	5
4. 我母親會花時間參與我和我朋友的活動.	1	2	3	4	5
5. 我父親確實知道誰是我的朋友.	1	2	3	4	5
6. 我父親會花時間與我談及關於我的朋友.	1	2	3	4	5
7. 我父親會與我朋友的家長交談.	1	2	3	4	5
8. 我父親會花時間參與我和我朋友的活動.	1	2	3	4	5

丙部:

1. 在班中你有喜歡跟他/她一起玩的同學嗎? (請圈出答案)

有 / 沒有

如有, 請填寫他/她們的學號或名字, 最多填寫三位:

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.  
沒有, 則不用填寫.

2. 在班中你有不太喜歡跟他/她一起玩的同學嗎? (請圈出答案)

有 / 沒有

如有, 請填寫他/她們的學號或名字, 最多填寫三位:

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.  
沒有, 則不用填寫.

~ 完 ~

### Appendix C: Friendship Quality Scale (Original Items)

1. My friend and I spend a lot of our free time together.
2. My friend and I do things together.
3. If other kids were bothering me, my friend would help me.
4. My friend and I play together at recess.
5. My friend helps me when I am having trouble with something.
6. If my friend had to move away I would miss him/her.\*
7. When I do a good job at something my friend is happy for me.
8. Sometimes my friend does things for me or makes me feel special.
9. When I have not been with my friend for a while I really miss being with him/her.
10. I can get into fights with my friend. (R)
11. My friend would stick up for me if another kid was causing me trouble.
12. If I have a problem at school or at home I can talk to my friend about it.
13. My friend can bug me or annoy me even though I ask him/her not to. (R)
14. If I forgot my lunch or needed a little money my friend would loan it to me.\*
15. If I said I was sorry after I had a fight with my friend he/she would still stay mad at me. (R)
16. My friend and I go to each other's houses after school and on weekends.
17. My friend and I can argue a lot. (R)
18. If there is something bothering me I can tell my friend about it even if it is something I cannot tell to other people.
19. If my friend or I do something that bothers the other one of us we can make up easily.
20. My friend would help me if I needed it.

21. My friend and I disagree about many things. (R)

22. If my friend and I have a fight or argument we can say “I’m sorry” and everything will be alright.

23. I feel happy when I am with my friend.

\* Wordings have been adjusted and not directly translated into Chinese.

(R) Reverse scoring.