THE LINK BETWEEN PARENTAL FRIENDSHIPS

AND SOCIAL COMPETENCE IN

PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

By

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Introduction

Background

Parents are an important influence on all aspects of young children's development including social development. The home environment accounts for the bulk of the child's development in the early years (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). This raises the question of which parenting and familial experiences influence children's development. The current study addresses this question by comparing one aspect of parenting, parental friendships, to a specific area of child development, social competence.

Social competence is a complex social and emotional construct. Children who do not develop social competence during early or middle childhood are in danger of becoming socially rejected by their peers which can manifest itself as either aggression or social withdrawal and has been linked to detrimental outcomes such as low school achievement, psychiatric problems or a tendency toward criminal behavior (Ladd, 1999; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Peer rejection can be a major risk factor for young children who demonstrate atypical social development and have trouble establishing and maintaining friendships. Conversely, social competence manifested as friendship formation predicts emotional well being and positive emotional adjustment of children (Ladd, 1999).

Families today do not exist in a vacuum. There are many factors that influence family functioning including parent-child relationships, day-to-day activities, and the

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people with which children have an opportunity to interact. It is important to consider child development, specifically children's social development, within the context of the family. Families function within a network of friends, relatives, neighbors, teachers and others. People who interact with the family on a regular basis, such as those mentioned above, can be important models and interaction partners for both parents and children and, ultimately, begin to shape the child's views of social interaction beyond the family and act as an arena for skill development (Cochran & Brassard, 1979). This study will examine the contribution of one group of these network members, parents' friends, on children's social development.

Importance of Study

There is a large body of research concerning the various effects that parental social networks can have on a child's development. The research in this area has often grouped friends into parental social networks. There are far fewer studies which consider the impact of parents' friends specifically. What is known about the effects friends have on children's development has primarily been studied in the context of social networks. This study addresses that gap in the current research by looking specifically at parental friendships. This study will provide data that either supports or rejects the hypothesis that there is an association between parental friendships and their 3 and 4-year-old children's social development.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the relation between a parent's friendships and a preschool child's social competence. The broad research question that guides this study is "How do perceived parental social relationships influence their child's social

development in the early years?" Specifically, the study looks for a positive correlation between the number of a parent's friends and the support received from those friends and children's social competence in preschool.

Research Questions

The questions that will be explored during the course of this study are: 1) Do parents who feel supported by their current friendships have children who are more socially competent in preschool? 2) Do parents with a larger number of friends have children who are more socially competent than children whose parents have fewer friends?

Scope and Limitations

This study is designed as descriptive because it seeks to describe the relation between parental friendships and children's social competence. The results of this study will be generalizable to children who are between the ages of 3 and 5 years old who attend private preschool. The majority of the sample was White and reported yearly household income as at least 50,000. The study will explore the question of whether parental friendships are associated with children's social development. The study will examine the relationship between a parent's friendships and children's social competence in preschool.

The limitations of the study include generalizibility of results and cultural issues. The population to be sampled for this study is children attending a private preschool in Tulsa, OK, and their parents. Since the school being sampled is private and charges monthly tuition, most of the children in the sample come from similar backgrounds, have middle to high socioeconomic status, have parents who are relatively involved in their

educations, and are receiving similar educational experiences. Therefore, it will be difficult to generalize the results to a variety of populations. Public preschools and child care centers may have a more diverse group of students where results of a similar study may differ considerably than those in this sample.

This lack of diversity leads into the next limitation of the design, which is that the study does not include any provisions for cultural differences. Socialization varies considerably between cultures so aspects of social development that are important to one may not be valued and encouraged by all of the families influencing the children in the sample (Paker & Ladd, 1992). For example, American early childhood education in general places high value on autonomy. Preschools in this country stress teaching children self help skills, problem solving and independence (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Some other cultures may have a more interdependent view of development and may put a higher value on working together to complete tasks, or asking for help rather than trying things on your own. These children may be quite social by the standards of their own culture, but may be identified as lacking social competence by the American values reflected in some measures of social competence. Also family forms, goals, behaviors and expectations vary greatly across cultures which would influence the structure and support of their social networks (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

Conceptualization

The key concepts involved in the study are parental friendships, parental social networks and social competence. For the purpose of this study, **parental friends** will be defined as non-relatives, who through personal choice, are taking place in a friendship relationship which can be terminated (Uhlendorff, 2000).   In addition, the friendships

included in this study will be those in which the children have the opportunity to observe their parents interacting with. Friends who parents have only e-mail or phone contact with, or see only in situations where the child is not present, such as work, would not be included. **Parental social networks** will be defined as every person that the parent spends time with, receives personal support from and that the parent identifies as important to him/her at the present time (Jennings, et al. 1991; Norbeck, et al. 1981). This is a broad term which encompasses various social network members. **Social network members** may include, but are not limited to, spouse, extended family members, friends, neighbors, coworkers, or babysitters (Jennings, et al. 1991).   Friends are included in this group, but not every social network member is necessarily a friend. **Social competence** is defined as a child's effectiveness in his/her environment and demonstration of positive relations with his/her peers as reported by the child's teacher and his/her parents (Rubin & Rose-Krasnor, 1992). These concepts are explained in more detail in their respective sections of the literature review to follow.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

Introduction

This literature review will examine three main areas of research and identify the connections between them, which will serve to better inform the research questions. The review will examine how parental friendships, reviewed separately as well as in the context of parental social networks, and parenting influence child social competence in preschool. These relationships are visually represented by Figure 1 which illustrates the following literature review.

Although this paper contains a full synthesis of the current literature on the topic of parental influences that have been shown to be associated with children's peer relations, the focus of the study concerns the impact of parental friendships on children's social competence with peers which addresses the gap in current literature.

Theoretical Framework

Research has shown parental social networks to have a considerable impact on children's social development (e.g., Belsky, 1984; Cochran & Brassard, 1979). One possible theoretical explanation for this link is the concept of modeling contained in Social Cognitive Theory. Bandura (1969) theorized that children acquire new behaviors by observing others in their environment exhibiting those behaviors (observational learning). There is a higher likelihood of such a behavior being learned and repeated by a child if the person performing the behavior is similar to himself or herself in terms of

ethnic background and social status, is thought by the child to be successful, and if the person seems to be receiving rewards for the behavior as opposed to being punished (Bandura, 1977). Following these guidelines, parents are highly likely to be behavioral models for their children. According to Bandura's theory, when a parent models a new behavior, the child observes the behavior (using attentional processes) and then evaluates the outcome as to whether the parent performing the behavior was rewarded or punished. He/she then uses this information to decide whether the behavior could be useful to him/her in future situations (Bugental & Goodnow, 1998).

An important component to this theory is that the child must observe his or her parents interacting with their friends and modeling friendship behaviors in order to imitate these behaviors in his/her own relationships. To accommodate such observations, parental friends are operationalized as friends of the parents who children have the opportunity to observe their parent interacting with. Friends who parents interact with only in situations where their children are not present may contribute to the support they receive from their overall networks but would not account for increases in children's social competence as explained by the concept of parental modeling.

Social Cognitive Theory was formulated based on the idea of triadic reciprocal determinism which means that factors influencing development (environment, behaviors and one's cognition) affect one another bi-directionally, which is visually represented in Figure 2 (Vasta, 1992). In this model, B refers to behavior, E to environmental influences, and P represents events taking place within oneself such as cognition, and biological factors. Modeling and other instructional processes are considered environmental events (Vasta, 1992). In application to the current study, the bidirectional

interaction between environmental influences and behavior section of the model illustrates the relationship between modeling and behavior, or actions that the child will take. The observation of parental interactions with friends or social network members could influence that child's subsequent behaviors making him/her more likely to exhibit similar behaviors in different contexts. The section of the model that represents the relationship between internal events and behavior illustrates a parent's behavior and beliefs in the context of friendships. For example, what a parent believes about the importance of friendships and social interactions influences how often he/she engages in these relationships and to what extent they involve their families in these interactions (behavior). Conversely, the effects of these social relationships and interactions influence the parent's beliefs and cognition.

When parents frequently engage in interactions with friends that involve social skills such as sharing, negotiating, and conflict resolution, they are creating a positive friendship model for their children. If the child perceives the interactions as successful (bringing about rewards instead of a punishments), he/she may later exhibit similar behaviors in hopes of eliciting similar outcomes. This acquisition and performance of an observed behavior involves motivation processes. Conversely, if children lack positive parental models for social skills and peer interaction they may be less likely to exhibit these types of behaviors, or exhibit them less often. The current study looks for an association between parental friendships and children's social competence in a preschool setting which can possibly be explained by the theoretical concept of parental modeling, which is visually represented as path (a) in Figure 1.

Peer Relations

  A child's first understanding of himself and the world around him develops as a function of his relationships with his caregivers and family members. Children develop social skills in the context of close relationships, which most often refer to their parents and immediate family members, and they practice these skills in a variety of social experiences with adults and peers (Hartup, 1989). The variety and richness of these experiences vary greatly from child to child and from family to family. Establishing successful peer relationships is an important task in childhood that can positively or negatively impact a child's self-worth, influence his view about his environment and the world, and determine whether the child acquires competency or becomes socially deviant (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).   This section will define and describe children's peer relations, social skills and social competence during the preschool years.

  Peer relations are interactions between children of "equal status," which most often refers to the same or similar age (Pellegrini & Blatchford, 2000).   Preschool (ages 3-5) is one environment where young children are able to develop and practice social skills with other children of the same age and consequently form friendships because both frequency and complexity of peer interactions increase during this period. Children at this age are learning to regulate their emotions, function as a part of a group, play successfully with one or two peers, and develop rudimentary friendships which serve as a rehearsal for skills needed to have more emotionally significant relationships later (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

Social skills are defined in a broad sense as "discrete behaviors that lead children to solve social tasks or achieve social success" (Rubin, et al., 1998, p.644). Some social skills specific to preschool are engaging in imaginative play with shared meanings, effectively communicating with peers, and spontaneously demonstrating prosocial behaviors, such as sharing, toward peers (Rubin, et al. 1998). Social skills are learned and practiced in the context of peer interactions and once developed, provide the foundation for social competence.

Preschool has been found to promote children's social development due to increased opportunities for interactions with peers and closer peer relations (Howes, 1988). In 1988, Howes conducted a large scale cross sectional (N=329) and longitudinal study (N=264) study involving children ages 1 to 5 years old who attended a child care center for 68 hours per week. The sample used contained children with a variety of socioeconomic statuses, ethnicities, family structures, and child care environments. In the cross sectional sample, 50% of the children were Anglo, 20% Asian, 20% black and 10% Hispanic. Twenty-six percent of the children in this sample were oldest children, 30.7% were youngest children and 43% were only children. There were 341 girls and 337 boys in the total sample (both cross sectional and longitudinal samples). Seventy-six percent of the children lived in two parent homes and 23% in single parent homes. In this study, Howes examined children's social competence and friendships across different ages and developmental stages. The researcher conducted classroom observations, teacher ratings and sociometric ratings to study peer interactions and friendships. The study found that the amount of time spent in child care is positively related to the sophistication of children's social skills and time spent with peers is associated with increased social

competence. This would support the idea that preschool settings allow children opportunities to develop the capacity for lasting friendships.

The most common peer interactions in preschool involve play. Establishing play, joining in other children's play, and maintaining play are all important social tasks for preschoolers (Rubin, et al. 1998). Pretend play is the most complex type of play because it requires children to incorporate a variety of cognitive and social skills such as developing and followings rules, deciding on and taking on roles, and sharing meanings of objects with peers. This type of play helps children learn and practice skills such as negotiation, compromising, conflict resolution and communication skills (Rubin, et al. 1998). Social pretend play becomes increasingly complex and allows the child to demonstrate more positive social behaviors as the preschooler grows older.

Peer relations in preschool are a precursor to friendship formation for young children (Ladd, 1999). There is evidence that children can begin to develop friendships as young as three and a half years of age (Rubin, et al. 1998). This friendship development is shown by preference of certain children over others as playmates. Interactions between friends during the preschool years are characterized by an increased frequency of social behaviors, increased interaction and more complex play, increased cooperation, negotiation and conflict and increased likelihood of continued play after conflict resolution than interactions between non-friends. Friendship is a unique peer relation most often characterized by positive, more intense dyadic interactions (Doyle & Markiewicz, 1996).

Social Competence. Children who acquire and exhibit age appropriate social skills are said to be socially competent. There are multiple ways to operationalize social

competence. The most salient aspects across various definitions are positive peer interactions, acceptance into a peer group, and the ability to function effectively within one's environment (Rubin, et al. 1998). Rubin and Rose-Krasnor (1992) defined social competence as "the ability to achieve personal goals in social interaction while simultaneously maintaining positive relationships with others over time and across situations (p. 6)." Social competence has been used as a measure of a child's adaptive or functional behavior in their environment as assessed by someone else, most commonly a parent or adult (Waters & Sroufe, 1983; as cited in Pellegrini & Blatchford, 2000).

Parental Social Networks

It is widely accepted that the social context of the family including support from family members, friends and others influences both the parent-child relationship and children's development (Belsky, 1984; Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Cochran & Brassard, 1979). This literature suggests that a supportive, satisfying network may relieve some parental stress and enable parents to be more attentive to their children. The social networks of parents and friendships that those parents have can affect a child's development positively or negatively. This section of the literature review will summarize the research concerning parental social networks, since what is known about the effects of parental friendships on children's development has been primarily researched in the context of parental social networks. The next section will focus on the limited research specifically dealing with parental friendships.

Parental social networks have been conceptualized and measured in a variety of different ways. It is generally agreed upon that this is a complex construct with several different modes of support including tangible (carpooling, child care, etc.) and emotional

support (Jennings, Stagg & Connors, 1991). Cochran and Brassard (1979) define a social network as "those people outside the household who engage in activities and exchange of an affective and/or material nature with the members of the immediate family (p. 601)." This literature review focuses primarily on emotional support and its effect on a parent's overall level of interpersonal support and the size (number of members) of the network. A parental social network is defined as every person that the parent spends time with, receives personal support from and that the parent identifies as important to him/her at the present time (Jennings, et al. 1991). Social network members may include, but are not limited to, spouse, extended family members, friends, neighbors, coworkers, or babysitters (Jennings, et al. 1991).

Two important aspects of parental social networks that have been recognized as influencing the child's social development are size of the parental social network and satisfaction with the network (Uhlendorff, 2000). Satisfaction with the network refers to the support a parent receives from his or her network and how the parent perceives that support. For example, for one parent the support from two or three close network members may be satisfying for them, and another parent may require more support from several network members in order to feel satisfied with his/her social network. Individual differences between parents, such as in the example above, illustrate the importance of measuring both size and satisfaction when examining parental social networks.

According to a review by Bronfenbrenner, research in the area of parental social networks and child outcomes has generally focused on mothers of infants, most often at-risk groups such as teenage mothers and low income families (1986). An unpublished study by Tietjen and Bradley cited in Bronfenbrenner (1986) found that pregnant mothers

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had less tendency toward depression, lower levels of stress and anxiety, and more positive attitudes toward their pregnancies if they had access to larger, more supportive social networks (Tietjen & Bradley, 1982; as cited in Bronfenbrenner, 1986). It should be noted that support from social networks is most crucial and helpful to parents under conditions of stress such as poverty, single-parent homes, young mothers or families experiencing extremely stressful situations such as a death in the family; but also have implications for families characterized by more typical structure and functioning (Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

Parental Friendships

The concept of friendship is a broad term that can mean different things to different people. Some indicators commonly used to describe an adult friendship relationship are caring, sharing, helping, relationship permanence, intimacy, time spent together and support (Blieszner & Adams, 1992). One definition that has been used to describe friendships between both adults and children is a relationship between two people not biologically related to one another who feel a mutual connection. The components of friendship key to this definition are that the relationship is established and maintained by personal choice of the individuals, it has to be fostered in order to be successful, it can be terminated, and the group of people from whom one can choose their friends is limited (Uhlendorff, 2000). As mentioned earlier, for the purposes of this study, the definition used for parental friendships will contain all of the above components as well as emphasizing the importance of the child having opportunities to observe the parent/friendship interactions.

In a book reviewing the current knowledge base on the topic of adult friendships, Blieszner and Adams (1992) report that although the potential pool of friends from which one chooses is theoretically unlimited, adults tend to choose friends that are similar to themselves in social status, race and gender. This also includes similarities such as family forms. Married adults are more likely to befriend other married adults, parents are more likely to befriend other parents, etcetera, which makes it probable that parents would socially interact with their friends (who also have children) in the presence of the children. This becomes a time in which children observe their parents exhibiting friendship behaviors as well as practice their own social skills with peers (Uhlendorff, 2000).

Parental friendships differ from other friendships in several ways. For example, parents have demands on their time other than socializing with friends such as work, children's school and sports activities that may decrease both the number of friends and the amount of time spent with friends (Blieszner & Adams, 1992). These constraints on time may inhibit them from maintaining many friendships or establishing new friendships outside their families and cause parents to rely more heavily on relatives for support than friends or other network members (Magai & McFadden, 1996).

In a 1996 study, Doyle and Markiewicz examined how maternal relationships impact a child's peer relations. In a sample of 154 mothers and one of their 8 to 12-year-old children (grades three to six), the researchers looked for relations among maternal friendship quality, marital quality, and mother-child relationship factors as well as a link between children's participation in friendships and quality of mother's best friendships. The sample of children included 78 girls and 76 boys from three suburban public schools.

Eighty-three percent of the families involved in the study had two parents living in the home. Forty-eight percent of the mothers sampled were employed outside of the home full-time while 16% worked part-time. The participants came from a varied group of socioecomonic groups, averaging lower middle class. The researchers found that maternal friendship quality (i.e. the quality of the mother's closest, same-sex friendship) was linked to child's best friendship quality and friendship participation. Mothers who felt their own best friends provided stimulating ideas and activities, were more likely to have children who had a best friend. In addition, mothers who felt supported by their best friends were more likely to have children whose best friendships were characterized by closeness and intimacy. The authors used the concept of parental modeling as an explanation for these findings explaining that children who observe their mothers participating in close, supportive relationships may be more likely to exhibit these behaviors in their own friendships.

In 2001, Simpkins and Parke examined the relationship between quality of parents (mothers and fathers) best friendships and children's friendships. The study sampled 125 9-year-old children included 67 boys and 58 girls from public school in the western United States and their parents. Fifty percent of the families sampled were White, 39% Latino, 4% African America and the remainder of the participants failed to specify race. Yearly income ranged from $10,000-$50,000 with a median income of $38,000-$42,000. In this study, researchers compared parental report of the quality of their best friendship to children's self-report of friendship quality as well as observational data concerning friendship quality. Children completed a questionnaire about their relationship with a friend as well as interacting with that friend in a variety of ways (free play, task planning,

and game playing) in a laboratory setting. Simpkins and Parke hypothesized that fathers'

friendship quality would be more related to their male children's friendship qualities and

that mothers would be more related to their daughters. The researchers found that both

mother and father friendship quality was related to children's friendship quality of both

male and female children (Simpkins & Parke, 2001).

In view of the literature, friends are a specific group of people, with distinct

characteristics distinguishing them from neighbor or kin relationships. Friendships and

relationships with others make up the parent's social network and provide support to the

parent. Friends are included in a parent's support network because they are a source of

support for the parent but not every member of the social network is necessarily a friend

(Blieszner & Adams, 1992). Parental friendships are unique relationships in which the

parent receives support from a person that he/she has chosen as a close friend. These

relationships also serve as important contexts for parents to model social skills (helping,

caring, sharing) and friendship behaviors (fostering relationships and supporting friends)

to their children as well as provide peer interactions for the children if the parent's friend

also has children, and have been shown to influence children's friendship quality.

Parenting

Parenting behaviors, the parent-child relationship, and factors within the family

can have an impact on a child's peer relations and developing social competence

(Jennings, Stagg & Connors, 1991; Locke 1996; Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 1998;

Swick & Hassell, 1990). One area that has received a great deal of research is the idea

that parental social networks influence parenting which in turn influences a child's

development (Belsky, 1984). These studies provide evidence of an indirect effect of

parental social networks on child development as mediated by parenting behaviors, parent-child interactions, or the parent-child relationship. This indirect effect is indicated as path (b) in Figure 1. Path (a) denotes the direct impact of parental friendships on children's social competence by way of parental modeling, while path (b) shows the indirect effect of parental support provided by friendships on children's peer relations by way of parenting. One topic in this area that has received a significant amount of research is the effect of parenting styles on children's development. It is generally accepted that warm, responsive parent/child relationships are associated with positive peer relations in children (Doyle & Markiewicz, 1996).

A study by Swick and Hassell (1990) sampled 60 preschool children who were currently attending a university child development center and their parents. The center from which the sample was taken is representative of all socioeconomic, ethnic and racial groups. Sixty percent of the children were attending preschool free of charge due to a grant from social services and 40% paid tuition. The study examined the relationship between parental interpersonal support and child social competence (parent reported). The study found that interpersonal support available to parents from sources such as friends, neighbors, and spouses positively impact parent-child interactions. The previous two studies suggest that a parent who feels emotionally supported by friends and others, will have more positive parenting behaviors which result in more positive relationships with their children.

Impact of parental social networks on parenting. A study by Jennings, Stagg and Connors (1991) examined the relationship between parenting behaviors and mothers' social networks. The researchers observed one 45 minute in-home interaction between

45 urban 4-and 5-year-old preschoolers (25 boys and 19 girls) and their mothers, interviewed each mother about her social network and instructed the mother to keep a log of network members that she came into contact with for one week. The majority of the families in the sample were White (six children were black) and the overall sample had a broad range of socioeconomic status (scores ranged from 1-6 on a modified Hollingshead scale.) The researcher found that mothers of preschoolers with greater support provided by her network were less punitive and restrictive of their children with a tendency toward an authoritative style of parenting. One reason for this offered by the authors could be that mothers who feel emotionally supported are able to provide a similar support to their children. This study also suggested that high quality social networks indicate positive parent-child interaction.

In summary, parents who feel supported by their social networks and view teaching their children social skills as part of their parental role are more likely to exhibit positive parenting behaviors and model the social skills that will increase the probability that their child will also exhibit these social skills and become socially competent individuals (Jennings, Stagg & Connors, 1991; Swick & Hassell, 1990). Parents can directly influence children's social development and increase social success by arranging peer interactions for their children and supporting these interactions by giving children advice on handling situations, negotiating conflict, etcetera (Ladd, 1999; Rubin, et al. 1998). The previously reviewed literature demonstrates that parenting plays a major role in the social development of their young children.

Effects of Parental Social Networks on Child's Peer Relations

This section focuses on literature which attempts to identify ways in which parental social networks impact children's peer relations and reviews literature concerning direct effects that parental social network or members of the network can have on a child's development. Indirect influences effects (i.e., influences the network has on the child's development which are mediated by the parent in some way) were discussed in the parenting section.

Parental social networks are beneficial for influencing children's social skills in a variety of different ways. First, parents serve as the primary social role models in the lives of their young children because of their closeness and the fact that parents model and introduce children to social rules thereby having more social knowledge and power than the child (Hartup, 1989). This type of relationship is defined by Hartup (1989) as a vertical relationship because the child is looking to the parent for guidance in developing his own social understandings. Vertical relationships are relationships between a child and a more skilled and socially powerfully person (i.e., a parent or other adult). A child's first experience with the social world and consequently his/her first social skills are formed within this type of relationship.

Secondly, many of the parent's social network members, including friends, also interact with the children of the parent on a regular basis which increases the child's opportunities for social interactions which increases cognitive and social stimulation for the child (Cochran & Brassard, 1979; Uhlendorff, 2000). Following this idea, children whose parents have a large social network (many friends and supporters) will be exposed to positive social behaviors such as establishing and maintaining friendships; which will

in turn increase the likelihood that the child will imitate these behaviors. These interactions may also provide direct support to the child in terms of help or care giving (Cochran & Brassard, 1979). For example, some parental network members may provide child care services for the children in which the network member is directly supporting the child. In addition, these social network members become observational models for the children and expose the child to a repertoire of behaviors that may become models of the child's own behavior later on (Cochran & Brassard, 1979).

Thirdly, parental network partners are likely to have children which provide the child with peers to interact with increasing the child's interaction partners and social experiences (Uhlendorff, 2000). These interactions could contribute to the building of the child's development of his/her own social network (Cochran & Brassard, 1979). Hartup (1989) defined relationships between a child and his social equal, such as peers, horizontal relationships. Horizontal relationships allow the child to practice the social skills he has acquired, elaborate on them, and begin to form friendships with similar individuals (Hartup, 1989). It would seem that children whose parents have extensive social networks would have more people to interact with, both adults and peers (i.e. the children of their parents friends) thus having more opportunities to learn and practice their social skills and that children with limited social partners would have less opportunities. In addition to these mechanisms for direct effects on child development, parent's network members may also become observational models for the children modeling a variety of skills to the children, and observing their parents interact with a social network and actively interacting in that network as well may give children a model for creating their own social networks.

Both size of the parental social network and satisfaction with the network have been recognized as important factors in explaining how parental social networks impact the parent child relationship and the child's social development. Uhlendorff (2000) examined both parents' and children's friendship networks using a sample of 116 German children 7 to 12 years of age attending an inner city primary school. Sixty-nine percent of the children sampled lived in two parent households, 29% lived with in single parent households with their mothers and 2% with their fathers. The children were asked to list their friends and assign each to one of four levels of friendship (playmate, just friend, good friend, or best friend). The children's parent or parents were asked separately to nominate all of the people who "provide friendship and support to them" (p. 197). The researcher found that the children had friendship network sizes positively related to the size of their parent's social networks. This finding indicates that the number of friendships held by the parent influences the child's ability to make and keep friends as indicated by his quantity of friendships.

In a 1989 study, Roberts examined the possible links between parental stress, social networks, parent-child interactions, and children's overall competence (including peer relations) in preschool. The sample studied contained 30 two-parent families with preschool-aged children attending child care or preschool in the Vancouver area. The children used for the study consisted of 19 girls and 11 boys ranging in age from 3 to 5 years with an average age of 4.3 years. The average annual salary reported by participating families was 20% above the national average. The researchers gathered information from the families using parent questionnaires, home observations, and both teacher and parent report child measures. The study found that, despite the research that

suggests that effects on children's development linked to parental social networks are mediated by parenting, (Belsky, 1984; Bronfenbrenner, 1986), parental social networks can in fact impact children directly. The researcher strongly suggests that more studies be conducted with the purpose of exploring this finding further (Roberts, 1989).

Both size of parental social networks and support provided to parents by their network members can have an impact on a child's development. Some studies, (i.e. Uhlendorff, 2000) have found size to be the most important indicator of children's social networks. Other studies, such as the Jennings, et al. findings mentioned in the parenting section purport that the level of support felt by the parent is predictive of more positive parenting behaviors and mother-child relationships (1991). This study asserts that the support felt by the parent as a result of the network is an important construct in influencing a child's relationships and social development (eg: Jennings et al.,1991). It can be concluded that both size and support of parental social networks can influence children both directly and indirectly and should be studied further.

In summary, children learn social behaviors and relationship skills through the observation of others. Parents and parents' friends can serve as observational models for children during the early years when the majority of their time is spent in the home. Parents who have large, supportive networks are likely to provide their children with many opportunities to observe social relationships and behaviors as well as provide models for maintaining social networks which can influence the child's development of his own social networks later in childhood (Uhlendorff, 2000).

Summary

Although there has been extensive research in the areas of parent child relationships, children's social development, and parental social networks, there is a need for more studies that look for possible links between these areas and examine how each influences the other to impact children's social development (Cochran & Brassard, 1979). There is also a need for studies that examine parental friendships as a separate variable than parental social networks. The bulk of research in this area examines the effects of parental social networks on children's social development and neglects to differentiate the particular contributions of parental friendships.

Several of the studies mentioned in this paper sampled participants from a broad range of ethnicities and income levels. A few studies used primarily white-middle class families. The sampling of populations which include a variety of ethnic groups and socioeconomic backgrounds illustrates the effects of parental social networks and friendships on the social development of children from a variety of family types.

Additionally there is a need for research focusing on the preschool years (three to five years of age) when parental influences have a significant impact on a child's development, especially social development. The child is beginning to become socially aware, capable of conforming to social rules, learning to function in a group setting and developing friendships. Since these young children's social experiences have developed in the context of their families and are being explored with peers in preschool settings, this is a relevant time to explore these issues. The current study attempts to address these gaps in the literature by further exploring the associations between parental friendships and social competence in preschool-aged children.

Hypotheses

  This study is designed to examine the effect of two aspects of parental friendships, number of friends and support received from friends, on preschool children's social competence. The following hypotheses were formulated based on the preceding review of literature. The study hypothesizes that number of friends and support felt from these friendships will be positively related to a child's social competence. The hypotheses for the current study are as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Parents' level of support received from their friendships (as assessed by parent rating) will be positively related with child's level of social competence (as assessed by parent and teacher ratings).

Hypothesis 2: The number of a parent's friends (as assessed by parent rating) will be positively associated with child's level of social competence (as assessed by parent and teacher ratings).

Chapter III

Methodology

Participants

Parents of 3-and 4-year-old children, who were enrolled at Miss Helen's Private School (MHPS), a private preschool in Tulsa, Oklahoma, during spring of 2005, were recruited for this study. The participants in this study were the child's mother and the child's teacher. All parents of 3-and 4-year olds who had been enrolled for two months or longer were invited to participate in the study. This sampling frame contained 55 families; 32 of those families (58%) chose to participate in the study.

Procedures

The researcher personally distributed informational packets to each of the families who met the requirements for participation for this study. The packets consisted of an informational letter composed by the director of the school, and a parental consent form which were attached to the outside of the envelope and an instructional sheet and the research instruments inside the envelope. The informed consent form outlined the purpose and procedures of the study, informed parents of their rights that their participation would be voluntary, and identified the dates that the questionnaires would be sent home and would need to be returned. It also informed them that with their consent, the child's teacher would complete a questionnaire assessing the child's social competence and that all information gathered for the study would be kept confidential. The informational letter composed by the school's director informed the parents that the

research study is being supported by the school and that their participation would be greatly appreciated.

The parents completed an instrument which assessed their friendships in terms of number of friends and support received from these friendships. They also completed an instrument in which they assessed their child's social competence and a demographic questionnaire. In two parent homes, each parent had the opportunity to fill out a separate instrument assessing their friendships but only the mother's assessment of the child's social competence was requested. These instruments were completed in the participants' home. Each packet took approximately 30 minutes to complete. Once participating families returned their completed packet (signed consent form and completed research instruments) to a designated area at the front desk of the school, they were included in the sample. When the questionnaires were returned to the researcher, names were omitted from the data and each family assigned a number. Only the researcher had access to the data. The master list of names and numbers was kept in a separate place away from the actual data.

Once the children in the sample were identified and parental consent had been obtained, the researcher met with the teachers of those students to explain what was expected of them and to acquire their consent to participate in the study. The teachers were instructed to complete the instruments individually and to keep the information that they contribute about the students confidential. Each teacher signed an informed consent form which explained the purpose and procedures of the study and outlined her responsibilities if she consented to participate. All of the 3 and 4-year-old teachers consented to participate. The teacher of each child participating in the study completed

an instrument assessing the child's social competence. The teacher was given the questionnaires for the children in her class who are in the sample and was asked to complete them during school hours. A substitute filled in while the teacher completed the questionnaires. It took each teacher approximately 10 minutes per child to complete the social competence instrument.

Instruments

Demographic Information. A demographic questionnaire developed by the researcher was completed by each family participating in the study. This questionnaire is designed to collect personal information from the families including, the child's age, gender and ethnicity and the parent's age, gender, ethnicity, income level, employment status, marital status and level of education. The mother of each family participating completed this form. This information is kept confidential and the families were informed that this information will be used exclusively for this study and will not be shared with the school. A copy of the demographic questionnaire used for this study is contained in Appendix A.

Parental Friendships. The Perceived Social Support Scale-Friends (Procidano & Heller, 1983) was used to measure the number of friends a person has and the social support he/she she receives from those friendships. The PSS-Fr is a 20-item scale used to assess the social support that a person believes that he/she receives from his/her friends. This instrument contains twenty statements concerning friendships such as "I rely on my friends for emotional support" and "I wish my friends were much different." For each statement the respondent chose "yes" "no" or "don't know." High internal consistency was found for this instrument with an alpha coefficient of .90 (Procidano & Heller,

1983). For the current study, an alpha of .85 was calculated for the 20 items. This alpha was calculated using the scores of 11 participants due to incomplete data.

To measure the number of friends that a parent currently interacts with, and that his/her child have an opportunity to observe the interactions, the researcher added a question to this PSS-Fr. The parent was asked to list his/her "current friends that your children have the opportunity to observe you interacting with. Friends that you only have e-mail or telephone contact with, or see only in situations where your child is not present (i.e., work) would not be listed." The respondent was to list her friends and indicate the frequency of contact she has with each friend. The number of friends each parent indicated was used in the final analyses.

The research packets given to each family contained two copies of the PSS-Fr so that the child's mother and father could both complete this instrument. Father report of friendships was optional. Due to low participation (N=10), father data was not included in the final analyses.   See Appendix B for a copy of the Perceived Social Support Scale-Friends.

Social Competence (teacher report). The Social Competence and Behavior Evaluation Scale: The Short Form (SBCE-30) developed by LaFreniere and Dumas (1996) will be used to measure teachers' perceptions of children's social competence. This is a 30-item scale which can be completed by a child's preschool teacher in about 10 minutes. To ensure that the teacher has had sufficient time to observe the child in a variety of situations over a period of time, the children included in the study were enrolled in the teacher's class for a minimum of two months. This was also a requirement for students included in the SCBE-30 standardization sample (LaFrienere &

Dumas, 1996)   The SCBE is broken down into three summary scales which are social

competence, anger-aggression, and anxiety-withdrawal. Only the items that make up the

social competence summary scale were analyzed for this study. Interrater reliability for

the SCBE ranges from .78-.91. Test-retest reliability was found to be .78 to .86 at a 2-

week time period between tests. Internal consistency was calculated for this instrument

using Cronbach's alpha coefficient which ranged from .80 to .92 (LaFreniere & Dumas,

1996). For this particular study, the alpha coefficient (n= 20) was .91 for the ten items

that make up the social competence subscale. Refer to Appendix B for sample items

from the SCBE-30 teacher report scale.

  Social Competence (parent report). The parent report version of the previously

mentioned instrument, the SCBE-30 parent version, will be used to measure parental

perceptions of their children's social competence. This instrument has been adapted from

the teacher report SCBE and has similar reliability and validity results, including internal

consistency and construct validity (Kotler & McMahon, 2002). For this study, the alpha

coefficient was calculated as .78 for the ten social competence items. Refer to Appendix

B for sample items from the SCBE-30 teacher report scale (parallel items were used for

the parent report scale.)

Chapter IV

Findings

The study examined the relationship between a mother's friendships and her child's social competence in preschool.

Methods of Data Analysis

A correlational design was used to determine the relationship between parental friendships and preschool-aged children's social competence. To test the first hypothesis, a bivariate correlation was run between a composite variable composed of the twenty items on the PSS-Fr which assesses a parent's perceived support received from friendships and a second composite variable that sums the ten items concerning the child's social competence on the SCBE-30 (both parent and teacher rating). The second hypothesis was tested by running a correlation between a parent's number of friends and the variable concerning a child's social competence (both parent and teacher rating). Each of these correlations is based on a sample size of n=32. Significance levels are based on a one tailed significance test where p < .05 demonstrates significant correlations.

In addition to the correlations, reliability Alphas for each instrument used in the study, the Perceived Social Support Scale-Friends and the Social Competence and Behavior Scale (both parent and teacher versions), were calculated. Each scale was examined with "alpha if item deleted" option, and showed that no one item would affect the reliability coefficient significantly.

Descriptive Analyses

The final study sample consisted of fifteen girls (47%) and seventeen boys (53%), their mothers, and each participating child's preschool teacher. The children ranged in age from 38-59 months, with a mean age of 48 months. The majority of children (63%) were Caucasian, 13% Asian/Pacific Islander, 6% African American, 6% Biracial, 6% Other, and 3% each Hispanic and Native American.

The mothers who participated in this study ranged in age from 25-44 years, with a mean age of 34 years. Of these mothers, 69% were Caucasian, 15.6% Asian/Pacific Islander, 6.3% each of African American and Hispanic and 3.1% Native American. Seventy-five percent reported that they worked full-time, 12.5% worked part-time and 12.5% were not employed outside the home. The majority of mothers who participated in this study reported their educational level as 13% as having had some college, 9% as having a two-year degree, 66% having a four-year degree, 9% having a Master's degree and 3% having a Doctoral degree. Forty-one percent of the mothers reported their total yearly household income as being between $50,000-90,000, 36% between $90,000-$150,000, 16% between $10,000-$50,000 and 6% reported more than 150,000. Child demographic information is reported in Table 1, mother information in Table 2.

The number of mothers' friends ranged from 1 to 15 with a mean of 6.75 and a standard deviation of 3.91. Descriptive statistics concerning the number of mothers' friends are reported in Table 3.

Interdomain Correlations. In addition to the four correlations directly related to the study hypotheses, two additional correlations are worth noting. The correlation between teacher report and parent report of children's social competence approached

significance (r = .356, p = .068).   Parents' number of friends and social support received

by their friends was significantly correlated (r = .311, p = .042). All correlations are

reported in Table 4.

Quantitative Analyses

Hypothesis 1. Parents' level of support received from their friendships (as

assessed by parent rating) will be positively related with child's level of social

competence (as assessed by parent and teacher ratings). Parents' level of support from

their friendships was not found to be significantly correlated with child's level of social

competence as reported by parent (r = .130, p = .239) or reported by his/her teacher (r =

.068, p = .356).

Hypothesis 2. The number of a parent's friends (as assessed by parent rating) will

be positively associated with child's level of social competence (as assessed by parent

and teacher ratings). The number of a parent's friends was not found to be significantly

correlated with the parent report of the child's social competence (r = .045, p = .403), but

was found to be significantly correlated with teacher report of child social competence (r

= .319, p = .038)

Chapter V

Conclusions

The focus of this study was to examine the relation between a parent's friendships (number of friends and support received from those friends) and her preschool child's social competence. Using data collected from families enrolled in preschool at Miss Helen's Private School in Tulsa, Oklahoma, this relation was examined by comparing reports from the Perceived Social Support Scale – Friends (Procidano & Heller, 1983) and both parent and teacher report versions of the Social Competence and Behavior Evlauation – 30 (LaFrienere & Dumas, 1996) using bivariate correlations.

Summary of Results

The current study examined the number of a parent's friends, support felt by those friendships, and child social competence. The results showed a significant relation between a parent's number of friends and teacher reported social competence in preschool. No other significant results related to the study hypotheses were found. An additional correlation showed a significant relationship between the number of a mother's friends and the support she receives from those friendships.

Comparison of Results with Past Studies. In a 2001 study, Uhlendorff found that children ages 7 to 12 years old had friendship network sizes positively related to the size of their parent's networks. This study suggested that the size of a parental friendship network, or the number of friends a parent has, is an important factor in a child's own number of friendships. Similarly, the results of this study showed that the number of a

parent's friends was positively related to a child's social competence in the classroom, as reported by his/her teacher. These findings are consistent with Uhlendorff's assertion that the number of a parent's friendships influence children's social development. The current study furthers this finding by suggesting that the number of parent's friendships specifically influences a child's social competence as viewed by his/her teacher.

Swick and Hassell (1990) found that parental interpersonal support was positively related to preschool children's social competence. However the results of the current study found no significant relationship between parental support and children's social competence. This discrepancy could be attributed to the fact that the Swick and Hassell's study included various forms of interpersonal support including friends, family members, and community resources, and the current study narrowed the interpersonal support variable to include only support provided by friendships.

In a 1996 study, Doyle and Markiewicz found that maternal friendship quality was linked with children's participation in friendships (age 8-12 years). Specifically, mothers who felt their own best friends provided stimulating ideas and activities were more likely to have children with a best friend. The current study found little support for this finding. The results showed no correlation between the support a mother felt from her friendships and her child's social competence. This conflicting finding could be explained by differences in variables. For example, the current study looked at overall friendship support as opposed to the support felt by a mother's best friend, and examined overall social competence as opposed to whether or not the child had a best friend. The Doyle and Markiewicz study focused on children in middle childhood whose results could differ significantly from that of families with preschool children.

Limitations

Possible biases of the sample used for the current study impact its level of generalizability and include socioeconomic status, level of parental involvement, and quality of education. Miss Helen's is a private school which charges monthly tuition, so most children who attend are from families with middle to high socioeconomic backgrounds. Also, parents who pay tuition seem to be more involved in the education of their children which may positively affect sample size but may cause bias when compared to parental involvement of families of children who attend non-private preschools. Since the children in the sample are all enrolled in the same preschool, it will be difficult to generalize outside of that school. The children are all receiving essentially the same quality of educational experiences and the same types of social environment which may differ considerably from those of children in other schools. In addition, other family types, such as stay at home mothers with preschoolers, may have far different results than those of the participants in this study because of the increased time they spend with their children, which increases the child's opportunities to observe parent/friend interactions.

Further Considerations

Since there is little published research in the area of parental friendships, especially concerning the effects of parental friendships on child development in the early years, more studies in this area are needed to further clarify this relationship. Because this study utilized a sample of children and families attending private school, (a non-random sample), additional research will be needed to determine whether the findings from this study are replicated with geographical, cultural, and socio-economically variant

families. Results of studies sampling children from more diverse settings including child care centers, public preschools, and children who do not attend preschool outside of the home could vary significantly. It is possible that this type of sample would produce more diverse group of participants in terms of ethnicity, income, and family structure. Larger sample size overall with a more diverse group of children and parents would be recommended for future studies.

Due to low participation, father data was excluded in this study. Since little is known about the effects of fathers' friendships on children's social competence future studies in this area should include father variables or father report information concerning their friendships. Another interesting area of future research is the issue of gender. Future studies should consider whether the effects of parental friendships vary between boys and girls, and whether mother or father friendships are more influential (Simpkins & Parke, 2001).

Due to the limited amount of research available concerning the effects of parental friendships on children's social development, the majority of the studies described throughout this paper used a sample of older children. More research needs to be conducted using preschool children in order to accurately explain the effects of parental friendships on children's social development.

Implications for Research

The implications for research in the area of familial influences on children's social development for professionals, teachers, researchers, families and others who work with families is to better understand the relationship between parental friendships and their children's resulting development. The most important finding from the current study

is that parents with more friends seem to have children who are more socially competent in their preschool classrooms, as viewed by their preschool teachers. This could be because the parent is modeling a variety of different friendship behaviors to his/her children and adapting those behaviors to different friends. Another possible explanation is that parents of preschoolers may need a large support system of friends in order to feel supported as parents because of the stresses of having young children. It is possible that friends provide alternative types of support not measured in the current study. Parents who have a variety of friends who provide support to them as parents are likely to have children with more positive social outcomes.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Tables

Table 1

Summary of Child Demographic Variables (n=32)

Variable	Frequency
Child's Age (months)	
36-39	3 (9.4%)
40-43	3 (9.4%)
44-47	11 (34.4%)
48-51	5 (15.6%)
52-55	6 (18.7%)
56-59	4 (12.5%)
Child's Gender	
Female	15 (46.9%)
Male	17 (53.1%)
Child's Ethnicity	
Asian/Pacific Islander	4 (12.5%)
African American	2 (6.3%)
Hispanic	1 (3.1%)
Native American	1 (3.1%)
Biracial/Multiracial	2 (6.3%)
White	20 (62.5%)
Other	2 (6.3%)

Table 2

Summary of Mother Demographic Variables (n=32)

Variable	Frequency
Mother's Age (years)	
20-30	9 (28%)
31-40	21 (66%)
41-50	2 (6%)
Marital Status	
Never Married	3 (9.4%)
Married	24 (74%)
Divorced	5 (15.6%)
Ethnicity	
Asian/Pacific Islander	5 (15.6%)
African American	2 (6.3%)
Hispanic	2 (6.3%)
Native American	1 (3.1%)
White	22 (68.8%)
Employment Status	
Part-time	4 (12.5%)
Fill-time	24 (75%)
Not Employed	4 (12.5%)
Highest Level of Education	
Some college	4 (12.5%)
Two-year degree	3 (9.4%)
Four-year degree	21 (65.6%)
Masters degree	3 (9.4%)
Doctoral degree	1 (3.1%)
Yearly Household Income	
$10,000-$49,999	5 (15.36%)
$50,000-$89,999	13 (40.63%)
$90,000-$149,999	12 (37.5%)
More than $150,000	2 (6.3%)

Table 3

Summary of Number of Parents' Friends (n=32)

Number of Friends	Frequency
1	2 (6.3%)
2	2 (6.3%)
3	4 (12.5%)
4	2 (6.3%)
5	4 (12.5%)
6	4 (12.5%)
8	5 (15.6%)
9	2 (6.3%)
10	1 (3.1%)
11	1 (3.1%)
12	1 (3.1%)
13	2 (6.3%)
14	1 (3.1%)
15	2 (6.3%)

*Number of friends range from 1-15 with a mean of 6.75 and a standard deviation of 3.91.

Table 4

Summary of One-Tailed Pearson Correlations (n=32)

		Parental Support	Number Friends	Parent Report Social Competence	Teacher Report Social Competence
Parental Support	r	1.00	.311*	.130	.068
	p	--	.042	.239	.356
Number Friends	r	.311*	1.00	.045	.319*
	p	.042	--	.403	.038
Parent Report Social Competence	r	.130	.045	1.00	.270
	p	.239	.403	--	.068
Teacher Report Social Competence	r	.068	.319*	.270	1.00
	p	.356	.038	.068	--

*p<.05
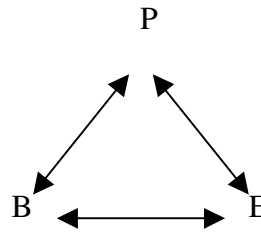
APPENDIX B

Figures

Figure 1
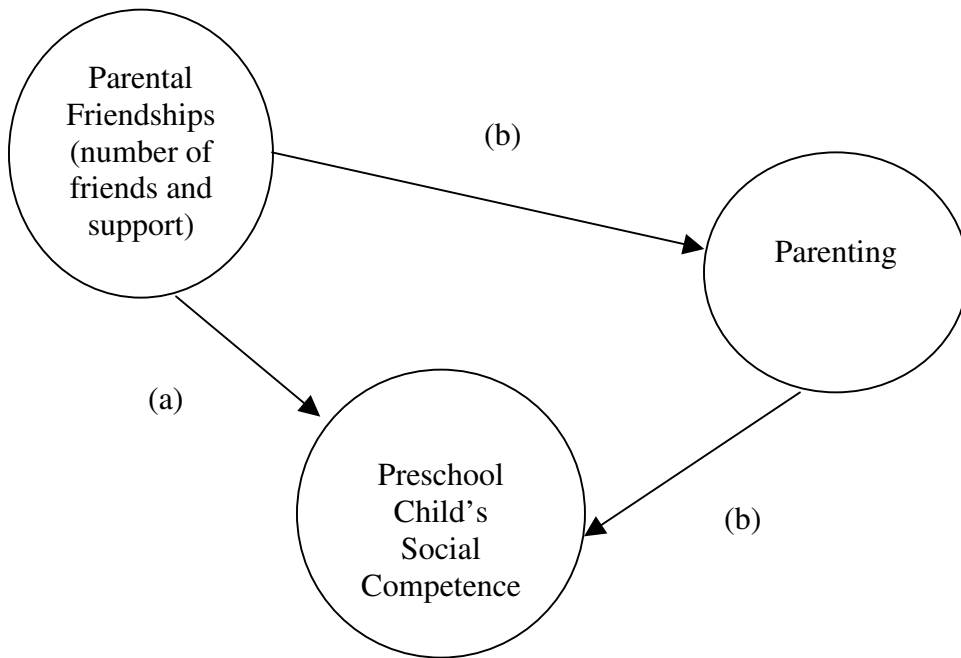
Relations between Main Topics of Literature Review

Path (a) - Modeling of friendship behaviors
Path (b) - Indirect effect of parental friendships on social competence via parenting

Figure 2

Triadic Reciprocal Determinism
Adapted from Vasta (1992)

APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Child Information	

Age: _____ Years _____ Months   **Gender:**   Male   Female

Ethnicity/Race: Asian/Pacific Islander   African American   Hispanic

Native American   Biracial/Multiracial   White

Other:

Mother Information	

Relationship to child: Mother   Stepmother

Age: _____ Years

Ethnicity/Race: Asian/Pacific Islander   African American   Hispanic

Native American   Biracial/Multiracial   White

Other: _____

Current Yearly Household Income:

Less than $10,000 $10,000-$29,999 $30,000-$49,999 $50,000-$69,999

$70,000-$89,999 $90,000-$109,999 $110,000-$149,000   More than $150,000

Employment Status: Part-time   Full-time   Not Employed Outside of Home

Current Marital Status: Never Married   Married   Separated

                              Divorced   Widowed

Highest Level of Education Completed:

Less than High School   High School   Vocational School   Some College

Two-Year degree   Four-Year Degree   Master's Degree   Doctoral Degree

Father Information

Relationship to child: Father   Stepfather

Age: ____ Years

Ethnicity/Race: Asian/Pacific Islander   African American   Hispanic

                              Native American   Biracial/Multiracial   White

Other: _____

Employment Status: Part-time   Full-time   Not Employed Outside of Home

Current Marital Status: Never Married   Married   Separated

                              Divorced   Widowed

Highest Level of Education Completed:

Less than High School   High School   Vocational School   Some College

Two-Year degree   Four-Year Degree   Master's Degree   Doctoral Degree

APPENDIX D

Perceived Social Support Scale-Friends

The following statements refer to feelings and experiences that occur to most people at one time or another in their relationships with friends. For each statement there are three possible answers: Yes, No, Don't know. Please circle the answer you choose for each item.

Yes   No   Don't know   1. My friends give me the moral
                                                support I need.

Yes   No   Don't know   2. Most other people are closer to
                                                their friends than I am.

Yes   No   Don't know   3. My friends enjoy hearing about
                                                what I think.

Yes   No   Don't know   4. Certain friends come to me when
                                                they have problems or need
                                                advice.

Yes   No   Don't know   5. I rely on my friends for emotional
                                                support.

Yes   No   Don't know   6. If I felt that one or more of my
                                                friends were upset with me, I'd
                                                just keep it to myself.

Yes   No   Don't know   7. I feel that I'm on the fringe in my
                                                circle of friends.

Yes   No   Don't know   8. There is a friend I could go to if I
                                                were just feeling down, without
                                                feeling funny about it later.

Yes   No   Don't know   9.My friends and I are very open about
                                                what we think about things.

Yes	No	Don't know	10. My friends are sensitive to my personal needs.
Yes	No	Don't know	11. My friends come to me for emotional support.
Yes	No	Don't know	12. My friends are good at helping me solve problems.
Yes	No	Don't know	13. I have a deep sharing relationship with a number of friends.
Yes	No	Don't know	14. My friends get good ideas about how to do things or make things for me.
Yes	No	Don't know	15. When I confide in friends, it makes me feel uncomfortable.
Yes	No	Don't know	16. My friends seek me out for companionship.
Yes	No	Don't know	17. I think that my friends feel that I am good at helping them solve problems.
Yes	No	Don't know	18. Other people's friend relationships are more intimate than mine.
Yes	No	Don't know	19. I've recently gotten a good idea about how to do something from a friend.
Yes	No	Don't know	20. I wish my friends were much different.

Procidano, M. E., & Heller, K. (1983). Measures of perceived support from friends and family: Three validation studies. American Journal of Community Psychology, 11, 1-24.

Please list your current friends that your children have the opportunity to observe you interacting with. Friends that you only have e-mail or telephone contact with, or see only in situations where your child is not present (i.e. work) would not be listed. Use first names or initials, and then indicate the frequency of contact you have with that person, as in the following example.

Frequency of contact:

1. Daily   5. Once a month
2. 2-3 times per week   6. Once every couple of months
3. Once a week   7. Less than once every six months
4. Once every two weeks

First name or initials	**Frequency of contact**
1. _____C. B._____	_____5_____
2. _____Mary_____	_____2_____

You *not* have to use all 15 spaces. Use as many spaces as you have friends. Spouses or significant others will not be listed.

First name or initials	**Frequency of contact**
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____
6. _____	_____
7. _____	_____
8. _____	_____
9. _____	_____
10. _____	_____
11. _____	_____
12. _____	_____
13. _____	_____
14. _____	_____
15. _____	_____

APPENDIX E

SCBE-30 Teacher Report Form (Sample Items)
Peter J. LaFreniere, Ph. D.

Here is a list of behaviors that you may observe when the child is in your care. Please circle the number that reflects the frequency of the behavior that you observe for the child according to the following continuum: The behavior occurs NEVER (1) SOMETIMES (2 or 3) OFTEN (4 or 5) or ALWAYS (6). For those exceptional cases that are impossible to evaluate please check CANNOT EVALUATE.

		Never	Sometimes	Often	Always	Cannot Evaluate
1.	Negotiates solutions to conflicts with other children	1	2 3	4 5	6	____
11.	Accepts compromises when reasons are given	1	2 3	4 5	6	____
17.	Cooperates with other children in group activities	1	2 3	4 5	6	____
20.	Shares toys with other children	1	2 3	4 5	6	____
30.	Takes pleasure in own accomplishments	1	2 3	4 5	6	____

APPENDIX F

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Friday, May 13, 2005

IRB Application No   HE0560

Proposal Title: The Link Between Parental Friendships and Social Competence in Preschool Children

Reviewed and   Expedited
Processed as:

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved   Protocol Expires: 5/12/2006

Principal
Investigator(s

Stacy Burrows   Stacy Thompson
7845 S. Yale Apt. D.   338 HES
Tulsa, OK 74136   Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

☒ The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Beth McTernan in 415 Whitehurst (phone: 405-744-5700, emct@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

Sue C. Jacobs, Chair
Institutional Review Board

VITA

Stacy J. Burrows

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: THE LINK BETWEEN PARENTAL FRIENDSHIPS AND SOCIAL
            COMPETENCE IN PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

Major Field: Human Development and Family Science

Biographical:

    Personal Data: Born in Talihina, Oklahoma, on April 7, 1980, the daughter of
        Steve and Ruth Burrows.

    Education: Graduated from Owasso High School, Owasso, Oklahoma, May
        1998; Received Bachelor of Science Degree in Family Relations and Child
        Development from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma,
        May, 2002. Completed the requirements for the Master of Science Degree
        with a major in Human Development and Family Science at Oklahoma
        State University, July, 2005.

    Experience: Preschool Teacher, Miss Helen's Private School, Tulsa, Oklahoma,
        Fall 2002-present; Child Development Specialist Intern, Tulsa Health
        Department and Sooner Start, Tulsa, Oklahoma, Summer 2004.

Name: Stacy J. Burrows   Date of Degree: July, 2005

Institution: Oklahoma State University   Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: THE LINK BETWEEN PARENTAL FRIENDSHIPS AND SOCIAL
        COMPETENCE IN PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

Pages in Study: 63   Candidate for the Degree of Master of Science

Major Field: Human Development and Family Science

Scope and Method of Study: The current study examined the relation between a mother's
    friendships and her child's social competence in preschool. The number of a
    mother's friends, and the support felt by those friendships, was compared to her
    preschool child's social competence using bivariate correlations. Parents of 3 and
    4-year-old preschool children in Tulsa, Oklahoma were asked to complete the
    Perceived Social Support Scale-Friends and the parent report version of the Social
    Competence and Behavior Evaluation-30. The child's preschool teacher
    completed the teacher version of the SCBE-30. The majority of the sample was
    White (62.5%) and reported yearly household income as at least $50,000.

Findings and Conclusions: Results showed a significant relation between the number of
    a mother's friends and the teacher reported social competence of the child in
    preschool. No other significant results related to the study hypotheses were
    found. An additional correlation showed a significant relation between the
    number of a mother's friends and the support she receives from those friendships.
    The results of the current study support the findings of previous studies that
    suggest that the size of a parent's social network (which includes friendships) has
    an impact on their child's social development. This study looked specifically at
    parental friendships as opposed to size and support of the parental social network
    as a whole.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: _Dr. Stacy Thompson_____