

**Group Entry as it Relates to Various Elements of Adjustment:  
Exploring a Domineering Group Entry Style**

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## Abstract

Group entry behavior is essential to and even diagnostic of social competence (Dodge, Schlundt, Schocken & Delugach, 1983). It thus has important consequences for social adjustment, including peer acceptance and the ramifications of peer rejection. However, group entry has not been studied among adolescents and seldom in the context of school peer groups. The current inquiry, involving a compilation of self report and peer report questionnaires, examined distinct group entry styles identified by previous literature in a sample of 202 male high school students. This endeavor investigated implications of group entry style on social preference, social power, perceived popularity, relational aggression, and delinquency. Moreover, the study focused on exploring a heretofore overlooked style of pushy, domineering group entry that may or not be erratic but also may be skillful. Though hypotheses were supported modestly at best, this work prompts important questions – both concerning the growing body of knowledge about social development and the methodology used – addressed in the discussion section.

### Group Entry as it Relates to Various Elements of Adjustment:

#### Exploring a Domineering Group Entry Style

School social atmosphere has a far-reaching and enduring influence on social development (Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 2006). Numerous developmental milestones emphasize the importance of studying social development in youth and adolescence specifically. By adolescence, friends equal or eclipse parents as the main source of advice and support (Brown, 2004; Bukowski, Newcomb, & Hartup, 1998). Even excluding class time, adolescents spend 29% of their time awake with peers, more than double the time they interact with parents or other adults (13%; Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984). These less supervised interactions occur in peer groups larger than in childhood (Rubin et al., 2006). Emerging cliques consist of members who are similar in areas such as academic achievement, substance abuse, and delinquency (e.g., Kiesner, Poulin, & Nicotra, 2003). Clique membership, like individual friendships, has been shown to contribute to adolescents' psychological well-being and coping ability (Hansell, 1981). Adolescence is further complicated by the characteristic sharp increase in desire for peer acceptance and popularity at the group level (Kuttler, Parker, & La Greca, 2002), elevated concern about maintaining peer relationships (Parkhurst & Hopmeyer, 1998), the surge in bullying and victimization (Espelage, Bosworth, & Simon, 2000), and the beginning of romantic relationships (Carver, Joyner, & Udry, 2003).

Throughout adolescence, aggression becomes less overt and physical; gradually, as the capacity to use social power becomes more sophisticated, adolescents engage in more verbal and relational aggression, such as insults, derogation, threats, and gossip (Kuttler et al., 2002). Deviancy training and peer coercion reach a peak in adolescence (e.g.,

Dishion, McCord, & Poulin, 1999; Snyder et al., 2008). Conflict begins to revolve less around resources or territory and can focus on other people specifically (NICHD, 2001; Olweus, 1984). Changes have a more intensified impact on adolescents because of their stage in neurological development. Adolescents experience less activation in the brain regions that govern the emotional response to social exclusion (Bolling et al., 2011). Consequently, peer rejection during adolescence may trigger a particularly high level of distress, with which adolescents are poorly equipped to cope due to their unique neurological profile (Masten et al., 2009; Sebastian, Viding, Williams, & Blakemore, 2010).

Changes in social rejection and victimization among adolescents are paralleled by developments in prosocial behavior and standards for normative, healthy friendships (See Dodge, Coie, & Lynam, 2006 for a review). Similar to the way in which bullies' choose more specific targets, adolescent friendships become stable (Berndt, Hawkins, & Hoyle, 1986). In addition, adolescents perform more acts of generosity, helpfulness, and cooperation than younger children (Eisenberg, Fabes, & Spinrad, 2007). Particularly relevant to this study is the evolution in adolescents' understanding of friendship (Hartup & Stevens, 1997). Overall, children view friendship as instrumental. However, adolescents begin to incorporate shared values and social understanding into their notion of friendship (Berndt, 1996). In addition to the importance of instrumentality in friendship, adolescents acknowledge both instrumental and relationship-oriented aspects including loyalty, self-disclosure, and trust (Pinto, Bombi, & Cordoli, 1997). These friendships are best maintained when those involved have similar attitudes, aspirations, and intellect (e.g., Smollar & Youniss, 1982). While peer groups among younger children

are relatively unified, adolescent groups feature smaller, differentiated clusters within the larger group (Bagwell, Coie, Terry, & Lochman, 2000). Adolescent relationships are shaped by processes such as co-rumination (Rose, 2002).

Findings from the research on deviancy training and the increased specificity of friendships (Rubin et al., 2006) and victimization (Olweus, 1984) suggest that social roles of adolescents are relatively stable. Indeed, personality traits have been found to become more stable through adolescence (Stein, Newcomb, Bentler, 1986). This new consistency is augmented by adolescents' changing perception of their peers; while young adolescents attend to specific behavioral tendencies, older adolescents focus on more consistent, thus more telling, dispositional characteristics and values (O'Brien & Bierman, 1987). These aspects of social development – in the individual, within the dyad, and in the group – have an impact on the nature of adolescent social groups.

### **Studying Groups**

The study of peer groups is an intricate endeavor, since complexities exist within individuals, interactions, relationships and groups, which can be imagined as concentric circles (Bronfenbrenner, 1944; Hinde, 1979). Each milieu has a certain amount of stability and also bears significant influence on other levels (Hinde, 1987). There is value to analyzing interactions within the same level (e.g., between individuals); however, a much richer understanding of the social environment emerges from examining each level in the context of other levels. For example, an integral part of Bandura's (1986) social cognitive learning theory is the dynamic interplay between one's actions and environmental responses that either reinforce or punish behavior. Craig and Pepler (1995, 1997) emphasize bullying as a group phenomenon in their analysis of bystander behavior.

Salmivalli, Huttunen, and Lagerspetz (1997) characterized numerous additional social roles within the group in bullying scenarios. Even studies of victimization on the dyadic level have insisted on the importance of group factors – such as prominence in the group (Pellegrini, 2002), homophily (Espelage, Holt, & Henkel, 2003), and peer affiliation (Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, Osterman, & Kaukiainen, 1996). By the same token, Bukowski, Sippola, & Newcomb (2000) recognize peer affiliation, even on the dyad level, as shaped by the surrounding group factors. Similarly, individual characteristics (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002) and best friendships (Hodges, Boivin, Vitaro, & Bukowski, 1999) have been shown to impact the expression of group influence. For a review of the history of peer group research and development of current methods, see Rubin et al. (2006). Group factors have been found to influence group entry behavior and bid success. These include: group size (Putallaz & Wasserman, 1989), status of group members (Gelb & Jacobson, 1988), and group psychological state (Zarbatany & Pepper, 1996).

### **Peer Acceptance vs. Popularity**

Peer acceptance and rejection are two of the most salient variables relevant to studying groups. It is crucial to mention the distinction made between peer acceptance or sociometric popularity and popularity or perceived popularity. The former refers to the extent to which an individual is liked by his or her peers on the dyad level, and the latter is focuses on how popular an individual is seen as by their peers.

Psychologists have measured sociometric popularity in two ways. One involves obtaining the number of times an individual is nominated as liked most and liked least and categorizing them based on their total votes for each. Specifically, votes for liked

least are subtracted from votes for liked most. Those who receive a lot of votes for being most liked and few for being liked least are considered to have high social preference and are classified as sociometrically popular. Conversely, those who garner many votes for being liked least and few for being liked most are viewed as having low social preference and are categorized as rejected. Subjects who receive similar scores for being liked most and liked least have average scores of social preference. Those who receive few votes on either liked most or like least are deemed neglected while those who receive many votes in both categories are deemed controversial. Sociometric popularity or social preference can also be measured by computing a continuous variable for the votes they received. The number of votes obtained for being liked least is subtracted from the number of nominations for being liked most. The difference is used as the individual's social preference score. A higher score indicates higher social preference (i.e., greater sociometric popularity), whereas a lower score indicates low social preference (i.e., greater sociometric rejection).

On the other hand, when this paper refers to popularity, it refers to a separate construct. The convention is to reserve the term for perceived status at the group level and assess it by asking directly: "Is he popular?" (LaFontana & Cillessen, 1998; Parkhurst & Hopmeyer, 1998). The implicit argument, which has been empirically supported, is that being liked and being popular constitute different phenomena that have distinct antecedents and distinct consequences (e.g., Bukowski, 2003).

### **Approach-Avoidance Motivation & Group Entry**

For adolescents, social preference and perceived popularity are key social resources that motivate behavior. The study of motivation in general is essential to understanding

social development, inasmuch as it often determines social behavior. Research has testified to its particular relevance for students, teachers, and administrators at any educational level (e.g., Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). Motivation has been defined as the energization or instigation combined with direction of behavior that dictates most behaviors (Elliot, 1997). Though students possess a wide range of individual differences (Rubin, Lynch, Coplan, Rose-Krasnor, & Booth, 1994), most behaviors stem from the desire for either approach or avoidance (Higgins, 1997). The approach-avoidance distinction, which dates back over two thousand years (see Elliot & Covington, 2001 for a review), is considered to be the basis for all other motivational distinctions and constitutes a popular area of contemporary research (Elliot, 1997). Approach can be defined as the “energization of behavior by, or the direction of behavior toward, positive stimuli (objects, events, possibilities), whereas avoidance may be defined as the energization of behavior by, or the direction of behavior away from, negative stimuli (objects, events, possibilities)” (Elliot, 2006, p. 112; for comprehensive reviews of approach-avoidance see Carver & White, 1994; Depue 1995; Gray, 1972, 1981, 1990; Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003).

The approach-avoidance motivation for social rewards features prominently in group entry, the behavior that individuals use to join ongoing activity between peers (Putallaz & Wasserman, 1990). Group entry represents a critical social approach task in that it is the prerequisite to any social interaction and cultivating positive relationships. The ability to join groups plays a major role in first impressions, which develop quickly (Asch, 1946; Miers, Blöte, & Westenberg, 2010) and can heavily influence the overall relationship to the group or one’s social standing (i.e., sociometric popularity and

perceived popularity; Sunnafrank & Ramirez, 2004). Effective group entry ensures group membership and further affiliation, while those who use ineffective group entry tactics are spurned by the group, have less opportunity for social activity, and are likely to earn a poor reputation among their peers (Putallaz & Wasserman, 1990; Zaratany, van Brunshot, Meadows, & Pepper, 1996). Group entry has been included in comprehensive measures of social competence (e.g., Waters & Sroufe, 1983) because it relies on effective emotion regulation and numerous social skills (Green & Rechis, 2006; Newcomb, Bukowski, & Pattee, 1993; Ronk, Hund, & Landau, 2011). Indeed, entry bids must be made in a well-timed and socially appropriate way (Wilson, 1999). The finding that even children nominated as well-liked are often rebuffed, led psychologists to declare that group entry constitutes a daunting task even to those who are socially skilled and well-liked (Corsaro, 1981; Garvey, 1984; Putallaz & Gottman 1981). Poor group entry skills limit social experiences and opportunities for learning social skills through observing other children's behavior (Hartup, 1989).

### **Group Entry**

The success of group entry bids has been shown to depend on prior sociometric popularity regardless of entry strategy chosen – attempts of disliked children are more likely to be rebuffed or ignored than their well-liked counterparts (Putallaz & Gottman, 1981). However, studies have implicated group entry skill as diagnostic of social competence, sociometric popularity, and other indicators of well-being and adjustment (e.g., Dirks, Treat, & Weersing, 2007; Dodge, Pettit, McClaskey, & Brown, 1986; Dodge, Schlundt, Schocken & Delugach, 1983; Putallaz, 1983; Putallaz & Wasserman, 1990). Group entry is a defining difference between socially accepted and rejected

children (Dodge, McClaskey, & Feldman, 1985; Putallaz & Wasserman, 1989). The importance of this finding cannot be understated; poor sociometric status in childhood is related to major behavioral, academic, and psychological difficulties both concurrent and long-term (e.g., Hartup, 1983; Parker & Asher, 1987; Putallaz & Dunn, 1990). Accordingly, interventions have prioritized teaching children more adaptive strategies to enter groups (e.g., Leff et al., 2010).

Methods of group entry found to be successful tend to echo prevalent formulations of social competence in that they require an awareness of the group members' common "frame of reference" and conform to general social norms (Phillips, Shenker, & Revitz, 1951). Others have called this pattern of peer affiliation "homophily" (Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1954). Definitions of friendship bear similarity to the notion of frame of reference. For example, Suttles (1970) asserted that common cultural symbol and social norms are essential to long-term friendship. According to Phillips et al. (1951), children successfully join groups by identifying a group's frame of reference. Research has supported Phillips et al.'s (1951) hypotheses: well-liked children are better able than less well-liked children to identify the group's frame of reference (Dodge et al., 1986; Dodge et al., 1983; Putallaz, 1983; Putallaz & Gottman, 1981).

After identifying the frame of reference, individuals must demonstrate that they too belong in the group's frame of reference by conversing and acting in a manner congruent with the prevailing social norms and activity of the group (Phillips et al., 1951). The ability to do so has also been found to relate to social status (Dodge et al., 1983; Ronk et al., 2011). Forbes and Lubin (1979) found sociometric popularity to be predicted by socially relevant behavior. Accordingly, Dirks et al. (2007) depicts the competent child as

engaging in social behavior that aligns with the ongoing activity of the group and appropriately matches the situation thereby preserving the frame of reference and smoothly integrating. Hence, Phillips et al. (1951) proposed that efforts to influence or lead the group's activities should only be made after demonstrating one's position in the frame of reference. Social rejection thus results from breaching the frame of reference making premature attempts to direct the group, self referential statements, statements irrelevant to the frame of reference, or opposing a member of the group's nucleus (Putallaz & Gottman, 1981). Research has confirmed this claim as well; individuals who succeed in establishing their place in the frame of reference are typically accepted, whereas those who fail are typically rejected (Dodge et al., 1983; Putallaz & Wasserman, 1990). In Wilson's (1999) study of developmentally delayed children, she emphasizes the discrete steps of recognizing the frame of reference and attempts to enter it. She found that delayed children, have no deficiency in identifying a group's frame of reference, but can be marginalized because they are intrusive in their group entry (Kopp, Baker, & Brown, 1992).

### **Categories of Entry Behavior**

Several major, distinct styles of group entry behavior have emerged from the literature. Dodge et al. (1983) classify and define these styles as sequences of tactics and strategies used to enter groups. Children who are typically rejected (Putallaz & Wasserman, 1990) engage in entry styles that can be classified as either passively or actively placing them outside the frame of reference. Some individuals seldom approach the peer group. Instead, they withdraw. Better understood as a lack of group entry behavior, this withdrawn style involves remaining completely reserved from social

activity. Since they are foreign to the frame of reference, it should be no surprise that these children experience poor sociometric status and are neglected (Newcomb et al., 1993). Another passive strategy found to be common among sociometrically unpopular children is “hovering” (Gottman, 1977), which consists of observing the group within close physical proximity to it without actually engaging it. Children who do this are usually ignored or rejected as they passively reveal that they have no claim to the group’s frame of reference (Putallaz & Wasserman, 1990). At the other end of the spectrum of rejected children, controlling children impede the group’s activity by diverting attention to themselves or by trying to control the activity. These pushy behaviors ignore the frame of reference and often violate conventional social rules. They are often poorly timed – recall that apt group entry behavior adheres to a sequence of socially acceptable behaviors. As outlined by Phillips et al. (1951) and Putallaz & Wasserman (1990), individuals must first discern the frame of reference and only then should they attempt group entry. Those who employ this domineering, self-referent strategy are typically rejected (Dodge et al., 1983; Putallaz, 1983; Dodge, Pettit, McClaskey, & Brown, 1987; Putallaz & Gottman, 1981).

The difference between successful and unsuccessful group entry can be summarized by expounding upon the finding of Rotheram (1987) that an assertive but non-controlling approach to interpersonal problem solving was related to social competence and peer acceptance. Group entry requires participation in the group’s activity that is agentic but not pushy. However, a child will fail to join the group if he or she 1) lacks the ability to join the group and refrains from social activity, or 2) due to wanton violation of social norms, is unable to preserve the group’s frame of reference;

both constitute socially incompetent behavior (Putallaz & Wasserman, 1990). As well, Bierman, Smoot, and Aumiller (1993) found the main difference between aggressive, sociometrically popular and rejected, unpopular children to be the latter group's disruptive and inattentive tendencies. In fact, well-liked children are not necessarily more likely to conform to the group's social norms, activities, or expectations; they are simply less likely to act disruptively and more likely to act in a relevant way (Forbes & Lubin, 1979). Children who use a domineering strategy are rejected because they engage in incongruous behaviors (e.g., disrupting, drawing excessive attention, referring to irrelevant details, or abruptly engaging in high-risk behaviors), whereas the passive child who hovers or remains withdrawn is ignored because they fail to demonstrate their sharing in the frame of reference (Dodge et al., 1983; 1986; Putallaz 1983; Putallaz and Gottman, 1981). The first aim of this study is to replicate in an adolescent subject pool the trend of group entry research – that participants with poor sociometric status will score high on social withdrawn, hovering, and controlling entry behavior and those with favorable sociometric status will score high on assertive but not domineering entry behavior.

### **Consequences of Low Social Preference and Social Rejection**

Social rejection in youth has been identified as one of the most consequential predictors of concurrent and future mental health difficulties (Mueller & Silverman, 1989), rendering the results of the first hypothesis very important. The social rejection faced by those with poor entry behavior is steady (Parker and Asher, 1987) and nullifying undesirable social status can take longer than a year (de Boo & Prins, 2007). The generally high price of social rejection is compounded by the developmental changes that

occur during adolescence, especially the increased concern for popularity on the group level (Kuttler et al., 2002). As discussed earlier, adolescents use social aggression and are wont to manipulate peers with peer rejection either as a threat or as negative treatment (Asher & Coie, 1990). Excluded youth are more vulnerable to several effects of internalizing psychological maladjustment such as depression and anxiety (Graham, Bellmore, & Juvonen, 2003; Isaacs, Card, & Hodges, 2001; Juvonen, Graham, & Schuster, 2003; Rigby, 2000), as well as emotionality and social withdrawal (Abecassis, Hartup, Haselager, Scholte, & Van Lieshout, 2002). These outcomes are among the enduring negative consequences of rejection that extend into adulthood (e.g., Lev-Wiesel, Nuttman-Shwartz, & Sternberg, 2006; Prinstein, Cheah, & Guyer, 2005; Rigby, 2000). Rejection is also associated with aspects of floundering in school such as lower school performance, performance on intellectual tasks, aspiration level, school dropout, vocational competence, participation in social activities and less favorable attitudes toward school (Bagwell, Newcomb, & Bukowski, 1998; DeWall, Deckman, Pond & Bonser, 2011; Hymel, Comfort, Schonert-Reichl, & McDougall, 1996; Ladd, 1990). Additionally, rejected children have higher rates of conduct disorder, substance abuse, criminal offences, and teacher-rated behavioral problems than their non-rejected peers (e.g., Ollendick, Weist, Borden, & Greene, 1992). Socially rejected adolescents have been shown to be more angry, aggressive, and dysregulated in their behavior (DeWall et al., 2011; Prinstein & La Greca, 2004).<sup>1</sup> Targeted rejection has even been found to impact physiological health; ostracism impacts the immune system in ways that, if sustained,

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<sup>1</sup> These externalizing outcomes are examined in more depth in relation to the third hypothesis.

increase risk for later diabetes, heart disease, stroke, mental illness and some cancers (DeWall et al., 2011; Murphy, Slavich, Rohleder, & Miller, 2013). In fact, rejection affects many of the same brain regions involved in physical pain (Eisenberger, Lieberman, & Williams, 2003).

### **Domineering Group Entry, Relational Aggression, and Social Prominence**

Much of the group entry literature has examined behavior of socially competent children in order to chart the ideal sequence of group entry behavior that relates to most favorable outcomes in terms of psychosocial adjustment. In doing so, researchers have somewhat overlooked the need to profile the other three styles. This study investigated the controlling, domineering entry pattern.

As described above, individuals who engage in self-referent, pushy behaviors in entering groups are typically rejected (Dodge et al., 1983). This outcome is largely due to failure to skillfully align themselves with the ongoing activity of the group. Group entry is a particularly difficult task for most aggressive children because of their documented propensity for hyperactive, impulsive behavior that violates social norms (Bierman et al., 1993; Harmon-Jones, Barratt & Wigg, 1997). Teachers report that aggressive children exercise poorer entry strategies than other children, including other rejected peers (Volling, MacKinnon-Lewis, Rabiner & Baradaran, 1993). They have been shown to make more demands and pose fewer prosocial questions, engage in disruptive entry attempts, and call attention to themselves more frequently than they refer to the group (Dodge & Coie, 1987; Dodge et al., 1983; Putallaz, 1983; Putallaz & Gottman, 1981; Tryon & Keane, 1991). The erratic dysregulated behavior of aggressive-rejected individuals, which involves wanton violation of social norms, disrupts the group.

Consequently, peers perceive them as outside of their frame of reference and reject them (DeWall et al., 2011; Phillips et al., 1951; Prinstein & La Greca, 2004; Putallaz & Wasserman, 1990).

Much of the previous literature often falsely viewed aggression as dysregulated behavior by definition. Indeed, erratically aggressive children are not well-liked and experience numerous elements of social maladjustment (Putallaz & Wasserman, 1990). However, this study examines a different construct. Here, the focus is a domineering behavioral profile that is not necessarily dysregulated. Such people may use a dominant group entry style in which they push themselves into the group and try to take over in a manner that is not necessarily fraught with hyperactivity, impulsiveness, or other features of dysregulated behavior that would hinder group entry. Since these individuals impose themselves on the group with socially aggressive behavior, completely disregarding the groups' frame of reference, they may not be well-liked by individuals within the peer group (i.e., low social preference). However, their forceful attempts to enter social situations may even be skillful. Studies have shown that not all aggressive individuals are hyperactive and impulsive and that they are not necessarily deficient in conscientiousness (Pope, Bierman, & Mumma, 1991) or perspective taking (Chandler, 1973; Piaget, 1965). Due to their non-erratic, yet impactful behavior, they are likely to attain prominence in the peer group (LaFontana & Cillessen, 1998; Parkhurst & Hopmeyer, 1998). These individuals may be perceived as popular by their peers and carry major sway in their environment, termed social power – defined as the relative ability to control one's social environment by manipulating the states of others through the supplying or withholding of

resources (material or social) and through the administration of punishments (Keltner et al., 2003).

The aggression utilized by this sort of individual is not erratic; it may even be socially skillful. Hawley (2003) showed that people who attempt to control and manipulate the peer group may still be prominent within it. Within her sample of early adolescents, she identified a group of individuals whom she referred to as “bistrategic controllers” or “Machiavellians.” Despite their aggression, which made use of prosocial *and* coercive tactics, or perhaps *because* of their strategic aggression, these individuals were socially central; they had the highest levels of perceived popularity and social power in their peer group. Researchers had already realized the necessity of balancing both prosocial and coercive strategies for goal achievement (Coie, Dodge, Terry, & Wright, 1991; Olweus, 1993). Hawley’s (2003) findings echoed earlier studies in which popular children did not differ from children of other status groups on measures of aggression (Newcomb et al., 1993) and aggressive children were found to be no less socially prominent than non-aggressive children (Bagwell et al., 2000). Vaillancourt, Hymel, and McDougall (2003) found a subtype of bullies to be powerful and popular despite their aggressive behavior. Studies have shown that aggression can be viewed as socially acceptable (Coie, Terry, Zakriski, & Lochman, 1995) or even favorable (Boivin, Dodge, & Coie, 1995; Little, Brauner, Jones, Nock, & Hawley, 2003) depending on peer group norms and the situation, which emphasizes the importance of group frame of reference. Accordingly, Andreou (2006) found popularity to be predicted by both elevated social power and relational aggression; in her study, relational aggression was actually predicted by high scores in cognitive aspects of social competence. Indeed, the

group values an individual's aggressive behavior to the degree that the aggression promotes group goals (Hawley & Vaughn, 2003) and, in response to their functional aggression, the group promotes the individual within the group (Cillessen & Rose, 2005).

In short, this study focuses on a group entry style that involves aggressively taking control of the group. This agentic, action-oriented entry behavior is controlling but not necessarily dysregulated; in fact, it may reflect social skill. For socially prominent individuals, the focus of this study, a hallmark of their social power is their capability to use relational aggression to attain their goals, such as being pushy in order to join groups. Domineering group entry can thus be seen as an element of a set of behaviors that define relational aggression and yield social prominence. Social aggression prompts the peer group to accord influence to those who use it inasmuch as they promote the goals of the group, even though it is done in a controlling manner. This approach epitomizes social power. The social power and popularity obtained through relational aggression provides reinforcement for such behavior, which is then reused in order to control relationships and preserve status in a continuous cycle (Salmivalli et al., 1996). Therefore, it was anticipated that high scores in domineering group entry would be symptomatic of general relational aggression and individuals who employed such behaviors would possess elevated levels of social power and popularity, despite being not necessarily well liked by the peer group.

### **Rejection and Externalizing Delinquent Behavior**

One of the major correlates of peer rejection in youth is delinquent behavior (Kupersmidt, Coie, & Dodge, 1990). However, not all marginalized youth are at higher risk for negative consequences of rejection (Parker & Asher, 1987). Several studies

indicate heterogeneity amongst individuals who are rejected in adolescence (e.g., Cillessen, van Ijzendoorn, van Lieshout, & Hartup, 1992; French, 1988). Delinquency is associated with both aggression and with peer rejection (Coie, Lochman, Terry, & Hyman, 1992; Parker & Asher, 1987). Furthermore, highlighting the compounding effect of peer rejection and aggression, the combination of the two has been shown to predict – more accurately than each one alone – highest rates of behavioral problems (Bierman & Wargo, 1995), adolescent disorder (Coie et al., 1992), increases in externalizing behavior (Coie, Terry, Lenox, Lochman, & Hyman, 1995; Rubin, LeMare, & Lollis, 1990), delinquency (Kupersmidt, 1983; Miller-Johnson, Coie, Maumary-Gremaud, Lochman, & Terry, 1999) and generally poorer adjustment as assessed with teacher ratings (Coie, Lochman, Terry, & Lee, 1987). McDougall, Hymel, Vaillancourt, & Mercer (2001) review studies that found the best predictor for externalizing difficulties to be the combined effect aggression and rejection. Coie (1990) notes that aggressive-rejected individuals are especially delinquency prone, since peers rate their aggressive behavior as more sneaky and indirect than the aggressive behavior of rejected but unaggressive counterparts (Bierman, Smoot, & Aumiller, 1987).

Based on their surveys of effects of social rejection, Rubin et al. (1990) and Coie (1990) state that the combination of aggression and rejection is consistently an accurate predictor because the manner in which an individual is rejected can heavily influence the outcome experienced and even the type of disorder developed. While both withdrawal and rejection are correlated with risk for internalizing forms of disorder, such as depression, the interaction between the two has consistently been the best predictor of such difficulties (Boivin, Hymel, Bukowski, 1995). By the same token, externalizing

forms of disorder, such as delinquency, should be predicted best by rejection based on aggressive behavior. As articulated by Kupersmidt et al. (1990), aggressive individuals will be rejected by peers because of their aggression, which may subsequently manifest itself as delinquent behavior since aggression and delinquency belong to the same constellation of antisocial behaviors.

Some have explained this link by framing peer rejection as a “marker variable” that indicates risk from some more inclusive factor (Kupersmidt et al., 1990). For example, a genetic explanation would propose that the group detects a suspect element of a child, whereas a social learning view might regard the deficit in social skills as the common cause of peer rejection and maladaptive, delinquent behavior later in life. Alternatively, peer rejection could play a moderating or even causative role in the negative outcomes related to it. Social rejection may have the opposite influence of the buffering effect of peer acceptance, which enhances self-esteem and presents opportunities for proper social interaction (Garmezy, Masten, & Tellegen, 1984). In addition to being deprived of early opportunities for developing adaptive social behavior, rejection “induces internal reactions in the child that then lead to psychopathological or antisocial outcomes” (Kupersmidt et al., 1990, p. 292). Those who internalize feelings of inadequacy may be at more risk for affective disorders (Asher & Wheeler, 1985), whereas those who act against the peer group may be at risk for delinquency or antisocial disorders (Coie, Dodge, & Coppotelli, 1982). If this is true of peer groups in general, it should occur in group entry as well. Whether it is because domineering group entry is simply diagnostic of globally aggressive behavior, or because it limits beneficially socializing experiences, or because it generates a forceful rejection that rouses the

joiner's anger, those rejected for their domineering group behavior should be more likely to express more externalizing behavior, such as delinquency.

### **Current Study & Hypotheses**

Given the significance of group entry to general social competence, the relationship of group entry to peer acceptance and gravity of consequences of peer rejection, psychologists should consider group entry as a potentially important predictor of adjustment. This study examines how group entry relates to several key factors of adjustment, totaling three hypotheses.

- 1) It was expected that children who scored highly on distinct styles of group entry behavior would be rated with corresponding levels of sociometric status.  
  
Specifically, it was hypothesized that subjects with high social preference would score highly on an assertive but non-controlling middle ground of group entry, while those with low social preference would score highly on social withdrawal, hovering, or domineering group entry behavior (Dodge et al., 1983). In addition to social preference, the study also analyzed a peer reported number of friendships as an additional measure of being well liked.
- 2) Participants who score high in a domineering style of group entry behavior were expected to have engaged in higher levels of relational aggression, to be given more social power by their peers, and experience higher level of perceived popularity. Those who scored highly on withdrawn and hovering group entry were expected to engage in less relational aggression, be given less power by their peers, and experience less perceived popularity.

- 3) It was anticipated that particularly high levels of delinquent behavior would be found among participants who had poor social status and high scores in domineering group entry.

After examining data for these hypotheses, secondary analyses were computed for the first two hypotheses that used a more general peer report measure of skillful group entry style and an avoidant group entry style to predict the same outcomes – sociometric status, social power, relational aggression, and popularity.

Most of the research on group entry focuses on early childhood (Putallaz & Wasserman, 1990). Research has discussed numerous reasons why adolescents may encounter social rejection; nevertheless, group entry strategies have not been given much attention as explanations for it. Additionally, though studies connecting social rejection with delinquency do indicate multiple types of rejected adolescents, these distinctions have been understated. Indeed, these distinctions may be evident in adolescent's group entry behavior, much earlier on than predictors previously discussed. Especially in light of the consequences of social rejection emphasized both in psychological literature and in newspaper headlines, this study stands to extend research of adolescent peer groups but also to prompt more effective and efficient methods for screening and intervention.

## **Method**

### **Sample**

The data was obtained from a pool of high school students in New York City who all attended one religious, boys-only school. Of the 202 students in the 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grades, 137 (68%) consented to participate. However, for all peer reports, data was obtained for all 202 participants. All 137 subjects had submitted a signed parental consent form

(Appendix A) and child assent form (Appendix B). The subjects ranged from 14-18 years old ( $M = 16.00$ ,  $SD = 0.87$ ). In exchange for their participation, the students received \$10 Amazon gift cards.

### **Materials & Measures**

The primary investigator and trained research assistants were provided a script to guide the participants through the questionnaires. The following questionnaires were administered as part of a larger series of questionnaires.

The Socio-demographic Information Questionnaire (Appendix C) was a 6 question self-report questionnaire that asked basic questions regarding participants' age, sex, race, religious affiliation, and religiosity.

The Approach Questionnaire (Appendix D) was a self-report questionnaire designed to assess approach and withdrawal related cognitions relevant to group entry. Students were presented with three vignettes (e.g., “There are a group of kids that you know from school hanging out, laughing, and having a good time”). After reading each situation, subjects were asked to decide how likely they would be to choose different responses to each situation (1 = Very Unlikely; 4 = Very Likely). Each question corresponded to a different style of group entry. All subjects received a score for each style of group entry behavior for which a higher score indicated higher levels of that type of group entry behavior. Below are examples of the questions:

Dominant - “Would you automatically join the group and probably begin leading whatever is going on?”

Withdrawn - “Would you stay where you are and not join the group because you would be too nervous?”

Hovering – “Would you move closer to the group so that you could hear what’s going on and try to figure out a way to join the group?”

Assertive – “Would you join the group to see what’s going on?”

A composite score was calculated for each style of group entry by obtaining the mean for each scale (i.e., group entry style) across the three scenarios. Thus each subscale was composed of 3 questions. Their Cronbach’s alphas were as follows: Dominant = .63, assertive = .34, hovering = .62, withdrawn = .51.

The Sociometric Questionnaire (Appendix E), a widely used peer-report questionnaire, examined the social structure of a given group. Students were prompted to nominate three classmates they most liked to work or hang out with and three classmates that they least liked to work or hang out with. The methods of Peery (1979) and Coie et al. (1982) were employed in this study. The first step in calculating an overall score of social preference was tallying the votes that each participant received both for being liked least and for being liked most. These two totals were each divided by the total number of eligible nominators in their class ( $N$  of the class minus 1), which provided a proportion score for how often a subject was nominated as most liked and least liked. In order to compute a score for social preference, the proportion score for times voted liked least was subtracted from the proportion score for times voted liked most. Higher social preference scores indicated greater acceptance in the peer group, whereas social rejection referred to lower levels of social preference.

The Self Report of Social Power Survey (Appendix F) comprised 7 statements ( $\alpha = .78$ ) about influence in the peer group. Subjects were asked to indicate the statement that best described them (1 = Never; 4 = Always). Items were coded so that higher scores

indicated more social power. Items included: "When I talk, other kids listen," and "I act as a leader, making decisions for the group." Subjects' scores were calculated by computing the average across all 7 items.

The Peer Nomination Questionnaire (Appendix G; PNQ) was a 12-item list of behavioral and personality descriptors in which students provided information about their peers in their class. This measure acknowledges the relative inaccuracy with which teachers predict student behavior and capitalizes on the reliability of peer reports (e.g., Holt & Keyes, 2004). Participants were asked to indicate which of their peers fit each descriptor. This study's PNQ was comprised of 7 subscales: A) High social power, 5 items ( $\alpha = .85$ , e.g., "A lot of kids imitate or copy what he does"). B) Indirect Aggression, 3 items ( $\alpha = .78$ , e.g., "He tells rumors about other kids behind their back"). C) Popularity, 1 item ("He is popular"). D) Friendship, 1 item ("He is my friend"). E) Effective group entry, 1 item ("He is good at joining another group of kids"). F) Inhibited group entry, 1 item ("He watches but does not join"). Proportion scores were calculated for each participant by obtaining the total nominations they received for each item and dividing it by the times they were eligible for each item. The proportion scores were then standardized by class to enable the comparison of students in different classes regardless of class size.

The Delinquency Measure (Appendix H) was a 17-item self-report measure in which students reported how frequently they had engaged in a list of delinquent behaviors in the previous month ( $\alpha = .78$ ) and year ( $\alpha = .83$ ). Items from this scale were based on items selected from the Bird et al., (2005) Rating of Delinquent Behavior Module for children 10 years or older, which was comprised of items from the Diagnostic

Schedule for Children (Shaffer, Fisher, Lucas, Dulcan, & Schwab-Stone, 2000), the Elliot Self-Reported Delinquency Scale (Elliot, Huizinga, & Ageton, 1985) and the Self-Reported Antisocial Behavior Scale (Loeber, Stouthammer-Loeber, Van-Kammen, & Farrington, 1989). Responses could range from 1 (Never) to 4 (Three or more times). Delinquency scores were computed by averaging the scores of the 17 items for both the previous month and year.

### **Procedure**

Parental consent and child assent forms were distributed and collected. Children who had submitted both consent and assent forms were able to participate. Students responded to the questionnaires in their classrooms in 2 testing sessions lasting approximately 45 minutes each. The primary investigator and trained research assistants read the questions aloud with thorough instruction. Children read along and marked their responses. The school and students were thanked and students were given their compensation.

### **Results**

First, the data for each item was checked by examining descriptive statistics, including the means, standard deviations, ranges, and frequency distributions for each item. This helps to identify improperly written responses or data entry errors that might have undue influence on the data. Any inconsistency was corrected by reexamining the set of responses in the booklet in question, disposing of invalid responses, and changing incorrectly entered data. Descriptive statistics were obtained for all variables (Table 1) and correlations between all variables were obtained (Table 2).

### **Hypothesis 1 – Group Entry and Social Status**

Hypothesis 1 was evaluated by observing the correlation between group entry style and social preference. Specifically, higher levels of social preference were expected to correlate with high levels of assertive group entry style and low social preference was expected to be associated with dominant, hovering, and withdrawn group entry style. Correlations between self-reported group entry style and peer nominated friendships were also explored. As shown in Table 2, no style of group entry, as assessed with a self report measure, was related to social preference or peer nominations of friendship. However, higher scores on peer reports of inhibited group entry behavior were inversely related to number of friendship nominations ( $r = -.35, p < .01$ ) but not social preference. Peer reports of effective, approach-oriented group entry was associated positively with social preference ( $r = .28, p < .01$ ) and numbers of nominations of friendship ( $r = .47, p < .01$ ).

### **Hypothesis 2 – Group Entry and Power, Relational Aggression, and Popularity**

Hypothesis 2 was assessed by examining correlations between group entry and social power, relational aggression, and popularity. It was predicted that a dominant group entry style would be correlated with increased social power, relational aggression, and popularity, whereas the withdrawn and hovering styles would be correlated with decreased relational aggression, social power, and popularity.

**Social power.** As indicated in Table 2, high scores in dominant group entry style did correlate positively with elevated social power – strongly in the self report measure of power ( $r = .50, p < .01$ ) and more modestly in the peer report measure of power ( $r = .19, p < .05$ ). High scores in withdrawn and hovering group entry styles inversely, moderately correlated with self reported social power ( $r = -.26, p < .01$ , and  $r = -.22, p < .05$ , respectively); these findings were not replicated with peer reports of social power. The

assertive group entry was unrelated to social power both in self report measures and peer report measures.

In the secondary peer reports of group entry, high scores in nominations of successful group entry correlated positively with social power – moderately in self report measures ( $r = .26, p < .01$ ) and strongly in the peer report measures ( $r = .51, p < .01$ ). Conversely, a high score in peer-nominated ratings of inhibited group entry was strongly, inversely correlated with social power according to both self reports ( $r = -.41, p < .01$ ) and peer reports ( $r = -.45, p < .01$ ).

**Relational aggression.** No group entry style was found to significantly differ in self reported relational aggression. However, secondary analyses revealed that high scores in peer nominations of effective group entry were modestly, positively correlated with increased relational aggression ( $r = .17, p < .05$ ), while scores in peer nominations of inhibited group entry were moderately, inversely related to relational aggression ( $r = -.29, p < .01$ ). Interestingly, though there was no relation between self reported group entry style and relational victimization, higher totals of peer nominations for effective group entry were moderately, inversely correlated with relational victimization ( $r = -.28, p < .01$ ), while higher totals of peer nominations for inhibited group entry were modestly, positively correlated with relational victimization ( $r = .15, p < .05$ ).

**Popularity.** Higher scores in self report measures of dominant group entry style were modestly, positively related to increased popularity ( $r = .17, p < .05$ ), while the other three styles were unrelated to popularity. In peer report measures of group entry, increased popularity was strongly, positively associated with peer reports of effective,

approach-oriented group entry ( $r = .58, p < .01$ ), whereas higher peer ratings for withdrawn behavior were strongly, inversely related to popularity ( $r = -.44, p < .01$ ).

### **Hypothesis 3 – Delinquency as a Product of Controlling Group Entry and Poor Social Status**

Hypothesis 3 predicted that high rates of delinquent behavior would be positively correlated to low levels social preference and a high score in a dominant group entry style. As part of the two hierarchical multiple regressions that were conducted, scores on dominant group entry style and social preference were standardized. A product term was then created to represent the interaction between the two predictor variables; main effects were controlled for. This analysis was first conducted for delinquent behavior during the year prior to the study and then for delinquent behavior during the month prior – these variables served as the two criterion variables. Step 1 of each regression revealed that main effects were not significant. Results indicated that the interaction between social preference and dominant group entry style did not significantly predict delinquency during the prior year,  $\Delta F(1, 130) = .670, p = .42; \Delta R^2 = .01$ . Similarly, the interaction of low social preference and dominant group entry style did not predict delinquent behavior in the prior month,  $\Delta F(1, 128) = .514, p = .48; \Delta R^2 = .01$ . Since there were no interaction effects found, no follow up analyses were conducted.

### **Discussion**

This report examined the relationship between group entry and a host of consequential variables: social preference, friendships, social power, popularity, relational aggression, and delinquency. The study builds on the extensive literature on group entry behavior on two fronts: 1) it extends group entry research to adolescent peer

groups, and 2) it aims to contribute to a growing body of knowledge on particular types of entry style, specifically a controlling and domineering approach, that is not necessarily dysregulated, and may even be skillful. Despite some non-significant results, this endeavor poses important questions not only about the nature of adolescent peer groups but also methodological issues for group entry research that arise from the unique features of adolescence. Issues in measurement are addressed below. When reviewing the results, it is of value to bear in mind that the absence of evidence does not equal the evidence of absence. The differences obtained between self report and peer report measures are also discussed. As group entry research moves its focus from childhood to adolescence and measures are better adjusted to capture adolescent group entry behavior, different results may emerge for the hypotheses posed here.

### **Summary of Results**

The first hypothesis sought to replicate links between styles of group entry behavior and sociometric status. No differences were found vis-à-vis social preference and friendships. Due to the weighty role of group norms as moderators of the links between behaviors and sociometric popularity, the researchers caution against generalizing results, or non-significant results, into broad conclusions about the correlates of social preference (Rubin, Bukowski, Parker, & Bowker, 2008). When group entry scores were measured somewhat differently and were derived from a peer report, effective group entry was associated with favorable social preference and more nominations of friendship, whereas inhibited group entry was inversely related to these variables. This finding highlights the importance of assertiveness in social competence

(Rotheram, 1987) and the contribution of social reticence to social incompetence (Hart et al., 2000).

The second hypothesis predicted that a controlling group entry style would correlate with elevated social power, relational aggression, and popularity, whereas hovering and withdrawal would correlate with reduced social power and relational aggression. Self reports and peer reports of elevated power were related to self report of controlling group entry and peer report of effective group entry. Self reports of withdrawal and hovering related to reduced power in self report measures, and peer reports of inhibited group entry related to self and peer reports of reduced power. Although peer reports of effective group entry were associated with increased relational aggression and diminished relational victimization, peer reports of inhibited group entry were correlated with reduced relational aggression and increased relational victimization. Finally, elevated popularity was related to self reports of controlling group entry and peer reports of effective group entry, while diminished popularity was related to high peer ratings of inhibited group entry. These results substantiate the way that social power relates to relational aggression and popularity (e.g., Hawley, 2003). Though the results must be investigated more in adolescent peer groups, the findings suggest that group entry style may be diagnostic of these social power, relational aggression, and popularity.

The final hypothesis predicted that higher rates of delinquency would be predicted by the combination of poor social status and high scores in domineering group entry. Predictions for both main effects and interactions were unsupported.

### **Identifying Subgroups and Heterogeneity**

Some of the results may have been non-significant because of a diverse array of

subgroups. In the introduction to this paper, various types of aggression were discussed (e.g. Hawley, 2003). Different styles of aggression have been found to relate uniquely with different varieties and levels of social competence and peer regard (e.g., Bierman et al., 1993; Rodkin, Farmer, Pearl, & Van Aker, 2000). Similarly, there may exist subcategories of group entry even within the controlling, assertive, and passive styles that differentially relate to levels of social adjustment. The lack of significant results may hint to heterogeneous groups within the four major categories of group entry behavior. Further investigation must be conducted to verify whether or not moderating factors – such as social competence or cognitive factors – may better shed light on group differences. For example, the items on passive group entry may not have distinguished sufficiently between reserved individuals who are fearful to join groups and those who do not bother with those they do not know because they are confident in and comfortable with their present group.

The domineering type provides another example for which examining variables that may potentially moderate the effects of group entry on sociometric status may elucidate the distinction between which children within each category thrive and which ones flounder. While the study focused on the domineering yet non-erratic group entry style, the study had no measure to identify which individuals who scored high on the domineering entry style were dysregulated and which were more socially competent. Conversely, as evidenced by the significant correlations between peer reports of group entry and multiple criterion variables, the results may have emerged as they did because peer perceptions of the basic ability to join a group may be the best predictor of sociometric status, prominence, and other behaviors.

In order to examine social preference, this study used a proportion score of nominations for being most liked and most disliked. Unlike other studies involving sociometric popularity, this research did not sort participants based on votes into *categories* based on social preference *and* social impact – popular, rejected, average, neglected, and controversial. While social preference, which measures peer acceptance or rejection, is calculated by subtracting votes for liked least from votes for liked most standardized by class, social impact, which measures prominence and visibility, constitutes the standardized sum of votes for liked most and liked least (Coie & Dodge, 1983, 1988). Social impact would have been particularly important for this study as it may be relevant for the very prominent individuals who engage in a domineering group entry style. The proportion scores used in this study would not have detected differences between the average, neglected, or controversial groups as they would have similarly average scores of social preference – scores for a controversial individual (a large vote total for liked least subtracted from a large vote total for liked most divided by the number of eligible nominators) would be indistinguishable from that of the neglected individual (small vote total for liked least subtracted from a small vote total for liked most divided by the total number of voters). Consequently, this study was not able to differentiate whether an average score of social preference indicated status of being average, neglected, or controversial. Dividing the participants in this way may have highlighted differences among the subjects in this study who obtained an average social preference score. Perhaps, because of their reserved nature, those who hover or withdraw would be neglected instead of outright rejected. Conversely, pushy joiners who are more prominent in their social group because of their forceful attempts and may be either

rejected or controversial. The groups may differ not just because of their low social preference but also as a function of social impact.

### **Issues with Reliability**

The study encountered issues with reliability, in particular with the group entry measures. Since group entry was the focal point of this study and poor reliability attenuates associations between variables, this is the most immediate explanation for the non-significant results. Adding additional items may have helped to improve weak reliabilities. In addition, these measures may have been better suited to assess group entry in children in peer group play activities.. Group entry surveys may need to be adjusted to the more mature conversations and complex interactions relevant to group entry among adolescents.

While there is certainly heterogeneity across group entry styles, it is also possible that the heterogeneity that exists across social situations, which adolescents are able to discern, contributed to the poor reliability of the measure used. Perhaps the questions on the group entry questionnaire used here assessed distinct sets of skills relevant only to particular group entry situations. For example, deciding whether or not to join a group as the new student at school does not necessarily measure the same construct as joining a game of peers known to the individual; neither of these situations is parallel to asking adolescents how they approach members of the opposite sex. Hesitance, assertiveness, and dominance may be more or less appropriate when interacting with well known peers than with strangers. Especially because of flexibility in social norms and frame of reference, different situations may require varying combinations of entry behaviors in order to successfully integrate (Dirks et al., 2007). Future endeavors should ensure that

items that ask about group entry are as comparable as possible in that the scenarios chosen are sensitive to potential nuanced differences.

Another explanation for the poor reliability lies in the nature of how the questions were asked. The survey sets up the items such that it assumes that one uses each group entry style with a relative amount of frequency or infrequency. However, previous research has noted that successful group entry indeed may require all four behaviors in sequence (Putallaz & Wasserman, 1990). While one must eventually approach a group assertively to join it, knowing how to do so entails observing the group from a distance to discern clues about the group's frame of reference. Though controlling behaviors may be objectionable at the beginning of one's attempt to join a group, vying for position within the group is vital to justify one's continued position in it (Hogan & Hogan, 1991). If this is true, measures should better tease out how well individuals transition from one strategy to the next or how well each is performed.

### **Self Report vs. Peer Report**

Potential shared method variance issues for self reports and for peer reports were a theme in the results section, which featured stronger correlations in measures obtained in same method than between two different methods. When constructs are assessed with the same techniques, correlations can become inflated since the same biases exist, especially when there is only one reporter. For example, hypothesis 2 predicted the association between group entry style and social power. When group entry style was measured through self report, the styles only correlated with the self report of social power but not the peer report. When examining correlations between variables of different methods, associations generally still followed a similar pattern but correlations were weaker.

### **Cognitive Biases**

In addition to the regular response bias of providing answers influenced by social desirability, numerous relevant social cognitions impact the varying accuracy of individuals' perceptions of their social competencies (Boivin & Hymel, 1997). These cognitive biases could even be the catalyst behind the potential shared method variance issues mentioned above. While rejected-withdrawn individuals have been found to believe that they have poor social skills and relationships than they actually may, perceive social experiences as more negative, and view themselves as more lonely than they may actually be (Gazelle & Ladd, 2003; Hymel, Bowker, & Woody, 1993). Conversely, aggressive youth, especially boys, overestimate their own competence, show inflated and inaccurate self perceptions relative to others, and fail to recognize elements of maladjustment or documented social difficulties (Gagnon, Dumont, Tremblay, Charlebois, & Larivee, 1988; Olweus 1978; Zakriski & Coie, 1996; Rubin, Chen & Hymel, 1993).

Due to the many cognitive biases that blur one's perception of his or her social competence (Boivin & Hymel, 1997), group entry may be more precisely assessed through social cognitions relevant to group entry including identifying the frame of reference, as opposed to self report of behavioral tendencies. While cognitions do not always translate into actions and important factors moderate the link between cognitions and behavior (e.g., Barry, Winograd, Friedman, & Isaacs, 2007), the ability to discern social norms and a group's frame of reference correlates with favorable sociometric status (e.g., Slaughter, Dennis, & Pritchard, 2002). There is precedent to the notion that the ability to recognize behavior may be influential than self reports of attitudes or

behavior. For example, recognition of bullying has not only been identified as a predictor of more prosocial attitudes about bullying, but also more strongly predicted reduced bullying behavior than did attitudes (Cherniak, Krinsky, Rosenberg, Novick, & Isaacs, 2014). Furthermore, this study found the association between pro-bullying attitudes and bullying behaviors to be strongest among those least able to identify bullying, whereas a more complete understanding of bullying mitigated the relation between pro-bullying attitudes and bullying behaviors. Several interventions have focused on recognition of bullying, (e.g., Olweus, 1993; Salmivalli, Kaukiainen, & Voeten, 2005); these programs operate on the idea that teaching students to identify bullying will result in its reduction (e.g., Olweus, 1993). In sum, recognition has been found to be especially diagnostic of bullying attitudes and behaviors; it may be worthwhile to shift group entry research from self reports of entry styles to assessing the ability to define proper group entry and to discern frame of reference.

Work by Rabiner and Gordon (1992) provides a precedent for exploring divergent cognitions relevant to group entry instead of self report of expected behavior. They found that sociometrically popular and unpopular children differ in their spontaneous motives for social engagement, which illustrates the heterogeneity even within the approach-avoidance distinction. In their report, sociometrically popular children were more likely to interact in order to establish new relationships or enhance existing ones. In contrast, sociometrically unpopular children were more frequently motivated by goals that compromise the success of social interaction, such as "getting even with" or "defeating" their peers. This comparison is also apparent in the tendency of rejected-aggressive children to interpret negative events as the result of hostile behavior of others (Dodge et

al., 2003). The idea of assessing group entry behaviors in light of related cognitions aligns with research conducted by Forbes and Lubin (1979), who found the relationship between socially relevant behavior and sociometric status to be strongest for those who could accurately discern the group's social norms.

These cognitive biases could help explain why self report of group entry did not correlate significantly with many of the variables. They also could account for the non-significant interaction between controlling group entry and peer rejection to predict delinquency.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

Several limitations besides the issues discussed above must be addressed. Due to the role of group entry specifically with new acquaintances, a study of group entry investigating relationships among ninth grade students entering a new school may be more ideal. Additionally, due to the homogeneity of the sample, many of the students at the school examined have preexisting relationships outside of school. Peer nomination group entry scores may have been falsely inferred from other tendencies familiar to peers from past interactions.

One of the strengths of the group entry literature is the episodic breakdown of group entry into specific attempts and responses, which is generally only possible through observation. Observational methods enable assessment of other variables such as multiple, subsequent attempts and responses to rejection (e.g., Corsaro, 1981). These considerations are especially important because successful assimilation into groups has been described as a progression involving some hovering in order to discern the group's frame of reference (McGrew, 1972). Longitudinal studies could be useful in addressing

questions such as whether changes in peer status are paralleled by changes in group entry behavior or whether changes in delinquency are found among those socially rejected subjects who score high on approach.

The poor reliability of the group entry measure used produced some non-significant correlations that were in places illogical, including variables that have consistently been demonstrated to relate to group entry behavior (e.g., Putallaz & Wasserman, 1990). Thus, future endeavors ought to use a revised measure that measures the constructs more consistently while properly capturing the heterogeneity of social situations, entry behaviors, and relationships. In addition, these refined assessments must also include scenarios that are carefully selected for age-appropriateness. Heretofore relatively understudied, adolescent peer group entry may call for particularly well researched measures due to the complexities of adolescent social interaction. Given the weighty consequences of group entry behavior for social competence and social adjustment (Rubin et al., 2006), it is certainly an area of research worth expanding.

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## Appendix A

## Letter of Consent

September 2013

Dear Parent or Guardian:

We are writing you to seek your permission for your child to participate in a research project conducted by Dr. Jenny Isaacs from Yeshiva University that will be conducted at your child's school this spring. All children are being invited to take part in this project and will receive a 10 dollar gift certificate for their participation.

Purpose: The purpose of this project is to gain a better understanding of how children interact in their social environment.

Procedures: All of the testing will be in the form of questionnaires that will be administered to the children at school during regular school hours. The project will involve two testing sessions of about 40 minutes each. Children will be asked to report about (a) their relationships with their peers; (b) their behavior in and out of school; (c) and thoughts about their about themselves and their peers. Samples of all of the questionnaires are available in the school office, and you are welcome to stop by to look at them. Children usually find these kinds of questionnaires very interesting and enjoy responding to them. Participation is voluntary and children may leave blank any questions they wish and they are free to end the testing session at any time.

Risks and Benefits. Risks to participating children should be minimal. However, some questions may cause children to experience a slight degree of anxiety or discomfort, however, this is a rare occurrence. At all times children will be under the supervision of a member of the research team and the testing session will be stopped if your child desires. Participating children will be given a 10 dollar gift certificate. In addition, the benefits to society could be substantial. The school environment is a significant factor in the development of children. Understanding how children interact with their peers can give us insight into various aspects of children's social experience, including: friendships, helpfulness, and bullying.

Confidentiality. It is important for you to know that your child's participation will be kept confidential, known only to the research team. School personnel or police will not be able to identify your child's responses. The questionnaires will not be identified by the names of the students, but rather by numbers. All questionnaires will be kept in a secured area and locked in a filing cabinet. Importantly, children's responses will be averaged with those of other children and will not be used to identify individual children for any purpose. Thus, there is no danger of any child being "labeled" on the basis of his or her response to the questionnaires.

Contact Information: For any questions or problems relating to your child's rights as a participant, the Administrator of Committee on Clinical Investigation of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine of Yeshiva University can be contacted at (718) 430-2253, Monday through Friday between 9 AM and 5 PM. For other questions about the study or your child's participation, please call the principal investigator, Dr. Isaacs, at (212) 960-5400 ext 5912.

Consent Information. It is necessary that you give permission in order for your child to participate. In addition, children who are participating will be asked to sign a "Child Assent Form" that describes the purpose of the study and what they will be asked to do. Children will also be informed that they are free to leave any question blank or to discontinue participation at any time.

We hope that you will give permission for your child to participate, because the research findings will have limited validity unless all, or nearly all, the children participate. Children who do not participate will engage in some alternative activity authorized by the child's teacher. Also, once your child has participated in the research, we hope you will discuss the project with your child and call us with any feedback your child may have about the project. Please complete and sign the attached consent form and return it to the school with your child. Your child may return the signed consent form to their homeroom teacher. Thank you very much.

Sincerely yours,

Jenny Isaacs, Ph.D.

Appendix B  
Assent Form

We are interested in learning about what it is like for children to be with other kids. We are going to give you a few questionnaires that should take you around an hour to an hour and a half to finish. You will be asked questions about things that happen when you are with other kids. Also, we will ask you what you think and feel about other kids. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions. Most kids find these kinds of questionnaires very interesting and enjoy doing them. All children who do these questionnaires will receive a \$10.00 gift certificate as a thank you from us.

We will keep your answers private. No one but you will know what your answers are. For example, your parents, your teachers, or any other adult cannot find out anything you wrote. To make sure that nobody knows your answers, **do not** put your name anywhere on the questionnaire. In addition, at any time, you are free to leave any questions blank or to stop answering the questions at any time. Okay, let's read the rest of this, and if you agree to participate, then you can sign this form below.

1. This project has been explained to me, and I agree to participate.
2. I understand that if I have any questions, I can ask the adult who is reading the questions.
3. I understand that I don't have to answer any question that I don't want to and that I can stop at any time I want to.
4. I understand that my answers to all questions will be completely private.

---

Name

---

Date

I certify that the research has been explained to the participant and that I am available to answer any questions or concerns the participant may have related to this research.

---

Signature of researcher  
**Jenny Isaacs, PhD**  
(212) 960-5400 ext. 5912

Appendix C  
Sociodemographic Questionnaire

Please give one answer for each question.

1) Age: \_\_\_\_\_

2) Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

3) Sex: Male \_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_

4) Race (can check more than 1):

\_\_\_ White/Caucasian

\_\_\_ Black/African-American

\_\_\_ Hispanic/Latino

\_\_\_ Oriental/East Asian

\_\_\_ Other (Please Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

5) Religion:

\_\_\_ Christian

\_\_\_ Islamic

\_\_\_ Jewish

\_\_\_ Buddhist

\_\_\_ Hindu

\_\_\_ Other (Please Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ No religion

6) How religious do you consider yourself?

\_\_\_ Not religious at all

\_\_\_ Somewhat religious

\_\_\_ Very religious

Appendix D  
Group Entry Questionnaire

Below there are three different situations. Each situation has four questions. Please imagine yourself in each of the situations and answer every question as honestly as you can.

Situation A: There are a group of kids that you know from school hanging out, laughing, and having a good time.

1. Would you stay where you are and not join the group because you would be too nervous?  

Very <u>Un</u> likely	<u>Un</u> likely	Likely	Very Likely
-----------------------	------------------	--------	-------------
2. Would you move closer to the group so that you could hear what's going on and try to figure out a way to join the group?  

Very <u>Un</u> likely	<u>Un</u> likely	Likely	Very Likely
-----------------------	------------------	--------	-------------
3. Would you join the group to see what's going on?  

Very <u>Un</u> likely	<u>Un</u> likely	Likely	Very Likely
-----------------------	------------------	--------	-------------
4. Would you automatically join the group and probably begin leading whatever is going on?  

Very <u>Un</u> likely	<u>Un</u> likely	Likely	Very Likely
-----------------------	------------------	--------	-------------

Situation B: During recess a bunch of kids are playing your favorite game.

1. Would you stay where you are and not join the group because you would be too nervous?  

Very <u>Un</u> likely	<u>Un</u> likely	Likely	Very Likely
-----------------------	------------------	--------	-------------
2. Would you move closer to the group so that you could hear what's going on and try to figure out a way to join the game?  

Very <u>Un</u> likely	<u>Un</u> likely	Likely	Very Likely
-----------------------	------------------	--------	-------------
3. Would you join the game?  

Very <u>Un</u> likely	<u>Un</u> likely	Likely	Very Likely
-----------------------	------------------	--------	-------------
4. Would you automatically join the group and probably begin leading the game?  

Very <u>Un</u> likely	<u>Un</u> likely	Likely	Very Likely
-----------------------	------------------	--------	-------------

Below there are three different situations. Each situation has four questions. Please imagine yourself in each of the situations and answer the questions as honestly as you can.

**Situation C:** Your family just moved and today is the first day at your new school. You walk into the lunchroom and see a table of kids from your new class eating lunch together.

1. Would you sit at a separate table by yourself because you would be too nervous to join them?  

Very <u>Un</u> likely	<u>Un</u> likely	Likely	Very Likely
-----------------------	------------------	--------	-------------
  
2. Would you sit at a nearby table and listen to the conversation and try to figure out a way to join them?  

Very <u>Un</u> likely	<u>Un</u> likely	Likely	Very Likely
-----------------------	------------------	--------	-------------
  
3. Would you sit down at the table with them and listen to the conversation?  

Very <u>Un</u> likely	<u>Un</u> likely	Likely	Very Likely
-----------------------	------------------	--------	-------------
  
4. Would sit down with them, introduce yourself, and join right in on the conversation?  

Very <u>Un</u> likely	<u>Un</u> likely	Likely	Very Likely
-----------------------	------------------	--------	-------------

Appendix E  
Sociometric Questionnaire

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: M / F

Do not put your name on this paper. Please **DO NOT** choose your own name.

Circle the names of the three kids you like to hang out with the **MOST**.

Last name, First name

Circle the names of the three kids you like to hang out with the **LEAST**.

Please **DO NOT** choose your own name.

Last name, First name

Appendix F  
Self Report of Power Questionnaire

For the next set of questions please circle the choice that best describes you.
---

1. When I talk, other kids listen.

1 <b>Never</b>	2 <b>Rarely</b>	3 <b>Sometimes</b>	4 <b>Always</b>
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2. I act as a leader, making decisions for the group.

1 <b>Never</b>	2 <b>Rarely</b>	3 <b>Sometimes</b>	4 <b>Always</b>
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3. When I talk other kids do not listen.

1 <b>Never</b>	2 <b>Rarely</b>	3 <b>Sometimes</b>	4 <b>Always</b>
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4. In social situations at school or when hanging out, I make decisions about what to do.

1 <b>Never</b>	2 <b>Rarely</b>	3 <b>Sometimes</b>	4 <b>Always</b>
-------------------	--------------------	-----------------------	--------------------

5. I am more of a follower and do not make decisions for the group.

1 <b>Never</b>	2 <b>Rarely</b>	3 <b>Sometimes</b>	4 <b>Always</b>
-------------------	--------------------	-----------------------	--------------------

6. I get my way; other kids do what I want.

1 <b>Never</b>	2 <b>Rarely</b>	3 <b>Sometimes</b>	4 <b>Always</b>
-------------------	--------------------	-----------------------	--------------------

7. A lot of kids imitate or copy what I do.

1 <b>Never</b>	2 <b>Rarely</b>	3 <b>Sometimes</b>	4 <b>Always</b>
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Appendix G  
Self-Report Delinquency Questionnaire

In the last YEAR, how many times have you:

**1) Run away from home**

- a. never
- b. once
- c. twice
- d. three or more times (write exact # here\_\_\_\_\_)

**2) Skipped class or school without a good excuse**

- a. never
- b. once
- c. twice
- d. three or more times (write exact # here\_\_\_\_\_)

**3) Lied about your age to get into some place or to buy something**

- a. never
- b. once
- c. twice
- d. three or more times (write exact # here\_\_\_\_\_)

**4) Carried a weapon**

- a. never
- b. once
- c. twice
- d. three or more times (write exact # here\_\_\_\_\_)

**5) Done graffiti on property that did not belong to you**

- a. never
- b. once
- c. twice
- d. three or more times (write exact # here\_\_\_\_\_)

**6) Purposely damaged or destroyed property that did not belong to you**

- a. never
- b. once
- c. twice
- d. three or more times (write exact # here\_\_\_\_\_)

**7) Avoided paying for things such as movies, bus or subway rides, or food**

- a. never
- b. once
- c. twice
- d. three or more times (write exact # here\_\_\_\_\_)

**8) Stolen or tried to steal things worth less than 50 dollars**

- a. never
- b. once
- c. twice
- d. three or more times

**9) Stolen or tried to steal things worth more than 50 dollars**

- a. never
- b. once
- c. twice

**10) Attacked someone with a weapon or to seriously hurt them**

- a. never
- b. once
- c. twice

**d. three or more times (write exact # here\_\_\_\_\_)**

**d. three or more times (write exact # here\_\_\_\_\_)**

In the last YEAR, how many times have you:

**11) Used a weapon or physical force to get money or things from people**

- a. never
- b. once
- c. twice
- d. three or more times (write exact # here\_\_\_\_\_)**

**12) Been involved in a gang fight**

- a. never
- b. once
- c. twice
- d. three or more times**

**13) Hit or threatened someone for reasons other than self-defense**

- a. never
- b. once
- c. twice
- d. three or more times (write exact # here\_\_\_\_\_)**
- e. nearly every day**

**14) Drank alcohol**

- a. never
- b. once
- c. twice
- d. three or more times**
- e. nearly every day**

**15) Used marijuana**

- a. never
- b. once
- c. twice
- d. three or more times (write exact # here\_\_\_\_\_)**
- e. nearly every day**

**16) Used illegal drugs other than marijuana**

- a. never
- b. once
- c. twice
- d. three or more times**
- e. nearly every day**

**17) Smoked cigarettes**

- a. never
- b. once
- c. twice
- d. three or more times (write exact # here\_\_\_\_\_)**
- e. nearly every day**

Appendix H  
Peer Nomination Questionnaire

<b>For the next set of questions you are given a list of all the kids in your class. Please place a check neatly in the boxes below the names of the kids if the statements below are true about them. You may check off more than one kid for each statement if it is true.</b>	<b>Participant 1</b>	<b>Participant 2</b>	<b>Participant 3</b>
<b>1. When he talks, other kids listen.</b>			
<b>2. He acts as a leader, making decisions for the group.</b>			
<b>3. He gets his way; other kids do what he wants.</b>			
<b>4. In social situations at school or when hanging out, he makes decisions about what to do.</b>			
<b>5. A lot of kids imitate or copy what he does.</b>			
<b>6. When mad, he gets even by keeping the person from being in their group of friends.</b>			
<b>7. When he is mad at a person, he ignores them or stops talking to them.</b>			
<b>8. Tells rumors about other kids behind their backs.</b>			
<b>9. He is popular.</b>			
<b>10. He is my friend.</b>			
<b>11. He is good at joining another group of kids.</b>			
<b>12. He watches but does not join.</b>			

Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics*

Variable	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. SR Withdrawn GE	136	1.87	.54
2. SR Hovering GE	136	2.77	.59
3. SR Joining GE	138	3.10	.42
4. SR Leading GE	137	2.40	.68
5. PR Withdrawn GE	202	1.73	2.38
6. PR Joining GE	202	3.80	2.87
7. PR Social Preference	202	.00	.27
8. PR Friendship	202	.00	.97
9. SR Social Power	138	2.74	.44
10. PR Social Power	202	.21	.14
11. PR Relational Aggression	202	.00	.97
12. PR Indirect Victimization	202	.00	.97
13. PR Popularity	202	.00	.97