CHILDREN'S SUBJECTIVE UNDERSTANDING OF

THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FRIENDS AND BEST FRIENDS

Todd S. Bryan

Certificate of Approval:

Glen E. Ray
Chairman
Associate Professor
Psychology

Steven LoBello
Associate Professor
Psychology
Director of Graduate Studies

Peter Zachar
Associate Professor
Psychology

Judd A. Katz
Assistant Vice Chancellor
of Academic Affairs

CHILDREN'S SUBJECTIVE UNDERSTANDING OF THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FRIENDS AND BEST FRIENDS

Todd S. Bryan

A Thesis

Submitted to

the Graduate Faculty of

Auburn University Montgomery

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the

Degree of

Master of Science

Montgomery, Alabama

July 22, 2002

CHILDREN'S SUBJECTIVE UNDERSTANDING OF

THE DIFFERNCES BETWEEN FRIENDS AND BEST FRIENDS

TODD S. BRYAN

Todd S Bryan

Signature of Author

July 24, 2002

Date

Copy sent to:

Name Date

VITA

Todd Sheridan Bryan, son of Neil Sheridan Bryan and Kathy Sue Bryan, was born April 26, 1978, in Carrolton, KY. He graduated from Trimble County High School in Bedford, KY in 1996. He attended Transylvania University, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology in August, 2000. In September of 2000 he entered Graduate School at Auburn University Montgomery.

THESIS ABSTRACT

CHILDREN'S SUBJECTIVE UNDERSTANDING OF THE DIFFERNENCES BETWEEN FRIENDS AND BEST FRIENDS

Todd S. Bryan

Master of Science, August 2, 2002

(B.A., Transylvania University)

58 Typed Pages

Directed by Glen E. Ray

The present study examined children's understanding of the differences between two types of close peer relationships; friends and best friends. Third through sixth grade children evaluated a classroom friend and a self-nominated classroom best friend using a Relationship Quality Q-Sort (one for classroom friend and one for classroom best friend). The Relationship Quality Q-Sorts assessed eight relationship quality dimensions shown to be important in children's friendships: Loyalty and Commitment, Compatibility of Attitudes and Behaviors, Reciprocal Candor, Affirmation and Personal Support, Rivalry and Competition, Exclusivity, Interdependence, and Asymmetrical Influence and Status. Results demonstrated that children evaluated Loyalty and Commitment, Compatibility of Attitudes and Behaviors, Reciprocal Candor, Affirmation and Personal Support, and Interdependence as being more characteristic of best friends compared to friend relationships. Findings are discussed in terms of the present study and extend previous research into children's understanding of close peer relationships.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Glen Ray for all of his help, support, patience, and good humor in assisting me with this thesis and making this project productive and enjoyable. Dr. Ray's expertise, guidance, and friendship are the foundation of this body of work. I would also like to express my appreciation to Dr. Steve LoBello and Dr. Peter Zachar for their contributions to the development of this thesis. Finally I would like to thank my parents, without their endless personal support and enthusiasm for my education none of this would have been possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LISTS OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Children's Subjective Understanding of the Differences

Between Friends and Best Friends

Research has demonstrated that children's friendships are important to social, emotional, and cognitive development (Bukowski, Newcomb, & Hartup, 1996; Newcomb & Bagwell, 1995). For example, friends provide support and buffer each other from many types of stress (Berndt & Perry, 1986). Further, friendships are key factors in socialization, and the acquisition of conflict resolution skills (Asher & Gottman, 1981; Buhrmester & Fuhrman, 1986; Parker & Asher, 1987). Research on children's understanding of these special relationships has focused primarily on friendship expectations (e.g., Bigelow, 1977; Furman & Beirman, 1984; Ray & Cohen, 1996) and the features (qualities) found to be desirable in friendship selection (Berndt, 1996; Furman, 1996; Hinde, 1979; Monroe, 1898). Little work has been conducted on children's understandings of different types of positive relationships (see Cleary & Ray, 2001; Muerling, Ray, & LoBello, 1999 for exceptions). Thus the purpose of the present study was to investigate children's subjective understanding of the differences between friend and best friend relationships using a Q-sort methodology. What follows is a review of children's understanding of peer relationships (friendship expectations and friendship qualities), types of positive peer relationships, and Q-methodology.

Friendship Expectations

Beginning in the 1970's, research on children's understanding of friendships focused primarily on friendship expectations. Bigelow (1977) defined friendship expectations as beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors that a child believes are important in a friend. Using interviews with elementary school age children, Bigelow and his

colleagues (e.g., Bigelow & LaGaipa, 1975) developed a three-stage model of friendship expectation development. The first, reward-cost stage emerges between grades 2 and 3 and includes similarity of friendship expectations between friends, shared activities between these friends, and nearness (propinquity, availability). The second stage, which emerges between grades 4 and 5, is known as the normative stage. In this stage, children who are friends begin to develop similar attitudes towards rules or seek out friendships with individuals who share these attitudes. For example, children who are likely to obey rules are more likely to have friends who obey rules while children who are likely to break rules are likely to have friends who also break rules. The third stage, known as the empathic stage, begins around grades 6 or 7, and children begin to value self-disclosure, understanding, and shared interests.

Furman and Bierman (1983) investigated friendship expectations of 4 to 7 year olds through an open-ended interview, a picture recognition task, and a forced-choice rating task. Results indicated that friendship expectations develop through an additive process in which new expectations are added to preexisting expectations. Specifically, children's conceptualizations of friendship expectations undergo qualitative changes over the course of development, moving from behavioral desires (i.e., help, play, and other common activities) in 4-year-old children towards more abstract qualities such as trust, intimacy, and understanding as children age (Furman & Bierman, 1983).

Furman and Bierman (1984) further added to our understanding of friendship expectations by making distinctions between behavioral characteristics and dispositional characteristics associated with friendship expectations. In this study, which implemented an open-ended interview, a story-recognition task, and a questionnaire about the

importance of specific characteristics in friends and acquaintances, Furman and Bierman (1984) found that friendship expectations, both dispositional and behavioral, could be further subdivided into five conceptual groups: intimacy, affection, association, prosocial support, and similarity (i.e., ten expectations total, five for behaviors and five for dispositions). Findings indicated that expectations of the behaviors of intimacy and association increase with age while expectations of affection, prosocial support, and similarity decrease with age. For dispositional factors, expectations of prosocial support, intimacy, and association increase with age while expectations of dispositional similarity showed no change. In general, expectations progress from being egocentric and concrete (availability and common activities) to being empathic and abstract (Bigelow & LaGaipa, 1975; 1980; Furman & Bierman, 1983).

In addition to friendship expectations, Hunter & Youniss (1982) demonstrated that friendship obligations also change over time. Friendship obligation, differ from expectations in that obligations are behaviors which children believe are necessary between friends while expectations are desired but not always necessary. Hunter & Youniss' (1982) findings indicated that younger children (ages 10 to 11) believed that a central obligation of friendship was "being nice to each other" while older children (16 to 17) did not believe that this was a central obligation. Similarly, older children attributed more importance to emotional support while younger children did not. Motivations behind these obligations change as well, with younger children's motivations being more self-serving (i.e. "So they'll be nice to me."), while older children indicated greater motivation with the intent of benefiting their friends, or because it was a defining characteristic of the relationship.

Selman (1980) further added to our understanding of friendship expectations by examining the cognitive aspects of friendship expectation development. Basing his research upon the stage model of cognitive development espoused by Jean Piaget (1932; 1965), Selman (1980) found that the development of mental structures facilitates the development of social thought. Selman (1980) presented a model of social development in which friendship expectations emerge in a set of five stages. The first of these stages, occurring between the ages of three and six years, Selman called Stage Zero or the Momentary Play stage, is characterized by friendship expectations that extend no further than immediate or repeated interaction. In other words children only have expectations of their friends during the moments in which they interact and "friendship" is only defined by physical proximity. During this stage, children also place greater value on those individuals who are similar to them in ability and physical characteristics. During this stage children make no distinction between different types of positive relationships. Instead, kind acts are seen as friendly while unkind acts are seen as unfriendly. While the child is beginning to develop the capacity for feelings of jealousy these feelings are object oriented (such as the taking of a favorite item by another child) and do not yet extend to feelings of jealousy over the loss of affection or attention of another child. Because of the physical and momentary nature of friendship during this stage reciprocity of friendship is not as important a determinant of the quality of the relationship as it later becomes.

Selman's second stage of friendship expectation development is the One-Way Assistance stage. In this stage, which occurs between four to nine years of age, the child's expectation of friendship is essentially selfish. Rather than looking at the

relationship with intention of mutual benefit for both themselves and their friends, children are concerned exclusively with what they themselves will gain from the relationship, with no understanding or concern for the needs and desires of their partner. The child evaluates the friendship based upon the specific role which the friend performs in his or her life. Similarity of attitudes and interests are important as well as willingness to participate in events together. Physical proximity increasingly takes a backseat to mutual interests. It is interesting to note that during this stage we see the beginnings of the development of intimacy and closeness, as well as the further development of trust. Children at this stage expect good intentions and motives in their friendships. Trust is no longer merely about sharing, but instead becomes personal. As one would expect, friendship termination is also one-way. A child is likely to terminate a relationship if they feel their friend is no longer useful to them, such as when a friend's interests shift in such a way that they are no longer shared.

The third of Selman's stages, Stage 2, or the Fair-Weather Cooperation stage begins when the child is between seven to twelve years of age and marks the beginnings of an appreciation of reciprocity between individuals. Children at this stage are aware of the motives, thoughts, and feelings of friends and begin to consider the friendship needs and expectations of others. In this stage, intimacy is reciprocated to the extent that children share interests and are willing to play together; benefits of these characteristics are still more closely associated with the self than with enhancing the relationship. At this stage, friends also begin to develop into confidants and share secrets. Friendships at this stage are capable of immense change based simply on the moods of the children

involved. If one child is upset with another child that child is no longer considered a friend, however the friendship will be reestablished after conflict resolution.

In the fourth of Selman's stages, the Intimacy and Mutual Sharing phase, children begin to see friendships and other relationships as continuous and secure. As children enter this phase, sometime between the child's tenth and fifteenth year, concerns have altered to allow not only for support and sharing of interests in the immediate present, it now allows for desires to share and support each other on a more continuous basis with expectation of continued support and sharing in the future. Along with this shift of focus comes a shift from egocentrism to concern for the status of the relationship itself. Also of note, children no longer expect instant friendship attainment but instead expect an extended process of familiarizing themselves with the interests, attitudes, and beliefs of others while at the same time allowing for the same process in others. For the first time children become interested in the personality of their prospective friends rather than simply taking into account only how the potential friend serves their own interests. Children at this stage become protective of their friendships and take actions to ensure the preservation of the relationship; this results in an increase of contribution from both children in the dyad. Friends at this stage share a close bond and freely share intimate secrets with each other. It is also at this stage that distinction is made between friendships and acquaintances.

In Selman's final stage, the Autonomous Interdependence stage, children begin to attend to the psychological needs of their friends. Children at this stage (ages 14 and up) begin to understand the complexities of the friendship relationship and are able to adapt to allow for changes and variations in needs on the part of themselves and their partners.

Children at this stage are also more aware of who they are as individuals and tend to seek out others similar to themselves. Because the needs of each child are met, friendships at this stage are simultaneously dependant and autonomous. Trust has increased and is now apparent in the form of respect and intimacy.

To summarize, Selman's (1980) research further added to our understanding of the process of friendship expectation development by delving into the cognitive aspects of this process. His research led him to postulate a five-stage process of friendship expectation development. At the core of this process is the idea that the development of mental structures facilitates social thought. According to Selman's five stages, children develop via an additive process in which ever increasing levels of consideration for friends are added upon the child's basic desire to gratify his or her own needs.

Friendship expectations not only vary with age, as mentioned above, they also vary by gender, though research indicates that these variations are not as consistent as age effects. Girls expect more intimacy and self-disclosure from their best friends than do boys in late adolescence (Bigelow, 1977). Few differences have been found in early adolescence between the friendship expectations of boys and girls (Bigelow, 1977), though researchers (e.g., Bittle & Clark, 1988) have found that girls expect greater intimacy from their same-sex friends than boys as early as middle school.

More recent research on friendship expectations has evolved to the point that researchers are now investigating the function that these conceptualizations play in children's peer relationships. For example, Clark and Ayers (1993) studied the extent to which children's friendship expectations were met by their actual friends and how important it was for these expectations to be met in order to maintain the friendship.

Using seventh and eighth grade students, they reported that the extent to which friendship expectations were met depended on the age and gender of the participant, as well as the specific expectation in question. Clark and Ayers (1993) reported that of all the friendship expectations investigated, the one that most clearly met well beyond expectations was the amount of time spent sharing activities with their friends. It is interesting to note that Selman (1980) indicated that this was one of the very first, most basic of the friendship expectations to develop. Clark and Ayers (1993) also found that the level of conventional morality adolescents expected from their peers was seldom present. Boys and individuals with reciprocated friendships were receiving the expected amount of understanding from their relationships while the expectation of empathic understanding of girls was higher and therefore harder to meet (finding for loyalty and commitment showed a similar pattern). Clark and Ayers (1993) concluded that boys and those benefiting from reciprocal friendships in early adolescence were having their friendship expectations met, while girls and those without reciprocal friendships were generally not. Further girls had both more and higher friendship expectations that they found necessary to the friendship during early adolescence than did boys, however the data also indicated that while girls' expectations were generally not being met, they did report greater amounts of the expected characteristics than did boys (Clark and Ayers, 1993). This indicates that while friendships between girls may be qualitatively "better" than those of boys, they are still insufficient to meet the bulk of the expectations girls place upon them.

Ray and Cohen (1996) explored the differences in children's prototypical (idealized) best friend expectations versus their actual best friend expectations. Through

the application of questionnaires and peer nominations, Ray and Cohen (1996) demonstrated that both boys and girls expressed higher expectations for prototypical best friends than for their actual best friends. This indicates that children were able to maintain high expectations for best friends in general (as indicated by the high prototypical expectations) while still being able to tolerate failure to meet all of these expectations in their actual best friends. Ray and Cohen (1996) also found that while children with no reciprocal best friends held the same level of expectations for prototypical best friends they had lower expectations for actual non-reciprocal best friends than did children with at least one reciprocal best friend.

In general, previous research demonstrates that friendship expectations change as children age, progressing from concrete, physical, behaviors (time spent together, amount of play activity) in early childhood to more abstract interpersonal and dispositional characteristics (trust, support, loyalty) as children age (Berndt, 1981; Furman & Bierman, 1983; Ray & Cohen, 1996; Rubin, 1980; Selman, 1980). Research also indicates that friendship expectations commonly held by boys differ from those of girls (Clark & Ayers, 1993). Research has also indicated that friendship expectations have cognitive aspects which change over time (Selman, 1980), and that children also perceive a set of friendship obligations which change as children age (Hunter & Youniss, 1982).

Friendship Quality

Friendship quality may be defined as the overall sense of satisfaction towards a particular friendship, and has subsumed much of the early work on friendship expectations. The quality of close relationships can be assessed by examining the meaningful dimensions children used to understand friendship such as what is valued or

unwanted in the friendship. Some researchers believe the most valid measure of friendship quality is the subjective perception of that friendship by the children involved (Bukowski, Hoza, & Boivin, 1994).

In line with Bigelow's (1977) stage theory of friendship expectation development, Rubin (1980) demonstrated that young children consider physical accessibility the most important qualification for friendship. Young children also exhibit preference in friendship formation towards those they are able to spend a great deal of time with and those who take part in similar activities (Rubin, 1980). Rubin (1980) also reported that psychological attributes are not generally perceived by young children.

Berndt (1981), in a study of children from kindergarten, third, and sixth grades, reported that loyalty and intimacy increase a great deal as children age, while the importance of sharing and helping behaviors remained unchanged. Berndt's findings also indicated that the emphasis children place on sharing and helping one another remained constant across the ages considered. This indicates that while some features associated with friendship change over time, others remain more or less constant.

Bukowski et al. (1994) created the Friendship Qualities Scale to assess children's relationships with their best friends. The Friendship Qualities Scale measures the quality of relationships based upon five dimensions found to be central to the formation and upkeep of relationships: Companionship, Conflict, Help, Security, and Closeness. As defined by Bukowski et al. (1994), Companionship is a basic feature of children's friendships and involves the amount of time children spend interacting. The Conflict dimension includes any arguments or disagreements between the children. The ways in which children deal with conflict may be a great indicator of the children's ability to

maintain the relationship, determining whether the relationship will continue or terminate. The help category is also considered an important feature of friendship. Bukowski et al. (1994) broke this category down into two sub-components; Aid (mutual help and assistance) and Protection from Victimization (help of a friend). Security encompasses the child's sense that their friend can be relied upon and trusted in the event of problematic situations. Security is also important in deciding the outcome of conflict between friends and helps determine if the friendship continues or terminates. Finally, closeness deals with the positive feelings that friends share for one another.

Bukowski et al. (1994) found that the dimensions of Security, Companionship, Help, and Closeness were all characteristics commonly used in children's descriptions of friendships. Conflict was the only factor that seemed to have no significance in relation to stable or non-stable friendship (the likelihood that the children would remain friends). This is consistent with research demonstrating that while children report little to no conflict in their relationships, observational studies have shown friends to engage in conflict as much or more than acquaintances or enemies (Hartup & Shantz, 1992). What does appear to be important is the way in which children overcome normal conflict situations through the course of any friendship. For example, children involved in a friendship are more likely to concede their side of an argument if it appears that the argument might endanger the continuation of that friendship while children who are not friends are more likely to pursue an argument with one another. Bukowski, et al. (1996) found high intercorrelation between the positively valenced scales ($\underline{M}$ r = .62), component analysis yielded five factors which closely resemble Parker and Asher's (1993) six scales, outlined below.

Parker and Asher (1993) investigated the differences in friendship quality between sociometrically accepted and rejected children by examining children's perceptions of their best friends. The friendship qualities studied by Parker and Asher were derived partially from an earlier version of Bukowski, et al's. (1994) scale and included the degree of companionship offered by close friendships during play times and other recreational activities, the amount of intimacy associated with the friendship during social exchange, and whether or not the relationship increased feelings of self worth. Parker and Asher (1993) also investigated children's willingness to share with, guide, and help their friends as well as the extent to which these features manifested themselves in the relationship. Parker and Asher (1993) created the Friendship Quality Questionnaire which was composed of six qualitative dimensions: Validation and Caring, which assesses the amount of caring, interest, and support in friendships; Conflict and Betrayal, which assesses the extent to which disagreement and mistrust characterize the friendship; Companionship and Recreation, which assesses the amount of quality time children spend together; Help and Guidance, which assesses the amount of time and effort a child will give to help a friend with tasks; Intimate Exchange, which assesses sharing of personal experiences and feelings with one another; and Conflict Resolution, which assesses the ease or difficulty children have in resolving conflicts within the friendship.

The Friendship Quality Questionnaire was then used to examine friendship satisfaction and other features of best friends. Parker and Asher (1993) reported that all six of the factors measured by the Friendship Quality Questionnaire were significantly related to friendship satisfaction. Perceptions of friendships were moderately to highly related to partner's perceptions of the relationship and children who were accepted by

their peers perceived their friendships as more positive than children who were not accepted by their peers.

Using Parker and Asher's Friendship Quality Questionnaire (1993) Muerling, Ray & LoBello (1999) developed the Relationship Quality Questionnaire to investigate the differences in quality of relationships between perceived classroom friends and perceived classroom best friends. The Relationship Quality Questionnaire consisted of 21 items taken from the Friendship Quality Questionnaire and modified to include a new dimension, "exclusivity." The modified questionnaire was then given to children ranging from grades 2 through 6. Muerling, et al. (1999) found that children consistently evaluated classroom best friends higher than classroom friends on five of the seven dimensions: caring, companionship, conflict resolution, intimacy, and exclusivity. Thus, children receive more support and benefits from their best friends than they do from their friends. Muerling, et al. (1999) also reported that girls evaluated relationship quality dimensions higher than did boys, especially when evaluating the dimensions of caring, intimacy, and help/guidance, indicating that girls tend to give and receive more benefit from their relationships than boys do.

Extending Muerling, et al. (1999), Cleary & Ray (2001) investigated children's understanding of friendship quality in reciprocal relationships. Using second, third, fifth and sixth grade children, Cleary & Ray (2001) reported that reciprocal best friends were evaluated higher than were reciprocal friends. Thus, reciprocal best friends were not only of higher quality compared to reciprocal friends, best friends showed more similar perceptions of their relationships than did friends. Further, best friends exhibited more response similarity than friends.

Types of Friendships

Research investigating peer relationships in children and adolescents has revealed many types of positive relationships. Friend, best friend, unilateral friend, non-friend, chum, close friend, casual friend, and reciprocal friend are just a few (Hayes, Gershman & Bolin, 1980; Hays, 1989; Lea, 1979). Most commonly, types of friendships are defined in terms of reciprocity of friendship nominations. Reciprocal friendships are defined as those in which a child's nominated friend returns the friendship feelings as indicated by mutual nomination and both children's parents agree that the children are indeed reciprocal friends (Hayes, et al, 1980). In addition, friends can be categorized as Mutual Friends (each child nominated the other), Unilateral Given Friends (child nominated classmate), Unilateral Received Friends (classmate nominated child) or Non-Friends (neither child nominated the other). Research demonstrates that children like classmates whom they nominate more than those that they do not, further Mutual Friends are liked better than Unilateral Given Friends. Both Mutual and Unilateral friends were liked better than non-friends. Research has also shown that children are aware of reciprocity in friendships and in general, value friends with whom they share reciprocity and that this is a contributing factor to the amount of liking associated with friendships (Hundley & Cohen, 1999).

While the bulk of friendship research has centered on characteristics of particular types of relationships, several researchers have begun to investigate two or more types of peer relationships, often with the goal of determining the qualitative differences between relationship types (Furman and Buhrmester, 1985; Hays, 1989; Lea, 1979). Comparisons made by these studies include friends versus non-friend, reciprocal versus non-reciprocal

friendships, and close versus casual friendships. Lea (1979) reports that reciprocated friendships are marked by a higher level of similarity compared to unreciprocated friends. Hays (1989) demonstrated that more resources are shared in greater variety in intimate (i.e., secret-sharing, emotionally supporting) relationships as opposed to non-intimate relationships and that close friends provide more and better emotional support than casual friends.

In nomination technique research, only mutually nominated dyads have been considered "friends," as unilateral nomination does not satisfy the dyadic conceptualization of friendship. Unilateral relationships cannot be dismissed out of hand, however, because to the child nominator a perception of a friendship relationship might well exist. Several important differences have been found between unilateral and mutual nomination (reciprocal) friendships. First, it is common for elementary school aged children to perceive themselves as having more friends than are actually borne out by mutual nominations (Ray, Cohen, & Secrist, 1995). Studies are varied on the dynamics of interactions between unilateral friends. Some studies indicate that relationships between unilateral friends are similar to those of mutual friends while other studies have indicated that these interactions show a great deal of disparity (Hartup, 1996; Lea, 1979). Hartup, Laursen, Steward, & Easton (1988) conducted research on conflict between unilateral friends and found that these conflicts bear close resemblance to conflicts between non-friends. At the conclusion of the conflict, however, unilateral friends were more likely to continue to interact while non-friends were more likely to break off contact and move away from one another.

Children express a higher level of commitment to reciprocated relationships than non-reciprocated relationships (Clark & Ayers, 1988). Hayes, et al. (1980) found that nominated but not reciprocal friends may actually dislike the nominating child, a relationship which Hayes called unreciprocated friendship. Frankel (1990) found a positive correlation between the number of reciprocated friendships and feelings of emotional support in girls. Mutual friends have also been found to be more similar in personality than unreciprocated friends. While non-reciprocal relationships are obviously not as high in positive influence as reciprocal friendships (as evidenced above), Epstein (1983) believes that non-reciprocal friendships still are of use in the personal and social development of adolescents as they learn about developing relationships from interacting in both reciprocal and non-reciprocal relationships, though it has yet to be determined how frequently those with non-reciprocal friendships go on to develop reciprocal friendships.

Another distinction that has been made in the study of children's special relationships is between close and casual friendships (Hays, 1989). Casual friendships (such as friendships that are early in their development) are different in several ways from developed close friendships. Primary among these differences is a shift in focus from concern only for one's own reward-cost outcome towards concern for a two-way mutually beneficial outcome. Not surprisingly, close friendships are also associated with a greater amount of emotional support and guidance than are casual friendships. Such close friends are mutually dependant and these relationships are commonly characterized as being deeper than casual or "ordinary" friendship. Interactions between close friends have been found to be more deliberate and much more frequent than interactions between

casual friends. Further interaction between casual friends are often dictated by the situation (i.e. both children sitting near each other in the same class), whereas interactions between close friends are actively sought out.

Besides the frequency with which they occur, interactions between close and casual friends are also different in a number of important ways (Hays, 1989). Close friends communicate with one another more easily than casual friends and less verbal communication is necessary between close friends (Hays, 1989). Casual friends are often seen as generic and easily replaced, while close friends generally consider each other unique and irreplaceable. Hays (1989) found that dissatisfaction and emotional ambivalence actually rises when friendships become closer. At the same time, the benefits from the friendship increases as well. Hays (1989) reported that the close friendship will continue to be maintained and grow closer as long as the benefits continue to outweigh the costs. The relationship will falter and perhaps even terminate if the costs begin to outweigh the benefits. Hays (1989) also reported that boys and girls close and casual friendships differ in several ways. Girls, says Hayes, provide and receive more benefits from their close friends than boys. Benefits that have been positively correlated with close friendships include emotional support, information sharing, and task based assistance (Hays, 1989).

Q-Methodology

As can be seen from the research reviewed above, the majority of research into children's understanding of friendship has relied heavily on questionnaires. While research using this methodology has proven fruitful in discovering quantitative differences between friends and best friends, there are several limitations. For instance,

having children evaluate a friend and a best friend using the same questionnaire can address differences of degree. For example, Muerling, et al. (1999) and Cleary & Ray (2001) demonstrated that best friends were evaluated higher than friends on the majority of the relationship qualities examined. However, this methodology does not allow for the investigation of more qualitative differences that may exist between friends and best friends. A second limitation of the questionnaire method so popular in friendship research is that the relative importance of each relationship dimension (e.g. exclusivity, conflict resolution) to each participant is overlooked. To address these limitations and extend previous work investigating friend and best friend differences, the current study used Q-methodology in an examination of children's understanding of friend and best friend relationship qualities.

Q-methodology, created in the 1930's by William Stephenson, is a scientifically derived method of studying individual human subjectivity in a systematic way (McKeown & Thomas, 1988). The basic premise of Q is that although true subjectivity is self-referent and depends upon an individual's internal frame of reference, this does not mean that it is inaccessible to examination. Because the goal of Q-methodology is the study of this internal subjectivity, Q studies preserve the internal frame of reference of the participants. While it is true that the opinions found during the course of a Q-study can seldom be proven scientifically, it is the purpose of Q-methodology to present them in such a way as to allow for the identification of the structures and forms which make up the individuals reference framework (Brown, 1993).

The most well known component of Q-methodology, the Q-sort, is simply a way of allowing the participant to model his or her viewpoints in a tangible form. The

participant arranges a set of stimuli, each of which represent an opinion or idea, according to whatever instruction is appropriate to accomplish the study's goals (i.e. from those that are "most like my friends" to those that are "least like my friends") (Kerlinger, 1973). Stimulus items in the Q-sort (known as the "Q-sample) can be created in a variety of ways. McKeown & Thomas (1988) classify stimulus items by differentiating between "naturalistic" and "ready-made" Q-samples. A naturalistic Q-sample is one culled from the oral or written statements of the participant. Q-samples culled from pre-existing sources outside of participant communication are known as ready-made samples (such as samples taken from pre-existing questionnaires). McKeown & Thomas (1988) also mention quasi-naturalistic samples in which the Q-sample is culled from interview materials but interviews that are external to the study.

Kerlinger (1973) points out that Q-samples can further be subdivided into the categories of "structured" and "unstructured." Of these, unstructured samples are by far the most commonly used. An unstructured Q-sample is one that is constructed with no specific regard to the factors underlying them. Put more simply, items can come from anywhere and be anything; though they are selected because it is presumed that (much like the items on a personality test) they measure some variable of interest (aggression, racial tolerance, etc.). A structured Q-sample, on the other hand, is one in which the variables or hypothesis of a specific theory are built into the sample. In the case of the structured Q-sample, while still presumably measuring one variable, the items are partitioned in some way to reflect the underlying theory (Kerlinger, 1973). For instance, if one had a theory that individuals from major metropolitan areas experienced more

stress it would be possible to structure the items so that half indicated high stress and half indicated low stress, though commonly the partitions are more complex than this. The Q-sort allows for the study of individual differences by forcing responses into a semi-normal distribution of the sorted items. In doing so it allows for analysis to focus not just on the quantitative differences between sorts but allows you to compare where the items are sorted within the distribution.

Thus, the strength of Q-methodology, compared to Likert-type questionnaires, lies in the format of the Q-sort itself. Whereas in the past participants were typically given questionnaires on which items could receive the same rating (i.e., all Really Like Us") the forced-choice format of the Q-sort makes it necessary for the participant to think deeply and prioritize the importance of each item. While it may be argued that the same can be accomplished by simply building forced-choice into the questionnaire, this would make it necessary to keep track of what score was assigned to each individual item, a daunting task, especially when the participants are children. By building these decisions into a tiered sorting task, this problem is circumvented.

The Q-sort also allows the researcher to objectively quantify what is, to the child, a purely subjective process. Q-methodology allows the researcher to focus on the differences between children's individual sorts, then combine those differences and make comparisons just as if the Q-sort items' were those of a questionnaire. Thus, strength of the Q-sort lies not in the analysis of the data, but in the process of the Q-sort itself.

Further, Q-methodology is also likely to be more engaging for the participant than would the basic questionnaire. This is an especially important consideration when working with children, as they are likely to become distracted. In line with the benefit of

the Q-sort, Kerlinger (1973) reports that most participants seem to enjoy the process of the Q-sort.

The Present Study

The present study investigated children's understanding of the qualitative differences between same-gender classroom friend and same-gender classroom best-friend relationships using the Friendship Attributes Q-sort (FAQ) developed by Parker, Saxon, Houlihan, and Casas (1997). Previous research investigating types of friendships (e.g., Hays, 1989) indicates that relationships between friends are less intimate and more shallow than relationships between best friends. Further, both Muerling, et al. (1999) and Cleary and Ray (2001) reported that children evaluated best-friends higher than friends on the majority of relationship qualities assessed. Based on these findings, it was first hypothesized that best-friends would be evaluated higher than friends on the dimensions of Loyalty and Commitment, Compatibility of Attitudes and Behavior, Reciprocal Candor, Affirmation and Personal Support, Exclusivity, and Interdependence; while the dimensions of Rivalry and Competition and Asymmetrical Influence and Status would show no difference.

It was further hypothesized that children would differ in their conceptualizations of special relationships based on gender. Parker et al. (1997) reported that girls evaluated their relationships higher than did boys on the dimensions of Loyalty and Commitment, Compatibility of Attitudes and Behaviors, Reciprocal Candor, Affirmation and Personal Support, and Interdependence. Parker, et al. (1997) also found that boys evaluated their relationships higher than girls Rivalry and Competition and Asymmetrical Influence and Status.

Based on research documenting how children conceptualizations of friendship become more dispositional and less behavioral as children get older (e.g., Berndt, 1981: Ray & Cohen, 1996), it was expected that younger children would evaluate behaviorally oriented qualities (i.e. those based upon overt actions) as more important than dispositional qualities (i.e. those based upon internal attitudes). Conversely, older children were expected to evaluate dispositional qualities as more important than behaviorally oriented qualities.

Method

Participants

Participants were 61 children (30 from each of the third and fourth grades and 31 from the fifth, and sixth grades) from a public elementary school in Montgomery, Alabama. Participating children returned a signed parent consent form and also gave their own written assent (see Appendix A). Children were informed that the study was in not part of their school work and that they could stop participation in the study at any time.

Design

The study had two between-participants factors: age and gender, and two within-participants factor: relationship type, and quality dimension. Thus, children's subjective understanding of the importance of relationship qualities of classroom friend and classroom best-friend relationships was assessed in the context of a 2(Age: 3-4; 5-6) x 2 (Gender) x 2 (Relationship type: best friend, friend) x 8 (Relationship dimensions) factorial design with Relationship type and Relationship dimension as within-participant factors.

Materials

Each child completed two questionnaires and two Q-sort interviews. One questionnaire identified same-gender classroom friends and a same-gender best-friend; the other questionnaire asked children to evaluate how much they liked each of their classmates. The two Q-sort interviews asked participants to sort items according to the importance of each item to the relationship: one interview for the child's same-gender classroom friend and one interview for the child's same-gender classroom best-friend.

Relationship Nomination Questionnaire. The present study employed a nomination technique in order to identify classroom same-sex friends and a same-sex best friend (as in Muerling, et al., 1999; see Appendix B). Two forms of the nomination questionnaire were used, one for boys and one for girls, both of which consisted of a roster of the names of the child's same-sex classmates. The child was asked to circle the names of all his or her friends, then to place an "X" next to his or her very best friend's name, even if they were not circled. From this measure, the child's classroom best-friend and pool of classroom friends was identified.

Relationship Rating Questionnaire. In order to identify how well each child liked each of his or her same-sex classmates, a Likert scale rating technique was used (see Appendix C). A roster of the names of all the same-sex classmates was presented and the child was asked to rate how much they liked each classmate using the number scale at the bottom of the page.

Classroom Friend and Classroom Best Friend Selection. Using the relationship nomination questionnaire and the relationship rating questionnaire a friend and best-friend were selected for each child. The two relationships selected were the child's previously identified best friend and the nominated friend with the lowest likert ranking. In the event of a tie between likert rankings, the friendship selected was decided using a table of random numbers.

Friendship Attributes & Best-Friendship Attributes Q-sort Interviews. The present study employed a Q-sort methodology to allow children to distinguish among features of their relationships: one for a same-gender classroom friend and one for a same-gender classroom best-friend (see Appendix D for items). The specific Q-sort used

was the Friendship Attributes Q-sort (FAQ) developed by Parker, et al., (1997), which was based in part on the Friendship Quality Questionnaire (Parker & Asher, 1993).

The FAQ is comprised of 67 items designed to assess 8 features of friendship: Loyalty and Commitment (α = .77), Compatibility of Attitudes and Behavior (α = .71), Reciprocal Candor (α = .67), Affirmation and Personal Support (α = .83), Rivalry and Competition (α = .65), Exclusivity (α = .67), Interdependence (α = .74), and Asymmetrical Influence and Status (α = .75).

The Q-sort procedure consisted of three stages following Saxon (1996). In the first stage, children were presented with the items mentioned above printed on 3x5 index cards. The child was then asked to think about either the selected classroom friend relationship or classroom best-friend relationship and sort the cards into three boxes, one labeled "Like Us", another labeled "Not Like Us", and a third labeled "Half and Half". The experimenter explained to the participating child that the "Like Us" box was for cards that were true about their friendship, the "Not Like Us" box was for cards that were untrue of their friendship, and the "Half and Half" box was for items that either did not apply or were true for one friend but not the other. Children were asked to keep the number of cards in each box about even, which prevented children from putting all of the cards in the same box. A minimum of 20 cards was required in each box in order to proceed to step 2. If the child had fewer than 20 cards in either of the extreme boxes they were asked to read back through the "Half and Half" cards and redistribute them until this requirement was met. In the second stage of the Q-sort, the experimenter read each card from the "Like Us" box and placed them before the child, the child was then asked to select the 10 items from these items that were "Really Like Us." The child was then

asked to select four items from these 10 that were "Definitely Like Us." Step three was very similar except that the child was asked to select 10 items from the "Not Like Us" box that were "Really Not Like Us," and then four items from these 10 that were "Definitely Not Like Us." The end result of this sorting procedure was a distribution of items grouped in categories ranging from "Definitely Like Us" on one extreme and "Definitely Not Like Us" on the other.

After each participant sorted the items into the seven possible categories, each item was assigned a score from 0 to 6 based on the category it was placed in. Items in the "Definitely Like Us" pile were assigned a score of 6 while items in the "Definitely Not Like Us pile were assigned a score of 0. From this point scores were interpreted in the same manner as a traditional questionnaire.

Procedure

Each child was individually interviewed in a quiet area outside his or her classroom in two 20-30 minute sessions. Four tasks were completed during this interview, the Relationship Nomination Questionnaire, the Relationship Rating Questionnaire, and the two Q-sort interviews. First each child received the Friendship Nomination Questionnaire, then the Relationship Rating Questionnaire, and then the two Q-sort interviews. Order of presentation for the Q-sorts (friend, best-friend) was counterbalanced. Following completion of all tasks, the child was thanked for his or her participation, asked if there were any questions, debriefed, and then taken back to his or her classroom by the experimenter.

Results

To examine grade effects with ample group size, the four grade levels were collapsed into two larger age levels forming a younger group (Grades 3-4; mean age = 9 years, 3 months), and an older group (Grades 5-6; mean age = 12 years, 3 months). For all analyses, grade and gender were between-participant variables and relationship type and relationship dimensions were within-participant variables. Further, all follow-up tests to significant interactions were conducted as tests for simple effects, followed by Newman-Keuls post-hoc tests ($p < .05$) to determine sources of differences where appropriate.

Hypothesis 1: Relationship Type x Dimension Interaction

For hypothesis one, a 2 (Type of relationship: friend, best-friend) x 8 (Relationship dimension) repeated measures factorial ANOVA revealed a significant relationship type x dimension interaction, $F(7,420) = 16.26, p < .001$. As predicted, children evaluated best-friends higher than friends on the dimensions of Loyalty and Commitment, Compatibility of Attitudes and Behavior, Reciprocal Candor, Affirmation and Personal Support, and Interdependence, though no differences emerged for Exclusivity. Further, rather than showing no relationship type effect on the dimension of Rivalry and Competition as predicted, friends were evaluated higher on this dimension than were best-friends (see Table 1 for means and standard deviations).

Table 1: Mean Ratings for Relationship Quality Dimensions

Dimension	Friend	Best-Friend
Loyalty & Commitment	4.24 (.88)	4.77 (.50)**
Compatibility of Attitudes & Behavior	4.42 (.99)	5.00 (.56)**
Reciprocal Candor	3.78 (.70)	4.40 (.56)**
Affirmation & Personal Support	4.26 (.73)	4.74 (.50)**
Rivalry & Competition	3.65 (.81)*	3.34 (.63)
Exclusivity	3.44 (.59)	3.44 (.70)
Interdependence	3.90 (.91)	4.52 (.68)**
Asymetrical Influence & Status	3.78 (.66)*	3.45 (.45)

* = $p < .01$; ** = $p < .001$

Within friend relationships, Loyalty and Commitment, Compatibility of Attitudes and Behaviors, and Affirmation and Personal Support did not differ but were evaluated higher than Reciprocal Candor, Rivalry and Competition, Interdependence, and Asymetrical Influence and Status. Exclusivity was evaluated lower than all other dimensions. For best-friends, Compatibility of Attitudes and Behaviors was evaluated higher than Loyalty and Commitment and Affirmation and Personal Support, which did not differ. Further, Reciprocal Candor and Interdependence did not differ but were evaluated higher than Rivalry and Competition, Exclusivity, and Asymetrical Influence and Status.

While the relative importance of each dimension within friends and within best friends was assessed using the follow-ups described above, dimensions within each relationship type were rank ordered and a spearman rank order correlation conducted on

the two ranks. This was done to assess the similarity with regards to the importance of each dimension between friends and best friends. Analysis revealed a significant positive relationship, $r_s(8) = .93$, $p < .01$. Thus the rank-ordered importance of each dimension for friends and best friends was highly similar.

In sum, the first hypothesis was supported. Best-friends were evaluated higher than friends on five of the eight dimensions investigated. When looking at the importance of the relationship dimensions for friends, Loyalty and Commitment, Compatibility of Attitudes and Behaviors and Affirmation and Personal Support were evaluated as most important, followed by Reciprocal Candor, Rivalry and Competition, Interdependence, and Asymetrical Influence and Status. Exclusivity was evaluated as the least important relationship dimension for friends. A slightly different pattern emerges when the importance of the relationship dimensions is examined for best-friends. Here Compatibility of Attitudes and Behaviors is evaluated as the most important dimension, followed by Loyalty and Commitment and Affirmation and Personal Support. Reciprocal Candor and Interdependence are next in order of evaluated importance, followed by Rivalry and Competition, Exclusivity, and Asymetrical Influence and Status.

Hypothesis 2: Gender x Dimension

For hypothesis 2, the 2 (Gender) x 8 (Dimension) mixed factorial ANOVA was non-significant. However, analysis did reveal a significant dimension main effect, $F(7,413) = 52.17$, $p < .001$. Loyalty and Commitment, Compatibility of Attitudes and Behaviors, and Affirmation and Personal Support did not differ but were rated higher than Reciprocal Candor and Interdependence. These dimensions were evaluated higher

than were Rivalry and Competition, Exclusivity, and Asymetrical Influence and Status, which did not differ (see Table 2 for means and standard deviations).

Table 2: Means for Relationship Quality Dimensions

Dimension	Mean	SD
Loyalty & Commitment	4.51	(.58)
Compatibility of Attitudes & Behavior	4.71	(.66)
Affirmation & Personal Support	4.50	(.51)
Reciprocal Candor	4.09	(.50)
Rivalry & Competition	3.49	(.55)
Exclusivity	3.44	(.49)
Interdependence	4.20	(.65)
Asymetrical Influence and Status	3.61	(.49)

Hypothesis 3: Age x Behavioral/Dispositional Item

To address hypothesis three, that younger children would evaluate behavioral qualities as more characteristic of their relationships while older children would evaluate dispositional qualities as more characteristic, items from the Q-sort interview were coded as either behavioral or dispositional. Two individuals independently rated each item as either behavioral or dispositional and the two lists were compared. Only items mutually nominated to be either behavioral or dispositional were included in the analysis of the third hypothesis (see Appendix D). This rating yielded 22 dispositional and 30 behavioral items.

For hypothesis 3, the 2 (Age) x 2 (Behavioral/Dispositional) mixed factorial ANOVA was non-significant, showing no change between the behavioral/dispositional makeup of the Q-sorts of young children and on older children.

As an additional analysis, a person product moment correlation was conducted on the relationship between the behavioral and dispositional dimensions derived. This analysis revealed a significant correlation, $r(60) = .50$, $p < .001$. Thus, these two dimensions appear to be tapping the same construct. This correlation may help explain the non-significant finding of hypothesis three.

Discussion

Children's friendships are important to social, emotional, and cognitive development (Gottman, 1981; Parker & Asher, 1987; Buhrmester & Fuhrman, 1986; Newcomb & Bagwell, 1995). A great deal of research has been done investigating children's understanding of their peer relationships (Bigelow, 1977; Furman & Bierman, 1984; Ray & Cohen, 1996). This research has revealed several dimensions (expectations, qualities) which seem to be important to children in the conceptualization of their friendships (Bigelow, 1977; Fuhrman & Bierman, 1984; Parker & Asher, 1993). However, little research has been directed towards children's understanding of the differences between types of close relationships (see Cleary & Ray, 2001; Muerling, et al., 1999 for exceptions). Thus, the present study investigated children's conceptualizations of their friend and best-friend relationships using a Q-sort methodology.

The hypothesis that children would evaluate best friends higher than friends on the dimensions of Loyalty & Commitment, Compatibility of Attitudes and Behaviors, Reciprocal Candor, Affirmation & Personal Support, Exclusivity, and Interdependence was supported. Children evaluated their best friends higher on five of the eight relationship dimensions (Loyalty & Commitment, Compatibility of Attitudes and Behaviors, Reciprocal Candor, Affirmation & Personal Support, and Interdependence). However no differences were found between children's ratings of friends and best friends on the dimension of exclusivity. Children were found to evaluate best friends lower than friends on the dimension of Rivalry and Competition, as well as the dimension of Asymetrical Influence and Status.

These findings are consistent with previous research (Hays, 1989; Muerling, et al., 1999) showing that best friends offer more intimate and emotional support during times of turmoil and difficulty. There are several possible explanations for this phenomenon. Is this increase in intimacy and support due simply to the fact that best-friends have spent more time together, leading to a greater feeling of trust between them; or is it that best friend relationships are qualitatively different from friend relationships in some way which causes this increase in trust? Perhaps as Muerling, et al. (1999) state, it is probably a combination of both. That is, best friends may not only spend more time interacting with each other compared to friends, best friends probably also interact in mutually rewarding ways that friends do not. Best friends are more likely to have qualitatively better relationships than do friends (Hays, 1989), because spending increasing amounts of time together is likely to lead to increases in feelings of trust and intimacy.

Previous research (e.g., Rubin, 1980) has also revealed that children share greater similarity with best friends than with friends in not only behaviors which they engage in and the dispositional characteristics (i.e. Compatibility of Attitudes and Behaviors) best friends also have more similar perceptions of their relationship compared to friends (Cleary & Ray, 2001). Interestingly, when ranked against all other relationship dimensions measured by the FAQ, Compatibility of Attitudes and Behaviors emerged as the relationship dimension most characteristic of classroom friends and classroom best friends. This is no surprise judging by the importance attributed to similarity in previous research (Bigelow & LaGaipa, 1975; Selman, 1980; Furman & Bierman, 1983; 1984).

In previous research (e.g., Muerling, et al., 1999; Cleary & Ray, 2001) Exclusivity was found to be evaluated higher for friends than for best friends. The current study failed to replicate these results. However, after reviewing the Exclusivity items of the FAQ and those of the FQQ (Muerling, et al., 1999) it is possible that the Exclusivity dimension of the FAQ differs fundamentally from that of the FQQ. The Exclusivity items of the FQQ ask children to evaluate how much they believe their friend likes them, while items on the FAQ ask children to rate the difficulty imposed by the inclusion of others into shared activities with their friend. Perhaps this fundamental difference accounts for these unexpected results concerning the Exclusivity dimension.

The hypothesis predicting that girls would evaluate their relationships more positively than boys was not supported, however analysis did reveal that boys and girls evaluated Loyalty and Commitment, Compatibility of Attitudes & Behaviors, and Affirmation and Personal Support higher than they did Reciprocal Candor, and Interdependence. These in turn were rated higher than Rivalry & Competition, Exclusivity, and Asymeterical Influence and Status. This finding is consistent with previous research (Hays, 1989) documenting the importance of intimacy and support in close personal relationships.

The hypothesis that older children would evaluate both friends and best friends higher on dispositional factors and younger children would evaluate their friends and best friends higher on dispositional factors was not supported. These results are not consistent with previous research, which has shown that older children tend to evaluate friends higher on dispositional qualities whereas younger children tend to rate them higher on behavioral qualities (e.g., Berndt, 1981; Ray & Cohen, 1996).

When considering why such results were not found in the present study, one has to first consider the items of the FAQ. The FAQ was not designed to differentiate between behavioral and dispositional items, as such all assignment to these categories were made by mutual agreement between researchers. It is likely that we were simply looking to reproduce results that were not possible with the FAQ. Another important consideration deals with the instructions given to children when they were taking the Q-sort. Children were asked to sort items by how like or not like their relationship the item was. Results for this particular hypothesis might have differed if children had been asked to sort the items by how important they felt they were to the relationship.

Several limitations are apparent in this study. First, the decision to use a unilateral friendship nomination technique rather than a reciprocal nomination technique may have led to difficulty accurately identifying classroom friends and classroom best friends. Typically, researchers implement a reciprocal nomination technique because this more clearly fits the description of a friendship as a dyadic relationship (Ray, Cohen, & Secrist, 1995). It will be important for future research to investigate reciprocal relationships using the Q-sort methodology.

Another limitation lies in the use of the Q-sort itself as it does raise concern that a certain degree of artificiality may be introduced into the participant response set due to its forced choice format (Kerlinger, 1973). The concern here is that by restricting participants to only a certain number of responses in each response category (i.e. Like Us, Not Like Us, Half & Half, etc.) the researcher may be limiting participants' ability to give a true picture of their relationship. Tied to this, of course, is a basic limitation of any study relying upon a preexisting measure as a means of obtaining data; the participant's

responses are obviously limited to the items of the measure. The only way in which one could overcome this particular problem is by conducting open ended interviews with the participant pool.

A third limitation of the current study is that the cross-sectional nature of the design did not allow for an assessment of the dynamic nature of friendship, of how relationships change over time. It will be important for future research to investigate how relationship differences and relationship qualities change using longitudinal designs.

Lastly, while the aim of the current study was to investigate friend and best friend differences "normatively" it will be important for future research to investigate the links between individual differences variables (e.g., attachment style, personality traits) and relationship quality.

While a great deal of data has been collected on the close peer relationships of children, a great deal more is needed before the complex dynamics of these relationships can be understood. While most research is concerned with quantitative analysis of differences within participant populations, it is still reasonable to assume that the fundamental differences between types of friends lies on a more qualitative plain. Perhaps best friends not only interact more frequently than do friends, they interact in ways that are more mutually beneficial. That is to say that research has demonstrated that best friends are higher than friends on caring, but it is possible that best friends go about the business of caring in a different way than do friends. It will be important for future research to investigate these possible differences.

In conclusion, it is understandable why researchers have been reluctant or hesitant to investigate differences in positive peer relationships. First, most researchers claim that

friends and best friends are positive and thus "lump" these relationships together when assessing the effects of these positive peer relationships on development. Second, in most research in this area, to be a best friend one first has to be friend, so the differences, methodologically speaking, are of degree only. However, Hartup (1996) in a review of the friendship literature, stated that to better understand the developmental significance of children's friendships research must focus on the quality of the child's relationships, i.e. how they are different, not just how much they are different. Thus it is not enough to know how many friends the child has or the identity of his or her friends. Also needed is an assessment of the child's perceptions of satisfaction and need fulfillment. This being the case, investigations into children's understanding of friends and best friends and the differences that exist between the two are pertinent to our understanding of how relationships, and more precisely relationship quality is linked to developmental outcomes.

Understanding these relationship differences more clearly will hopefully lead to a greater understanding of the process by which close relationships are formed and allow for the creation of techniques to aid those who have difficulty in forming close personal relationships. The present study revealed several differences in how children evaluate the relationship characteristics friends and best friends. Children evaluated best friends as being higher than friends on five of the eight relationship dimensions measured (compatibility of attitudes and behaviors, reciprocal candor, affirmation and personal support, loyalty and commitment, and interdependence). By extending past research showing that children do in fact make distinctions between types of close relationship, the

present study continues the investigation into the qualitative differences between friendship types and it is hopeful that it facilitates future research into this area.

References

Asher, S.R., & Gottman, J.M. (Eds.). (1981). *The development of children's friendships.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Berndt, T.J. (1981). Age changes and changes over time in prosocial intention and behavior between friends. *Developmental Psychology, 17*, 408-416.

Berndt, T.J., & Perry, T.B. (1986). Children's perceptions of friendships as supportive relationships. *Developmental Psychology, 22*, 640-648.

Berndt, T.J. (1996). Exploring the effects of friendship quality on social development. In W.M. Bukowski, A.F. Newcomb, & W.W. Hartup (Eds.), *The company they keep: Friendship in childhood and adolescence* (pp. 346-365). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Bigelow, B.J., & LaGaipa, J.J. (1975). Children's written descriptions of friendship: A multidimensional analysis. *Developmental Psychology, 11*, 857-858.

Bigelow, B.J. (1977). Children's friendship expectations: A cognitive development study. *Child Development, 48*, 246-253.

Bigelow, B.J., & LaGaipa, J.J. (1980). The development of friendship values and choices. In Foot, H.C., & Chapman, A.J. (Eds.), *Friendship and social relations in children.* (pp. 15-44). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Bittle, M., & Clark M. (1988). The role of reciprocity and proximity in junior high school friendships. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 17*, 403-411.

Brown, S.R. (1993) A primer on Q methodology, *Operant Subjectivity, 16*, 91-138.

Buhrmester, D., & Furman, W. (1986). The changing functions of friends in childhood: A neo-Sullivanian perspective. In V.J. Derlaga & B.A. Winstead (Eds.), *Friendship and social interaction* (pp. 41-62). New York: Springer-Verlag.

Bukowski, W.M., Hoza, B., & Boivin, M. (1994). Measuring friendship quality during pre-early adolescence: the development and psychometric properties of the Friendship Qualities Scale. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 11*, 471-484.

Bukowski W.M., Newcomb, A.F., & Hartup, W.W. (1996) *The Company They Keep: Friendship in Childhood and Adolescence*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Clark, M.L., & Ayers, M. (1988). The role of reciprocity and proximity in junior high school friendships. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 17*, 403-407.

Clark, M.L., & Ayers, M. (1993). Friendship expectations and friendship evaluations: Reciprocity and gender effect. *Youth and Society, 24*, 299-313.

Cleary, D., & Ray, G. E. (2001). *Reciprocity and Similarity In Children's Relationship Qualities.* Paper presented to the annual meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Memphis, TN.

Epstein, J. (1983). Examining theories of adolescent friendships. In J. Epstein & N. Karweitt (Eds.), *Friends in school: Patterns of selection in secondary schools* (pp. 39-61). New York: Academic Press.

Furman, W., & Bierman, K.L. (1983). Developmental changes in young children's conceptions of friendship. *Child Development, 54(3)*, 549-556.

Furman, W., & Bierman, K.L., (1984). Children's conceptions of friendship: A multimethod study of developmental changes. *Developmental Psychology, 20,* 925-931.

Furman, W., & Buhrmester, D. (1985). Children's perceptions of the personal relationships in their social networks. *Developmental Psychology, 21,* 1016-1024.

Furman, W. (1996). The measurement of friendship perceptions: Conceptual and methodological issues. In W.M. Bukowski, A.F. Newcomb, & W.W. Hartup (Eds.), *The company they keep: Friendship in childhood and adolescence* (pp. 41-65). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Frankel, K. (1990). Girl's perceptions of peer relationship support and stress. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 10,* 69-88.

Hartup, W.W. (1996). The company they keep: Friendships and their developmental significance. *Child Development, 67,* 1-13.

Hartup, W.W., Laursen, B., Stewart, M.I., & Easton, A. (1988). Conflict and the friendship relations of young children. *Child Development, 59,* 1590-1600.

Hartup, W.W., & Shantz, C. (1992) *Conflict in child and adolescent development.* New York: Cambridge University Press

Hays, D.S., Gersham, E., & Bolin, L.J. (1980). Friends and enemies: Cognitive bases for preschool children's unilateral and reciprocal relationships. *Child Development, 51,* 1276-1279.

Hays, R.B. (1989). The day-to-day functioning of close versus casual friendships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 6,* 21-37.

Hinde, R.A. (1979). *Toward understanding relationships.* London: Academic Press.

Hundley, R.J., & Cohen, R. (1999). Children's relationships with classmates: A comprehensive analysis of friendship nominations and liking. *Child Study Journal, 29*, 233-246.

Hunter, F.T., & Youniss, J. (1982). Changes in the function of three relations during adolescence. *Developmental Psychology, 18(6)*, 806-811.

Kerlinger, F. (1973). *Review of research in education, 3rd edition.* Itasca, IL: F.E. Peacock.

Lea, M. (1979). Personality similarity in unreciprocated friendships. *British Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 18*, 393-394.

McKeown, B., & Thomas, D. (1988). *Q-methodology.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Monroe, W.S. (1898). Social consciousness in children. *Psychological Review, 5*, 68-70.

Muerling, C.N., Ray, G.E., LoBello, S.G. (1999). Children's evaluations of classroom friend and classroom best friend relationships. *Child Study Journal, 29*, 79-96.

Newcomb, A.F., & Bagwell, C.L. (1995). Children's friendship relations: a meta-analytic review. *Psychological Bulletin, 117*, 306-347.

Parker, J.G., & Asher, S.R. (1987). Peer relationships and later personal adjustment: Are low accepted children "at risk"? *Psychological Bulletin, 102*, 357-389.

Parker, J.G., & Asher, S.R. (1993). Friendship and friendship quality in middle childhood: Links with peer group acceptance and feelings of loneliness and social dissatisfaction. *Developmental Psychology, 29*, 611-621.

Parker, J.G, Saxon, J., Houlihan, K.G., & Casas, J.F. (1997). *Assessing children's best friendships: conceptual issues and the development and assessment of a new q-*

sort instrument. Paper presented at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Washington D.C., April, 1997.

Piaget, J. (2000). Piaget's Theory. In K. Lee (Ed.), *Childhood cognitive development: the essential readings. Essential Readings in developmental psychology* (pp. 33-47). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publisher's Inc.

Ray, G.E., Cohen, R., & Secrist, M.E. (1995). Best friend networks of children across settings. *Child Study Journal, 25*, 169-187.

Ray, G.E., & Cohen, R. (1996). Children's friendships: Expectations for prototypical versus actual best friends. *Child Study Journal, 26*, 209-227.

Rubin, Z. (1980). *Children's Friends.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Saxon, J. (1996). *Distinguishing between the behavioral features and affective features of children's friendships.* Chicago, IL: University of Illinois.

Selman, R.L. (1980). *The growth of interpersonal understanding: developmental and clinical analysis.* New York: Academic Press.

Appendix A

Auburn University at Montgomery

Informed Consent

Your child is being invited to participate in a project looking at the importance of children's friendships. We hope to learn more about children's understanding of friends and best friends. Your child has been selected because all third, fourth, fifth, and sixth grade children at Dannelly Elementary School are being asked to participate.

If you decide to participate, we will spend a few moments familiarizing your child with the necessary tasks, and after which they will perform a card-sorting task designed to reflect their opinion on different qualities of friendships. There are no apparent risks to children, names of participants will be kept strictly confidential. At no time will your child leave the school. The study will be performed in a quiet room in the elementary school building at a time scheduled by your child's teacher.

All information obtained by this project will remain confidential. All data will be grouped together and no individuals will be identified.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice your relationships with Dannely Elementary School. If you decide to allow your child to participate, your child will be free to withdraw for the study at any time without penalty. If you child decides later to withdraw from the study, you may also withdraw any information which has been collected about your child.

If you have any questions, we expect you to ask us. If you have additional questions later, please contact Todd Bryan (277-2712) or Dr. Glen Ray (244-3690), and we will be happy to answer them.

YOU ARE MAKING A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO PARTICIPATE. YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE, HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED ABOVE.

Child's Name:_____

_____Yes, my child may participate in the project mentioned above.

_____No, my child may not participate in the project mentioned above.

Parent's Signature:_____ Date:_____

Child's Signature:_____ Date:_____

Witness' Signature:_____ Date:_____

Appendix B

Participant's Name:_____ 3 4 5 6 B G Today's Date:___/___/___

Teacher's Name:_____ Date of Birth:___/___/___

Age:_____

Instructions:

Here is a list of the names of all the girls and boys in your class. First, find your name on the list and mark a line though it. Second, circle the names of all your friends. Put an X next to the name of your best friend in the class.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

(numbers to show place holdings only, will not be present on actual questionnaire.)

Appendix C

Participant's name:_____ 3 4 5 6 B G Today's Date___/___/___
Teacher's name:_____ Date of Birth___/___/___
Age:_____

Instructions:

Find your name and mark a line through it. Second, I want you to think about how much you like all your classmates. Try to think of each of your classmates as they are right now and how important they are to you, use the numbers below to tell me!

Like Very Little	Don't Like	Dislike a Little	Like a Little	Like	Like Very Much
1	2	3	4	5	6

1._____ 1...2...3...4...5...6
2._____ 1...2...3...4...5...6
3._____ 1...2...3...4...5...6

etc.

Appendix D

Below is a list of the items of the Friendship Attributes Q-sort (FAQ). Items are sorted by dimension.

No.		Item

(* denotes items that are reverse scored, Bs denote behavioral items, Ds dispositional items)

Affirmation & Personal Support

18		We tell each other we like each other
15		If one person hurts the other persons feelings they always say they're sorry
3	D	This friendship makes you feel important and special
60*	D	In our friendship, one person makes the other person feel stupid a lot
53	D	In our friendship, you know that the other one cares about your feelings
37		If one of us has a problem with our friendship, the other one will take it seriously and listen
5	D	In our friendship, you can always count on your friend to like you even if other people don't
43	B	We do special favors for each other
4	D	In our friendship, nobody makes you feel bad if you do something stupid
62	D	This friendship makes you feel good about yourself

Asymmetrical Influence & Status

31		Things aren't even because one of us has trouble getting the other to listen
28	B	Things aren't even because one of us has trouble getting the other to do things
21	B	Things aren't even because one of us gets to be in charge more than the other one
45	B	Things aren't even because one of us ignores the other one
32		One of us gets to decide more things than the other one
29*		Things are always pretty even in our friendship
22	B	Things aren't always even because on of us shares more than the other one
46*	B	In our friendship, we take turns being the leader

Compatibility of Attitudes & Behaviors

2		If we disagree, we can solve it without getting mad, grabbing, or fighting
56	D	We never get mad at one another
40*	B	We argue a lot
64*	B	We fight a lot
57*	B	We bug each other a lot
8	D	We never lose our tempers
34	B	We have great adventures together
24	B	We like to do the same things for fun
48		We're really silly together
12	B	We make each other laugh

25*D We're really different from each other

Exclusivity

33 D Our friendship is more fun when it is just the two of us and other friends are not around
10*B We like to include other friends in things we do
23* Our friendship is more fun when other friends do things with us than when it is just the two of us
47 D If one of us has other friends it causes problems in our friendship

Interdependence

59 B We help each other with chores and other things a lot
30 We share everything!
67 B We loan each other things all the time
20 D We always count on each other for good ideas
44* B We don't help each other with our school work
13 B We sit together whenever we can
11 B We phone each other all the time
26*B We don't spend our free time together

Loyalty & Commitment

54 D In our friendship, you know that your friend would stick up for you if other people were talking about you behind your back
38*B Sometimes one of us says mean things about the other one to other people
1 D If one of us tells a secret, we can count on the other one not to tell anyone else
39*B In our friendship, sometimes your friend lies
6* B In our friendship, sometimes your friend breaks their promises
63*D In our friendship, sometimes you feel that your friend leaves you out of things
17*B One of us sometimes picks on the other one and calls them names

Reciprocal Candor

7 B We always tell each other about our problems
50*D In our friendship, it is hard to talk about things that are bothering you
14 B We tell each other things that we wouldn't tell other people
27 D We know lots of secrets about each other
51*D In our friendship, it is hard to say what you really feel
41*D In our friendship, feelings are easily hurt

Rivalry & Competition

55 D We have lots of problems with jealousy in our friendship
65 B We always try to beat each other when we do things like sports, games, and

schoolwork
58 D We hate to lose to each other
42* In our friendship, we don't try to do better than the other person
9 B We argue a lot about who's better at things
66*D We're always a good sport when we lose to to one another

Unassigned Items

61 B If we're mad at each other, we always talk about what would make us feel better
19 We always make up easily when we have a fight
52 D When we get in an argument, it takes us a long time to get over it
36 B In our friendship, the other one won't apologize even if they are wrong
35 B When we are together we love to talk about other people
49 Other kids are always trying to break us up
16 One of us is more popular than the other

Appendix E

Friendship Attributes Q-Sort Scoring Sheet

SUBJECT #: GRADE: ITEM PLACEMENT (1-7)

NAME:

GENDER: B G

TEACHER:

TESTER:

F / BF

COMMENTS:

1		L&C	35		
2		Comp	36		
3		Aff	37		Aff
4		Aff	38		L&C
5		Aff	39		L&C
6		L&C	40		Comp
7		Recip. C	41		Recip. C
8		Comp	42		Rivalry
9		Rivalry	43		Aff
10		Ex	44		Int
11		Int	45		Asym
12		Comp	46		Asym
13		Int	47		Ex
14		Recip. C	48		Comp
15		Aff	49		
16			50		Recip. C
17		L&C	51		Recip. C
18		Aff	52		
19			53		Aff
20		Int	54		L&C
21		Asym	55		Rivalry
22		Asym	56		Comp
23		Ex	57		Comp
24		Comp	58		Rivalry
25		Comp	59		Int
26		Int	60		Aff
27		Recip. C	61		
28		Asym	62		Aff
29		Asym	63		L&C
30		Int	64		Comp
31		Asym	65		Rivalry
32		Asym	66		Rivalry
33		Ex	67		Int
34		Comp			