CHILDREN'S PERCEPTION OF THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN

CLASSROOM FRIENDS AND CLASSROOM BEST FRIENDS

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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The present study assessed children's understanding of the differences between friends and best friends. Second, third, fifth and sixth grade children were interviewed about a classroom friend and a self-nominated classroom best friend. An interview was employed to determine why children evaluate best friends higher than friends on four dimensions on the Relationship Quality Questionnaire: Caring, Companionship, Intimacy, and Exclusivity. Results demonstrated that overall children view their best friends as being more qualitative than friends on all four dimensions. Findings are discussed in terms of the present study and extend previous research into children's understanding of close peer relationships.

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Research (see Bukowski, Newcomb & Hartup, 1996, for review) indicates that friendships are crucial to children's social, cognitive, and emotional development. Friends provide one another with important social skills needed to successfully communicate, initiate activity, and when necessary, solve problems when interacting with others (Hartup, 1996a). Further, friendships provide a context necessary for children to develop a valid sense of their own identity (Rubin, 1980) and to acquire knowledge about others and the world (Hartup, 1992). Additionally, Bukowski and Sippola (1996) report that friendships are vital to children's development of moral processes such as compassion, reciprocity, and commitment to others. Investigations into children's own understanding of friendships have focused on children's perceptions and expectations of relationships (e.g., Berndt & Perry, 1986; Bigelow & LaGaipa, 1975, Ray & Cohen, 1996), as well as the qualities or features that characterize these relationships (Berndt, 1996; Cleary, Ray, LoBello, & Zachar, 2002; Meurling, Ray, & LoBello, 1999; Parker & Asher, 1993). Interestingly, with few exceptions (e.g., Cleary, et al., 2002; Meurling, et al., 1999) little work has been done examining how children differentiate between types of special relationships. Extending research on friend-best friend differentiation, the current study will interview children to examine why children evaluate friends and best friends differently.

Friendship Expectations

Much of the research on children's understanding of friendships has focused on friendship expectations. Using essays from previous research on children from six to

fourteen years of age, Bigelow (1977) determined that friendship expectations are the "...beliefs, attitudes, and values that a person expresses as being important characteristics to have in a best friend" (p. 247). Researchers quickly realized a developmental trend in expectation development with young children's expectations focusing on shared goals and give-and-take (Hartup, 1983); while, older children emphasize the significance of acceptance, loyalty, and shared interests (Furman & Bierman, 1984; Hartup, 1992). Thus, it appears that young children's expectations are based on overt, observable behaviors, while older children stress interpersonal understanding.

Bigelow and LaGaipa (1975) had children in first through eighth grades write essays about what they expected from their best friends that was different from other acquaintances. From the results, Bigelow and LaGaipa (1975) constructed a three-stage model of friendship expectation development. The first stage termed reward-cost emerges between the second and third grade, and includes comparable friendship expectations between friends, mutual activities between these friends, and availability or proximity of the friend. The second or normative stage emerges between the fourth and fifth grades, and is when children who are friends begin to develop similar values or seek out friendships with others who share these same values. The third stage, termed the empathic stage, emerges about the sixth or seventh grade and is when children begin to appreciate self-disclosure, understanding, and shared interests.

Similar to the developmental path addressed above, Furman and Bierman (1984) report that children's conceptions and expectations of their friendships undergo qualitative changes as a function of age. Moreover, the maturation of friendship expectations appears to be an accumulative process in which existing friendship

expectations are supplemented with new expectations. In a study of second-, fourth-, and sixth-grade children, Furman and Bierman (1984) inquired about how friendship expectations change as a function of age. To study both behavioral and dispositional friendship expectations, Furman and Bierman (1984) administered an open-ended interview, a story-recognition task, and a written questionnaire, which differentiated characteristics referring to observable behaviors from characteristics referring to dispositional factors. The two categories were subdivided into intimacy, prosocial support, affection, association, and similarity. Results demonstrated that with age the behavioral expectations of intimacy and association increase, while similarity and affection decreased. Although there was no significant effect with regard to similarity in the dispositional category, support, intimacy, and association all increased with age. Additionally, Furman and Bierman (1984) investigated whether or not children distinguished between friends and acquaintances. The results showed that there were significant effects for all five expectations in both categories; all were reported to be more important in friends compared to acquaintances.

Similarly, Selman (1981) reported that friendship expectations evolve according to a hierarchical developmental model. For instance, certain expectations appear at specific ages and are added to some of the existing expectations, while other existing expectations are replaced. This hierarchical model emphasizes "that beliefs such as the young child's notion that friends have to be physically together to be friends are grounded in reality. [However,] this reality will eventually be replaced by a higher-level reality that reconceptualizes the function of physical contact in social relations" (Selman, 1981, pp. 265-266).

Selman, following a social-cognitive developmental model, reported that the maturation of cognitive processes assists in the development of social understanding. Selman investigated the notion that friendship expectations progress in a hierarchical fashion between the ages of 6 and 15. Specifically, children's understanding of friendship expectations progress in a fashion in which each stage is qualitatively different from the previous one. Stage Zero, or Momentary Physicalistic Play, generally occurs between the ages of three and seven. In Stage Zero, children's conceptions of friendship are based on immediacy or nearness. For example, a friend is not only someone who happens to live nearby, but is someone the child is playing with at the precise moment. During Stage Zero, children also place greater value on peers who are comparable to them in ability and physical characteristics. Additionally, in Stage Zero children make no distinction between different types of positive relationships, rather acts of kindness are seen as friendly while unkind acts are seen as unfriendly. Problems incurred in Stage Zero include jealousy and intrusion of a third party. These are not problems when the child loses the attention or affection of another child, but when a specific toy or space is lost to another child. Because of the physical and immediate nature of friendship during Stage Zero, reciprocity of friendship is not as significant a component of the relationship as it later becomes.

The second stage in Selman's model is Stage 1 or the One-Way Assistance Stage. In this stage the child's expectations are basically self-centered. Instead of looking at the relationship as beneficial to both participants, children focus entirely on what they themselves will gain from the relationship without consideration for the wants and needs of their partner. Thus, the child bases the friendship on the specific purpose that the

friend fulfills in his or her life. Additionally, during Stage 1 it is important for a friend to have similar attitudes and interests as well as an enthusiasm for joint participation in tasks. Furthermore, it is important to note that during Stage 1 intimacy and closeness begin to develop, and trust becomes more personal with the progression from confidence in a person's abilities to confidence in a person's motives and intentions. As expected, friendship termination is also one-way. That is, friendship is terminated on one person's decision that he or she no longer wants to be friends because the friend is no longer useful and no longer shares the same interests.

Selman's third stage, Fair-Weather Cooperation (Stage 2), is where children begin to understand the importance of reciprocity between individuals. For it is in Stage 2 when children become aware of other's motives, thoughts, and feelings, and begin to realize that others have friendship needs and expectations as well. Furthermore, intimacy is also understood to be reciprocal at this stage; however the benefits are still more closely associated with the self than with improving the relationship. It is at this stage that friends begin to acknowledge one another as confidants with whom secrets are shared. Additionally, friendships may undergo extensive transformations during this stage simply because of the moods of the children involved. If one child is in disagreement with another child that child is no longer considered a friend, however the friendship is easily reformed when the conflict is forgiven or forgotten.

Stage 3 in Selman's model is known as the Intimate and Mutual Sharing Stage. It is during this stage that children begin to see relationships, specifically friendships, as continuous and secure, and the focus of attention has shifted from being solely egocentric to being concerned about the relationship itself. An important characteristic of the

relationship is the desire to share and support one another over a continuous period beyond the immediate present. At this stage, children do not expect to procure friendship immediately; instead, they expect a prolonged process of getting acquainted and ascertaining a potential friend's interests, attitudes, and beliefs. In Stage 3, children are more interested in the personality of the prospective friend than they are in how the potential friend serves their own interests. Further, children at this stage become very protective of their friendships, making it beneficial for both parties to make contributions that will ensure the continuity of the friendship. As a result of their increasing intimacy with friends, children are able to clearly distinguish the differences between friends and acquaintances.

It is in Selman's final stage, the Autonomous Interdependence Stage, which children begin to focus on the psychological needs of their friends. At this stage, children understand the intricacies of relationships and are able to adjust to allow for changes in the needs of others. Additionally, children are also more aware of their own identities and tend to seek out others with similar interests, beliefs, and values. Because the needs of both parties are met at this stage the friendships are seen as being simultaneously dependent and autonomous. The level of trust has increased and manifests itself in the form of respect and intimacy. According to Selman (1980), "truly close friends perform a unique and qualitatively distinct function. They attend to the deeper psychological needs of each other" (p. 141).

To reiterate, Selman's (1981) research added to our understanding of the cognitive processes involved in the development of friendship expectations. At the foundation of his model is the notion that the development of cognitive processes assists

in the development of social understanding. According to Selman's model, children develop through an accumulative process in which increasing levels of respect for the needs and wants of friends are added to the child's basic desire to satisfy his or her own needs.

Clark and Bittle (1992) studied the impact of children's friendship expectations on friendship and the existence of these expected qualities in actual friendships. In their study, Clark and Bittle had third, fifth, and seventh graders choose and rank their three best friends from a class roster. Each child also completed a questionnaire that measured friendship expectations and a questionnaire that measured the behaviors and qualities that exist in each child's present friendships. Results were similar to previous research (e.g., Bigelow & LaGaipa, 1979; Buhrmester & Furman, 1987) documenting a developmental trend. Third graders expected more mutual activity in their friendships, while fifth graders expected more conventional morality and empathic understanding from their friendships. Additionally, by seventh grade children expected more conventional morality, loyalty and commitment, and empathic understanding from their friendships, instead of merely being interested in sharing mutual activities.

As previously stated, children's friendship expectations vary by age; however research also indicates that friendship expectations vary by gender although the findings are not as consistent. For example, girls' relationships focus on intimacy and trust, while boys' relationships place more attention of group activities and games (Hartup, 1992). Additionally, Furman and Buhrmester (1985) reported that girls expect more acceptance and enhancement of worth in their friendships than boys do. According to Clark and

Bittle (1992), girls also expect more conventional morality and empathic understanding from their friends than do boys.

Recently, research on children's friendship expectations has progressed to the point that researchers are now exploring the roles that friendship expectations play in peer relationships. For example, Clark and Ayers (1993) questioned whether or not children's actual close friendships possess the characteristics that children perceive as important for friendships. By evaluating seventh and eighth graders, Clark and Ayers (1993) demonstrated that whether or not the expectation was met depended on the gender of the participants and level of reciprocity in the friendship. For example, boys and reciprocal friends were having their friendship expectations met, while girls and unilateral friends were not. Additionally, Clark and Ayers (1993) determined that the amount of time spent sharing activities with friends was the expectation that was met most often. Similarly, Selman (1980) indicated that sharing activities is one of the first expectations to develop. Clark and Ayers (1993) also discovered that adolescents' expectation of conventional morality from their friends was rarely present. They found that while boys and reciprocal friends were receiving the expected amount of understanding from their relationships, girls' were not because their expectation was higher and harder to meet. In addition to being higher, Clark and Ayers (1993) also found that girls had more expectations and although they were not being met, girls did report greater amounts of the expected characteristics than did boys. This indicates that while friendships between girls qualitatively surpass those of boys, they are still unable to adequately meet the majority of the expectations girls place upon them.

Additionally, Ray and Cohen (1996) studied the differences between children's expectations for an ideal best friend and their expectations for an actual best friend. By using questionnaires and peer nominations, Ray and Cohen (1996) found that both girls and boys expect more from an ideal best friend than they actually receive from their actual best friend. This suggests that children are able to retain high expectations for ideal best friends even though their actual best friends are incapable of fulfilling all of their expectations. Further, Ray and Cohen (1996) found that children with no reciprocal best friends held similar expectations for ideal best friends; however their expectations were lower for actual best friends than those children who had at least one reciprocal best friend.

As previously noted, research indicates that friendship expectations change as a function of age; research also indicates that friendship expectations have evolving cognitive aspects (Selman, 1980). For example, children's expectations progress from overt, concrete behaviors in early childhood to more dispositional and interpersonal characteristics in early adolescence (Berndt, 1981; Furman & Bierman, 1984; Ray & Cohen, 1996; Rubin, 1980; Selman, 1980).

Friendship Quality

In addition to expectations, research has examined relationship qualities to understand how children conceptualize their peer interactions. Relationship quality refers to "provisions" or "features" that characterize or differentiate one relationship from another. According to Aboud and Mendelson (1996), friendship qualities are the social, emotional, and instrumental characteristics sought in the relationship by one friend and provided by the other. Research indicates that friends provide more companionship,

help, intimacy, reliability, emotional security, and self-validation than do nonfriends and that these qualities are related to relationship quality (Aboud & Mendelson, 1996).

Researchers (e.g., Hartup, 1996b) have begun theorizing that to understand the developmental significance of friendship we need to explore the "quality" of the friendship. Evidence for the importance of friendship quality is mounting. For example, research indicates that children who have high quality peer relationships are more socially competent than children who do not (Hartup, 1996b). Additionally, adolescents who perceive their relationships as being positive have higher self-esteem and are less likely to suffer from emotional disorders; and, their behavior at school and academic achievement are better than adolescents with poor quality friendships (Berndt & Keefe, 1995).

Parker and Asher (1993) explored friendship quality by studying children in the third through eighth grade who were sociometrically accepted and rejected, and their understanding of their best friends. In an effort to explore the qualitative features of these relationships, Parker and Asher (1993) examined specific friendship qualities. These qualities included "...the extent to which the relationship offers children opportunities for play, companionship, and recreation; the degree of intimate disclosure and exchange that characterizes the relationship; the extent to which the friends share, help, and guide one another; and the extent to which children find the relationship validating and enhancing of self-worth" (p. 612). To study these specific qualities, Parker and Asher (1993) developed the Friendship Quality Questionnaire consisting of six qualitative dimensions. Validation and caring ($\alpha = .90$) measured the extent to which the friendship is typified by caring, support, and interest. Conflict and betrayal ($\alpha = .84$) measured the degree to

which the relationship is characterized by argument, disagreement, annoyance, and mistrust. Companionship and recreation ($\alpha = .75$) measured the amount of quality time the friends spend together both in and out of school. Help and guidance ($\alpha = .90$) measured the extent of the children's attempts to help one another with both ordinary and difficult tasks. Intimate exchange ($\alpha = .86$) measured the degree to which the friends are willing to divulge personal information and to express their feelings. Finally, Conflict Resolution ($\alpha = .84$) measured the degree to which disagreements are resolved quickly and easily.

Parker and Asher (1993) reported that it was a combination of these six qualities that children use to form perceptions of their best friends. Additionally, girls reported more intimate exchanges, more validation and caring, more help and guidance, and less difficulty resolving conflict in their friendships than did boys. Furthermore, the results showed that girls were more likely to have at least one friend, and that girls, overall, had substantially more friends than did boys.

Similarly, Bukowski, Hoza, and Boivin (1994) developed the Friendship Qualities Scale to investigate children's relationships with their best friends. The Friendship Qualities Scale is composed of five dimensions that Bukowski, et al. (1994) found essential in the development and maintenance of relationships. These dimensions include Companionship, Conflict, Help, Security, and Closeness. According to Bukowski, et al. (1994), Companionship is a fundamental quality of children's friendships and is characterized by the amount of time children spend socializing. The Conflict dimension is composed of any arguments or disagreements that occur between the children. The manner in which children handle conflict may be an important indicator of the children's

ability to preserve the relationship, determining whether the relationship will endure or be terminated. The Help dimension, which is also considered an important quality of friendship, is further subdivided into Aid (mutual help and assistance) and Protection from Victimization (help of a friend). The fourth dimension is Security, which includes children's realizations that their friend can be depended on and trusted if a problem arises. Security is important in determining the outcome of conflict between friends, and, like conflict, is an indicator of whether the relationship endures or is terminated. Finally, Closeness encompasses the positive feelings that friends share for one another.

Bukowski, et al. (1994) demonstrated that the qualities of Security, Companionship, Help, and Closeness were mentioned frequently in children's descriptions of friendships, while Conflict appears to have no significant effect on the stability of children's friendships. In this case, the importance lies in the manner in which children resolve the normal conflict situations that are presented. For instance, children involved in a friendship are more likely to acquiesce if it seems that the altercation might jeopardize the friendship, while children who are not friends are more likely to prolong an argument with one another. While conflict is a natural part of children's friendships, Bukowski, et al. (1994) found that the children themselves do not anticipate any disagreements.

To investigate differences in quality of relationships between perceived classroom friends and perceived classroom best friends, Muerling, et al. (1999) developed the Relationship Quality Questionnaire. The Relationship Quality Questionnaire, a modified form of Parker and Asher's Friendship Quality Questionnaire (1993), consisted of 21 items from the original questionnaire as well as the added dimension termed

"exclusivity." Reliability coefficients for the Relationship Quality Questionnaire were .89 and .84 for friend and best friend, respectively. Using second through the sixth grade children, Meurling, et al. (1999) reported that children consistently evaluated best friends higher than friends on five of the seven dimensions (i.e., caring, companionship, conflict resolution, intimacy, and exclusivity). Additionally, children received more assistance and support from their best friends than they did from their friends. They also found that girls evaluated the relationship quality dimensions more positively than did boys; this was especially true in the dimensions of caring, intimacy, and help/guidance, which suggests that girls are more likely to give and receive assistance to a friend than are boys. Moreover, Meurling, et al. (1999) inquired about whether age is a factor in differentiating between the relationship dimensions. Their findings indicated that when distinguishing between classroom friends and classroom best friends older children consistently made larger distinctions, than did younger children, on the dimensions of caring, help/guidance, companionship, exclusivity, and conflict resolution.

Expanding on Meurling, et al. (1999), Cleary, et al. (2002) examined children's understanding of friendship quality in reciprocal friendships. Through their examination of second, third, fifth and sixth grade children, Cleary, et al. (2002) demonstrated that mutual best friends received higher evaluations than mutual friends on the dimensions of Caring, Companionship, Intimacy, and Exclusivity. In addition to higher quality, best friends also had more comparable perceptions of their relationships than did friends.

Further, extending the work of Meurling et al. (1999) and Cleary, et al. (2002), Bryan (2002) examined children's understanding of the qualitative differences between friend and best friend using a Q-sort methodology on children from the third through

sixth grades. Similar to previous research, Bryan (2002) demonstrated that best friends were evaluated higher than were friends on the dimensions of Loyalty & Commitment, Compatibility of Attitudes and Behaviors, Reciprocal Candor, Affirmation & Personal Support, and Interdependence. However, Bryan (2002) demonstrated that there were no differences between children's evaluations of friend and best friend on the dimension of exclusivity. Additionally, Bryan (2002) was unable to replicate previous research (e.g., Berndt, 1981; Furman & Bierman, 1983; Ray & Cohen, 1996; Rubin, 1980; Selman, 1980) demonstrating that older children evaluate friends and best friends higher on dispositional qualities while younger children evaluate friends and best friends higher on behavior qualities. Bryan (2002) concludes by suggesting that the reason most of the results did not mirror previous research is because the Friendship Attributes Q-sort is unable to distinguish dispositional from behavioral characteristics.

Types of Positive Relationships

Through their investigation of peer relationships in children and adolescents, researchers have identified many different types of positive peer relationships including friend, best friend, close friend, chum, reciprocal friend, unilateral friend, acquaintance, and non-friend (Hayes, Gershman & Bolin, 1980; Hays, 1989; Lea, 1979). Typically, types of friendships are defined in terms of reciprocity of friendship nominations. According to Hayes, et al. (1980), the criterion for a reciprocated or mutual friendship is one in which a child's nominated friend returns the friendship feelings, and both children's parents agree that the children are indeed mutual friends. Further, friends can be categorized as unilateral friends (one child nominated the other but the nomination was not reciprocated) or non-friends (neither child nominates the other). Research

indicates that children like classmates whom they nominate more than those they do not and both reciprocated (mutual) friends and unilateral friends are liked better than non-friends (Hundley & Cohen, 1999). The degree to which one child likes another is contingent upon the dynamics of the relationship as well as peer evaluations of the relationship. Research also indicates that children are mindful of reciprocity in friendships and that they value the friends with whom they share reciprocity (Hundley & Cohen, 1999).

Although the majority of friendship research has focused on the characteristics of a particular type of relationship, several researchers have investigated two or more types of peer relationships, often with the goal of qualitatively distinguishing between relationship types (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985; Hays, 1989; Lea, 1979). For example, they distinguished between friend versus non-friend, reciprocal versus non-reciprocal friendships, and causal versus close friendships. According to Lea (1979), reciprocated friends have more similarities and common interests than unreciprocated friends do. Hays (1989) reported that more resources are shared in greater variety in friendships than in non-friend relationships. Additionally, it is important to note that close friends provide not only more but better emotional support than casual friends (Hays, 1989). For example, Argyle and Henderson (as cited in Hays, 1989) demonstrated that trusting and confiding in each other were among the qualities that distinguish a close friendship from more casual relationships.

Research employing the nomination technique only considers reciprocally nominated dyads "friends" because a unilateral nomination does not satisfy the dyadic conceptualization of the friendship. However, unilateral relationships cannot be

dismissed because in the nominator's mind a friendship might well exist. Research indicates that there are several important differences between unilateral and reciprocal friendships. First, it is common for elementary school aged children to see themselves as having more friends than those indicated by mutual nominations (Ray, Cohen, & Secrist, 1995). Research varies on the dynamics of the relationship between unilateral friends. For example, some studies indicate that relationships between unilateral friends are similar to those of reciprocal friends while other studies imply that these relationships are the antithesis of one another (Hartup, 1996b). For instance, an investigation into conflict between unilateral friends found that these conflicts closely resemble conflicts between non-friends; however, after the conflict is resolved, 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 (Hartup, Laursen, Steward, & Eastenson, 1988).

Additionally, Hays (1989) investigated the difference between close friendships and casual friendships (i.e., friendships in the early stages of development) in college students. He demonstrated that the primary distinction between these types of relationships is the shift in focus from one's own immediate reward-cost outcome toward an outcome that is reciprocally beneficial to both partners. Additionally, close friendships are characterized by greater amounts of emotional support and guidance than casual friendships. Thus, close friends are mutually dependent and these friendships are perceived to be more meaningful than casual friendships. The interactions between close friends are more intentional (i.e., actively pursued) and occur more frequently than interactions between casual friends, which are often situational.

In addition to frequency, there are a number of important ways interactions between close and casual friends differ (Hays, 1989). For example, close friends are able to communicate better and with less verbal interplay than are causal friends (Hays, 1989). Furthermore, close friends often perceive one another to be unique and irreplaceable, while casual friends are seen as being generic and easily replaced. As friendships become closer the benefits from the friendships increase; however, it is also important to note that dissatisfaction and emotional ambivalence rise as well (Hays, 1989). Nonetheless, as long as the benefits outweigh the costs the relationship will persevere. Hays (1989) also differentiated between the close and casual friends of boys and girls. According to Hays (1989), girls provide and receive more benefits (i.e., emotional support, information sharing, and task-based assistance) from their close friends than boys do.

In an attempt to understand the process by which two people become closer to one another, Fehr (1996) reviewed previous research that compared various types of relationships (i.e., strangers, acquaintances, friends, close friends, and best friends). According to Fehr (1996), research on the differences between these types of relationships generally looks at interaction patterns, self-disclosure, and similarity. For example, when comparing strangers and acquaintances to friends, research indicates that friends are more likely to engage one another and that they enjoy the interaction more than either strangers or acquaintances (Fehr, 1996). Further, after asking students to identify the type of relationship by listening to recorded conversations, Planalp and Benson (as cited in Fehr, 1996) found that friends have greater mutual knowledge and participate in more intimate conversations than strangers or acquaintances. Fehr (1996)

also indicates that the progression from friend to close friend is largely a matter of degree. For instance, when Roberto and Kimboko (as cited in Fehr, 1996) asked elderly adults to define what a friend is and to distinguish the difference between a friend and a close friend they found that close friends had "more" of the qualities one looks for in a friend. Similarly, when Brenton (1974) asked elementary school-age children what distinguished best friends from all other friends, their responses were more quantitative than qualitative in nature. Thus, once a relationship becomes a friendship, the changes in closeness appear to be changes in terms of degree, making them quantitative rather than qualitative in nature (Fehr, 1996).

Relationship Quality Differences between Friends and Best Friends

Research suggests that children perceive their relationship with their best friend as being more positive and less negative than the relationships with their second or third closest friends (Berndt & Keefe, 1992) and acquaintances (Berndt & Perry, 1986). Meurling, et al. (1999) reported that relationships between best friends were deeper and more intimate than relationships between friends. Previous research (e.g., Cleary, et al., 2002; Meurling, et al., 1999) demonstrated that best friends were evaluated higher than friends on the dimensions of Caring, Companionship, Intimacy, and Exclusivity. Additionally, Bryan (2002) demonstrated that best friends were evaluated higher than friends were on the dimensions of Loyalty & Commitment, Compatibility of Attitudes & Behaviors, Reciprocal Candor, Affirmation & Personal Support, and Interdependence. However, there was no difference between friends and best friends on the dimension of Exclusivity; and best friends were evaluated lower on the dimensions of Rivalry & Competition and Asymmetrical Influence & Status (Bryan, 2002).

Methodological Issues

As indicated by the previous review, much of the research on children's perceptions of friendship has been conducted using questionnaires. Although this method has provided a wealth of information on children's friendships, there are several limitations. For example, Meurling, et al. (1999) and Cleary, et al. (2002) indicated that best friends were evaluated higher than friends on four of the seven friendship qualities examined. However, the forced choice format of the questionnaire did not allow for the investigation of possible additional qualities associated with children's perceptions of friendship. Further, the forced choice format of the questionnaire denies the participant the chance to articulate their personal opinions about potential differences between friends and best friends. To address these limitations and extend previous work investigating friend and best friend differences, the present study will interview children in an effort to better understand the qualitative differences between friends and best friends. By interviewing children about their friends and best friends, the current study will be able to investigate "why" children evaluate friends and best friends differently on the various quality dimensions identified in earlier studies.

To reiterate, using an interview will allow for an extension of earlier work in two important ways. First, children will have the opportunity to describe potential friend/best friend differences not studied before. In previous research (e.g., Bryan, 2002; Cleary, et al., 2002; Meurling, et al., 1999), with specified dimensions, any differences identified were limited to the dimensions assessed and since children evaluated friends and best friends with the same instrument, all differences were necessarily quantitative in nature. But might friends and best friends differ on other dimensions as well and might the

differences be more qualitative in nature? Second, children will have the opportunity to discuss the quantitative and qualitative reasons for why best friends are evaluated higher than friends or vice-versa.

The interview is a unique method because it provides information that may not be accessible through other techniques (e.g., questionnaires). Specifically, it gleans information about an individual's perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and feelings (Parker, 1984). By incorporating questions with follow-up probes and observations of non-verbal behavior, the interview technique does not require the respondent to be able to communicate his/her thoughts and feelings onto paper (Parker, 1984). Thus, according to Parker (1984), the interview is the best technique available to achieve direct and reliable access to the subjective, inner world of the respondent.

The Present Study

The present study extends previous work (e.g., Bryan, 2002; Cleary, et al., 2002; Meurling, et al., 1999) demonstrating that children evaluate their best friends higher than their friends on various dimensions of relationship quality. Specifically, previous research has demonstrated that children consistently evaluate their best friends to be higher on the relationship quality dimensions of Caring, Companionship, Intimacy, and Exclusivity. By interviewing children, the present study determined "why" children evaluate their best friends higher than their friends on these relationship quality dimensions.

Research on developmental changes in children's understanding of close peer relationships demonstrates that older children discriminate between their friends and best friends to a greater degree than do younger children (e.g., Berndt & Perry, 1986; Bryan,

2002; Cleary, et al., 2002; Furman & Bierman, 1983; Meurling, et al., 1999). Thus, older children appear more knowledgeable than do younger children about the characteristics that distinguish friends from best friends. Based on these research findings, it was assumed that older children's understanding of close peer relationships is more sophisticated than that of younger children's understanding of close peer relationships. It was first predicted that older children's responses to questions about relationship differences between their friends and best friends would be more qualitative in nature (i.e., "...she makes me feel better cause she knows how to make the feeling go away...") than would younger children's responses. Second, it was predicted that younger children's responses would be in relation to the self (i.e., she's nice to me) as opposed to older children's responses, which would be more relationship or other oriented.

Gender differences are pervasive in the peer relations literature (see Bukowski, et al., 1996, for review). Girls' friendships are more exclusive than boys' friendships. For example, girls play in smaller friendship groups and their relationships are more psychologically intimate than are boys' relationships. Based on this line of research, it was predicted that girls' responses to why they evaluate best friends higher than friends would focus on more mutually beneficial (i.e., relationship oriented) activities compared to boys' responses. Lastly, girls were predicted to have more qualitative responses than were boys.

Method

Participants

Participants were 91 children (49 from the second and third grades and 42 from the fifth and sixth grades; 44 males and 47 females) from a public elementary School in Montgomery, Alabama. All participating children returned a signed parental consent form and gave their own written consent (see Appendix A). Children were informed that participation in the study was not part of their schoolwork and that they were free to discontinue the study at any time.

Design

The study was composed of two between-participants factors: Grade and Gender; and, one within-participants factor: Relationship Dimension. Thus, children's responses to questions about friend/best friend differences were evaluated in the context of a 2 (Grade: 2-3, 5-6) x 2 (Gender) x 4 (Relationship Dimension: Caring, Companionship, Intimacy, Exclusivity) mixed-factorial design.

Materials

Each child completed two questionnaires and an interview. The first questionnaire (Relationship Nomination Questionnaire) identified same-gender classroom friends and a same-gender classroom best friend. The second questionnaire (Relationship Rating Questionnaire) asked children to evaluate how much they like each of their same-gender classmates. The interview then asked questions about different qualities of these relationships.

Relationship Nomination Questionnaire. The purpose of this questionnaire was to identify classroom same-gender friends and a classroom same-gender best friend (as in

Bryan, 2002; Cleary, et al., 2002; Meurling, 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 child's same-gender classmates. The child was then asked to circle the names of all his or her friends, and place an "X" next to his or her very best friend's name, even if it was not circled. This measure identified the child's classroom best friend and a pool of classroom friends.

Relationship Rating Questionnaire. To identify how well each child likes each of his or her same-gender classmates, a Likert scale rating technique was employed (see Appendix C). A roster of the names of all the same-gender classmates was presented to the child and the child was asked to rate how much they like each classmate using the number scale at the top of the page.

Classroom Friend and Classroom Best Friend Selection. Using the relationship nomination questionnaire and the relationship rating questionnaire, a friend and a 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. Using the nominated friend with the lowest ranking was done to maximize potential differences that may exist between the friend and best friend. In the event of a tie between Likert rankings on friendship nominations, the "least liked" friend was selected using a table of random numbers.

Relationship Quality Interview. As previously stated, research (e.g., Cleary, et al., 2002; Meurling, et al. 1999) has demonstrated that friends differ from best friends on the dimensions of Validation & Caring, Companionship & Recreation, Intimate Exchange, and Exclusivity. Thus, the interview constructed for the present study focused

on these dimensions in order to have children evaluate their friends and best friends (see Appendix D).

The interview was constructed to investigate "why," both qualitatively and quantitatively, children evaluate their best friends higher than their friends on the four dimensions of interest: a) Validation & Caring, b) Companionship & Recreation, c) Intimate Exchange, and d) Exclusivity. Each of these items from the four dimensions of the Relationship Quality Questionnaire was turned into a question by altering the wording (see Appendices E and F). For example, question one in the validation and caring dimension originally states "_____ makes me feel good about my ideas;" this statement was changed to the question "Who makes you feel better about your ideas, your Best Friend _____ or your Friend _____?" Each question was followed by standard probes (i.e., "How does _____ make you feel better about your ideas?" and "Tell me some other ways _____ makes you feel good about your ideas."), which were designed to gain more information or clarify responses. Following procedure used in previous peer relationship research using verbal transcripts (e.g., Berndt, Hawkins, & Hoyle, 1986), probing continued until children gave at least three responses or stated that they could not think of anything else. Additionally, if the child responded to any of the probes by saying "I don't know," the interviewer stopped probing and moved on to the next question.

Coding. Children's interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Protocols were then checked by a second transcriber to ensure 100% accuracy of the transcript. Using a process similar to Gottman (1983) and Chi (1997), children's protocols were then segmented into "thought units." These units served as the unit of analysis for the

transcribed protocols. A thought unit is one expressed idea or fragment of an idea. The unit can be one utterance or several; it can be a phrase or a sentence. During pilot testing, a child's response to one question often contained two thought units. For example, "Because she's nice to me and I like her" were coded into two thought units even though it was a single response. Thus, "she is nice to me" and "I like her" were conceptualized as two different thought units. However, to control for verbal fluency and gender differences in frequency of responding only the child's first response was used in the current study.

Children's responses were coded according to the following scheme: the nature of the response category (i.e., qualitative or quantitative), the valence of the response category (i.e., positive or negative), and the beneficiary of the response category (i.e., self, other, or relationship). For the nature of response category, qualitative responses will refer to *how* individuals engage in activities or behaviors while quantitative responses will refer to expressions of quantity, measure, or amount.

Inter-rater Reliability. Twenty percent of all the transcripts were evaluated by two coders to measure inter-rater agreement on the three categories. Using a process described by Bakeman and Gottman (1987) overall percent agreement between the two coders was demonstrated to be 98.1%.

Procedure

Each child was individually interviewed in a quiet area outside his or her classroom in one 20-30 minute session. Three tasks were completed during this interview, the Relationship Nomination Questionnaire, the Relationship Rating Questionnaire, and then the Relationship Quality Interview. After all tasks had been

completed, the child was thanked for his or her participation, asked if there were any other questions, and then taken back to his or her classroom by the experimenter.

Results

Results are presented in two sections. Section I includes descriptive analysis on the variables of interest and analysis of the four hypotheses. Section II includes additional analysis not formally included in the hypotheses of the current study. To examine grade effects with ample group size, the four grade levels were collapsed into two larger age levels forming a younger group (Grades 2-3; mean age = 8 years, 5 months) and an older group (Grades 5-6; mean age = 11 years, 8 months). For all analyses (excluding descriptive statistics) Grade and Gender were between-participants variables and Relationship Dimension was a within-participant variable. Thus, a series of 2 (Grade) x 2 (Gender) x 4 (Relationship Dimension) mixed factorial ANOVA's were conducted on nature of the response and beneficiary of the response. For these analyses the dependent variables were the relationship quality dimensions (i.e., Caring) which were constructed by averaging the three items that compose each dimension. Follow-up tests of statistically significant interactions were conducted as tests for simple effects, followed by Newman-Keuls post-hoc tests to determine sources of differences where appropriate.

I. Descriptive Statistics and Hypotheses Analysis

Nature of Responses. The data presented in table 1 represents the frequency of all children's responses on all items coded for the nature of the response: 1 = Don't Know, 2 = Quantitative and 3 = Qualitative. As can be seen from the table, few children stated "I don't know" to the questions asked them. Important to the present study, children's responses were predominately qualitative in nature. The fact that children's responses were more qualitative than quantitative is quite different from reviews of the literature

(e.g., Fehr, 1996) and sociological studies (e.g., Brenton, 1974) which report differences between types of close peer relationships to be primarily quantitative in nature.

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage for Nature of Responses

	Don't Know Responses		Quantitative Responses		Qualitative Responses	
Dimension	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Caring	**5.3**	**5.9**	**5.3**	**5.9**	**78.7**	**86.4**
Q1 (Likes my ideas)	3	3.3	5	5.5	83	91.2
Q5 (Tells me I'm better at things)	6	6.6	5	5.5	76	83.5
Q9 (Important and special)	7	7.7	6	6.6	77	84.6
Companionship	**2.7**	**2.9**	**9.0**	**9.3**	**78.7**	**86.4**
Q2 (Sit with at lunch)	2	2.2	6	6.6	83	91.2
Q6 (Pick to be partner)	1	1.1	15	16.5	74	81.3
Q10 (You play with more)	5	5.5	6	6.6	79	86.8
Intimacy	**3.7**	**4.0**	**2.7**	**2.9**	**78.0**	**85.7**
Q3 (Tell problems to)	3	3.3	0	0	83	91.2
Q7 (Talk to when sad)	5	5.5	4	4.4	73	80.2
Q11(Talk to when mad)	3	3.3	4	4.4	78	85.7
Exclusivity	**5.7**	**6.2**	**10.0**	**11.0**	**73.3**	**80.6**
Q4 (Likes you more)	7	7.7	23	25.3	59	64.8
Q8 (Plays with you more)	7	7.7	1	1.1	80	87.9
Q12 (You like more)	3	3.3	6	6.6	81	89.0

*Text in bold represents the Relationship Type dimensions which are averages

Hypothesis 1, pertaining to older children's responses being more qualitative than younger children's responses and hypothesis 4, pertaining to girls' responses being more qualitative than boys' responses were tested together. Analysis on the nature of the response revealed a Gender x Dimension interaction, $F(3,261) = 3.02, p < .05$.

As shown in table 2 below, girls' responses were more qualitative in nature than were boys' responses on the intimacy dimension only. For girls, responses did not differ across the four relationship type dimensions. For boys, responses on the caring and companionship dimensions did not differ, but were more qualitative than responses on the intimacy and the exclusivity dimensions. Additionally for boys, responses to the exclusivity dimension were more qualitative than were responses to the intimacy dimension. Given that no grade effects were found hypothesis 1 was not supported, and hypothesis 4 was partially supported. That is, girls' responses were more qualitative than were boys' responses, but only for the intimacy dimension.

Table 2: Gender x Relationship Dimension for Nature of Responses

	Boys		Girls	
Dimension	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Caring	2.80	0.38	2.74	0.43
Companionship	2.88	0.22	2.77	0.34
Intimacy	2.55	0.73	2.78	0.54
Exclusivity	2.64	0.42	2.75	0.43

Beneficiary of Responses. The data presented in table 3 below represents the frequency of all children's responses on all items coded for the beneficiary of the response category: 0 = No Response, 1 = Self oriented, 2 = Other oriented and 3 = Relationship oriented. As can be seen from the table, relatively few children gave no

response. Further, children's responses focused mainly on the self rather than being other oriented or relationship oriented.

Table 3: Frequency and Percentage of Beneficiary of Responses

	No Response		Self Responses		Other Responses		Relationship Responses	
Dimension	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Caring	**7.0**	**7.7**	**69.3**	**76.2**	**10.7**	**11.7**	**4**	**4.4**
Q1 (Likes my ideas)	3	3.3	74	81.3	9	9.9	5	5.5
Q5 (Tells you you're better)	10	11	65	71.4	13	14.3	3	3.3
Q9 (Important and special)	8	8.8	69	75.8	10	11.0	4	4.4
Companionship	**3.3**	**3.7**	**39.3**	**43.3**	**23.7**	**26.0**	**24.7**	**27.1**
Q2 (Sits with at lunch)	2	2.2	43	47.3	21	23.1	25	27.5
Q6 (Picks to be partner)	2	2.2	36	39.6	32	35.2	21	23.1
Q10 (You play with more)	6	6.6	39	42.9	18	19.8	28	30.8
Intimacy	**10.7**	**11.7**	**61.7**	**67.7**	**16.3**	**18.0**	**2.3**	**2.6**
Q3 (Tells problems to)	8	8.8	61	67.0	19	20.9	3	3.3
Q7 (Talk to when sad)	14	15.4	63	69.2	13	14.3	1	1.1
Q11 (Talk to when mad)	10	11	61	67.0	17	18.7	3	3.3
Exclusivity	**8.0**	**38.5**	**43.3**	**47.6**	**16.7**	**18.3**	**23.0**	**25.3**
Q4 (Likes you more)	9	9.9	43	47.3	19	20.9	20	22.0
Q8 (Plays with you more)	10	11	29	31.9	13	14.3	39	42.9
Q12 (You like more)	5	5.4	58	63.7	18	19.8	10	11.0

*Text in bold represents the Relationship Type dimensions which are averages

Hypothesis 2, pertaining to younger children's relationships being more self-oriented than older children's responses and hypothesis 3, pertaining to girls' responses focusing more on relationship oriented activities than boys' responses were tested

together. Analysis on the beneficiary of the response category revealed a Gender x Dimension interaction, $F(3,261) = 2.90, p < .05$.

As shown in table 4 below, boys' responses were more relationship oriented (less self-oriented) than were girl's responses on the companionship dimension only. For girls, responses did not differ across the four dimensions. For boys, responses were more relationship oriented on the companionship dimension which was higher than all other dimensions. Additionally for boys, responses to the exclusivity dimension were more relationship oriented than were responses to the intimacy dimension. Given that no grade effects emerged, hypothesis 2 was not supported. Hypothesis 3 was not supported, and counter to what was predicted, boys' responses were actually more relationship oriented than were girl's responses.

Table 4: Gender x Relationship Dimension for Beneficiary of Responses

	Boys		Girls	
Dimension	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Caring	1.18	0.39	1.09	0.37
Companionship	1.89	0.59	1.63	0.65
Intimacy	1.04	0.51	1.18	0.4
Exclusivity	1.57	0.69	1.62	0.65

II. Additional Analyses

In addition to the nature and the beneficiary of the response, children's responses were also coded for the valence of the response: 0 = No Response, 1 = Negative Response and 2 = Positive Response. As can be seen from the table below relatively few children gave a no response, and across the four relationship quality dimensions responses were predominately positive.

Table 5: Frequency and Percentage for Valence of Responses

	No Response		Negative Responses		Positive Responses	
Dimension	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Caring	**7.0**	**7.7**	**2.7**	**2.9**	**81.3**	**89.4**
Q1 (Likes my ideas)	3	3.3	1	1.1	87	95.6
Q5 (Tells you you're better)	10	11	3	3.3	78	85.7
Q9 (Important and special)	8	8.8	4	4.4	79	86.8
Companionship	**3.3**	**3.7**	**11.0**	**12.1**	**76.7**	**84.2**
Q2 (Sit with at lunch)	2	2.2	9	9.9	80	87.9
Q6 (Pick to be partner)	2	2.2	9	9.9	80	87.9
Q10 (Play with at recess)	6	6.6	15	16.5	70	76.9
Intimacy	**10.3**	**11**	**8.0**	**8.8**	**72.7**	**79.8**
Q3 (Tell problems to)	8	8.8	5	5.5	78	85.7
Q7 (Talk to when sad)	14	14.4	10	11	67	73.6
Q11(Talk to when mad)	9	9.9	9	9.9	73	80.2
Exclusivity	**8.0**	**8.8**	**8.0**	**8.8**	**75.0**	**82.4**
Q4 (Likes you more)	9	9.9	8	8.8	74	81.3
Q8 (Plays with you more)	11	12.1	12	13.2	68	74.7
Q12 (You like more)	4	4.4	4	4.4	83	91.2

* Text in bold represents the Relationship Type dimensions which are averages

Discussion

Children's friendships are important to children's social, emotional, and cognitive development (Gottman, 1981; Parker & Asher, 1987, Buhrmester & Furman, 1986; Newcomb & Bagwell, 1995). Research has generated numerous dimensions (e.g., expectations and qualities) that are important to children when conceptualizing their close relationships (Bigelow, 1977; Furman & Bierman, 1984; Parker & Asher, 1993). However, rarely have researchers focused on children's understanding of different types of positive peer relationships or the differences that can exist between different types of close peer relationships (see Bryan, 2002; Cleary, et al., 2002; Meurling, et al., 1999, for exceptions). Thus, the present study investigated "why," both qualitatively and quantitatively, children evaluate their best friends higher than their friends on specific relationship quality dimensions.

The prediction that girls' responses would be more qualitative than would boys' responses was only partially supported. For this hypothesis, the findings were more sophisticated than the prediction in that girls' responses were more qualitative but only on the intimacy dimension. Thus, the main effect for gender predicted at the outset of the study was subsumed in a Gender x Dimension interaction. As defined and coded in the present study, a qualitative response indicates a difference in "kind" or a difference in the way an action is performed. There is a well developed literature on gender differences in children's close relations, highlighting among other things, how girls' relationships are more close knit and intimate compared to boys' close relationships (see Bukowski, et al., 1996, for review). For example, girls' share more personal information with their peers than do boys. There is also more shared relationship knowledge between girls'

friendships than between boys' friendships (Ladd & Emerson, 1984). Perhaps girls' responses were more qualitative than were boys' responses because girls simply have more experience with activities that make up the intimacy dimension because in the current study all three items comprising the intimacy dimension center around the sharing of emotions (i.e., talk to when sad).

The hypothesis that older children's responses to questions about relationship differences would be more qualitative in nature than would younger children's responses was not supported. An obvious explanation for the lack of age differences is that children's responses, regardless of age, were predominately qualitative in nature across the four relationship type dimensions. Interestingly, while past research documents that older children differentiate between their friends and best friends to a greater degree than do younger children (e.g., Cleary, et al., 2002; Meurling, et al., 1999) the current study demonstrated that younger children did appreciate the qualitative differences between their friend and best friend relationships as did older children. Further, second and third graders were able to articulate these differences as well.

The hypothesis that younger children's responses would be in relation to the self (i.e., she's nice to me) as opposed to older children's responses, which would be more relationship or other oriented, was not supported. According to Selman (1981), reviewed earlier, children's friendship expectations develop in a hierarchical fashion. This hierarchy indicates that early in life children view their friends as only being there to meet their needs, but with age and the development of perspective taking skills come the realization that other people have needs to be met as well. Thus, it is possible that while older children better understand that other people have needs, this does not necessarily

mean that they are willing to meet those needs. Clearly, the vast majority of both younger and older children's responses were in relation to or pertaining to the self.

The hypothesis that girls' responses to why they evaluate best friends higher than friends would focus on more mutually beneficial (i.e., relationship oriented) activities compared to boys' responses was not supported. Contrary to the prediction, boys' responses were actually more relationship oriented (perhaps less self-oriented is more appropriate) than girls' responses on the companionship dimension. Considering the items that comprise the companionship relationship quality dimension may help explain this opposite finding. The items are all physical behaviors that are necessary for play activities. Perhaps boys are less self-oriented on this dimension because they tend to play in larger peer groups with more interchangeable partners than do girls who tend to play with the same individuals in smaller dyadic groups.

There are several apparent limitations in this study. First, only children's initial or first response was coded and analyzed in the current study. While children were prompted three times or until they said "I don't know" for each question, only first responses were analyzed due to possible differences among children (i.e., age and gender) in verbal fluency and responding. Although beyond the scope of the hypotheses of the current study, it will be important to further investigate possible differences in the nature, beneficiary, and valence of children's responses as a function of order or number of responses given. Second, the findings indicate that there was a ceiling effect with regard to the nature of the response. As previously discussed, past research indicates that most of the differences in children's close peer relationships are quantitative in nature and while the results of the present study were expected to be of a more qualitative

nature, they were not expected to be overwhelmingly qualitative. Thus, it will be important for future research to examine the qualitative differences of children's close peer relationships. Third, children were only allowed to choose a friend and a best friend from among their current classmates. Although most children had at least one friend in their class, it is possible that this person was not their "very" best friend. The possibility that their best friend is in a different class, a different grade, or even a different town is something for future research to consider. That is, the goal of the present study was to investigate friend/best friend differences and using only current classroom friends and best friends may not have been the best way to maximize potential relationship differences. Fourth, the decision to implement a unilateral friendship nomination technique rather than a reciprocal nomination technique may have hindered the current study's ability to accurately identify children's classroom friends and classroom best friends. Generally, researchers use a reciprocal nomination technique because this plainly corresponds to the definition of a friendship as a dyadic relationship (Ray, Cohen & Secrist, 1995). Lastly, was the technique used for coding the responses. Literature on coding verbal data is not lacking (e.g., Gottman, 1983; Chi, 1997) although there is little literature available on making qualitative vs. quantitative distinctions using verbal protocols.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the current study was that children's responses were overwhelmingly qualitative in nature. Reviews of the literature on child and adult relationships (e.g., Brenton, 1974; Fehr, 1996) clearly state that when it comes to understanding differences between close relationships, such as those that exist between friends and best friends, the differences are quantitative in nature. That is, types of peer

relationships differ only in amount, that best friends and friends are conceptualized and understood to be either more (best friends) or less (friends) of the same thing. For example, best friends are just thought to be *more* intimate than friends, best friends are just thought to be *more* caring than friends.

It is easy to understand why this notion about differences between close relationships is so pervasive. First, just by definition the label friend/best friend connotes a quantitative difference or an amount difference. Specifically, the label friend and the label best friend share the same term "friend." Second, research on friendship formation, maintenance, and termination demonstrates that two children who are becoming friends progress from being relative strangers to close friends in a linear quantitative fashion. That to be a best friend you must first be a friend and so on. Third, much of the existing research on differences between children's close peer relationships was planned and conducted under the assumption that relationship differences are quantitative in nature (e.g., Cleary, et al., 2002;.Meurling, et al., 1999) Although it is too early to say definitively that differences between children's close peer relationships are differences in kind or qualitative differences, the current study clearly addresses an area that needs further study. It appears that while relationships do differ in amount as shown by past research, it is oversimplified to state that relationship types differ *only* in amount.

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Appendix A

Auburn University at Montgomery
Informed Consent
Children's Friendship Project

Your child is being invited to participate in a project looking at the importance of children's friendships. We hope to learn about more about children's understanding of friends and best friends. Your child has been selected because all second, third, 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, which include filling out friendship nomination questionnaires and answering some questions designed to reflect their opinion on different qualities of friendships. Children's responses to these questions will be recorded to ensure accuracy. 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 hallway outside your child's classroom at a time scheduled by your child's teacher. The interview will take about 20-30 minutes.

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

Your decision whether to participate will in no way prejudice your relationships with Dannelly Elementary School. If you decide to allow your child to participate, your child will be free to withdraw from the study at any time. If your child decides later to withdraw from the study, you may also withdraw any information that has been collected about your child.

This project has the approval of the principal, Judy Crockett. If you have any questions, we expect you to ask us. If you have additional questions later, please contact Ashley Newman (301-3401) or Dr. Glen Ray (244-3306) and we will be happy to answer them.

YOU ARE MAKING A DECISION WHETHER 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:_____

Witness' Signature:_____Date:_____

Appendix A

Participating Child's Assent/Consent Form

Today, I am doing a project about children's friendships and I would like you to help me. I want to know how you think and feel about your friends here at school. To tell me about your friends, you will be filling out some questionnaires and answering some questions. There are no right or wrong answers and this is not a test. Once we get started, you can stop at any time if you want to. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Child's Signature: _____

Appendix B

Relationship Nomination Questionnaire

Participant's Name: _____ 2 3 5 6 B G

Teacher's Name: _____ Today's Date: ___/___/___

Race: _____ Age: _____ Date of Birth: ___/___/___

Instructions: Here is a list of names of all the boys and girls in your class. First, find your name on the list and mark a line through 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

Relationship Rating Questionnaire

Participant's Name: _____ 2 3 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

Relationship Quality Interview

1. Who makes you feel better about your ideas, BF or F?
   How does _____ make you feel better about your ideas?
   Tell me some other ways _____ makes you feel good about your ideas.

2. Who do you sit with at lunch most of the time, BF or F?
   Why do you sit with _____ at lunch most of the time?
   Tell me some other reasons you sit with _____ at lunch most of the time.

3. Who do you tell your problems to more, BF or F?
   Why do you tell _____ your problems?
   Tell me some other reasons you tell _____ your problems.

4. Who likes you more than anybody else, BF or F?
   Why does _____ like you more than anybody else?
   Tell me some other reasons _____ likes you more than anybody else.

5. Who tells you that you are better at things more often, BF or F?
   Why does _____ tell you that you are better at things?
   Tell me some other reasons _____ tells you that you are better at things.

6. Who do you pick to be your partner more, BF or F?
   Why do you pick _____ to be your partner more?
   Tell me some other reasons you pick _____ to be your partner more?

7. Who do you talk to more about things that make you sad, BF or F?
   Why do you talk to _____ more about things that make you sad?
   Tell me some other reasons you talk to _____ more about things that make you sad.

8. Who plays mostly with you on the playground, BF or F?
   Why does _____ play mostly with you on the playground?
   Tell me some other reasons _____ plays mostly with you on the playground.

9. Who makes you feel more important and special, BF or F?
   How does _____ make you feel important and special?
   Tell me some other ways _____ makes you feel important and special.

10. Who do you play with more at recess, BF or F?
    Why do you play with _____ more at recess?
    Tell me some other reasons you play with _____ more at recess.

11. Who do you talk to more when you are mad about something that happens to you, BF or F?
    Why do you talk to _____ more when you are mad about something that happens to you?
    Tell me some other reasons you talk to _____ more when you are mad about something.

12. Who do you like more than you like any other kids, BF or F?
    Why do you like _____ more than you like any other kids?
    Tell me some other reasons you like _____ more than you like any other kids.

1. What else is different about BF and F?
   How else is BF different from F?
   Tell me some other ways BF is different from F.

2. What is the difference between a friend and a best friend?
   How else is a friend different from a best friend?
   Tell me some other ways a friend is different from a best friend.

3. Is there anything else that I did not mention that makes your best friend different from your friend?

4. Do you have anything you want to tell me that I did not ask you about?

5. I noticed on one/some of the questions you picked your friend _____ instead of your best friend _____ why is that?

Dimension: Caring
Questions 1, 5, 9

1. Who makes you feel better about your ideas, BF or F?
5. Who tells you that you are better at things more often, BF or F?
9. Who makes you feel more important and special, BF or F?

Dimension: Companionship
Questions 2, 6, 10

2. Who do you sit with at lunch most of the time, BF or F?
6. Who do you pick to be your partner more, BF or F?
10. Who do you play with more at recess, BF or F?

Dimension: Intimacy
Questions 3, 7, 11

3. Who do you tell your problems to more, BF or F?
7. Who do you talk to more about things that make you sad, BF or F?
11. Who do you talk to more when you are mad about something that happens to you, BF or F?

Dimension: Exclusivity
Questions 4, 8, 12

4. Who likes you more than anybody else, BF or F?
8. Who plays mostly with you on the playground, BF or F?
12. Who do you like more than you like any other kids, BF or F?

Other:

1. What else is different about BF and F?
2. What is the difference between a friend and a best friend?
3. Is there anything else that I did not mention that makes your best friend different from your friend?
4. Do you have anything you want to tell me that I did not ask you about?
5. I noticed that on one/some of the questions you picked your F instead of your best friend why is that?

Appendix F

Relationship Quality Questionnaire

Instructions: Use the numbers below to describe how important your best friend _____ is to you. Try to think of your best friend as they are right now and not as you want them to be. Circle the correct response using the numbers below. Remember, this is about your best friend _____ so make sure to think about them when you answer the questions.

0 = Not At All **1** = A Little True **2** = Somewhat True **3** = Pretty True **4** = Really True

1. _____ makes me feel good about my ideas.....	0...1...2...3...4
2. _____ and I always sit together at lunch.....	0...1...2...3...4
3. _____ and I always tell each other our problems.....	0...1...2...3...4
4. _____ likes me more than anybody else.....	0...1...2...3...4
5. _____ tells me I am good at things.....	0...1...2...3...4
6. _____ and I always pick each other as partners for things.....	0...1...2...3...4
7. _____ talks about things that make us sad.....	0...1...2...3...4
8. _____ plays mostly with me on the playground.....	0...1...2...3...4
9. _____ and I make each other feel important and special.....	0...1...2...3...4
10. _____ and I always play together at recess.....	0...1...2...3...4
11. I talk to _____ when I am mad about something that happens to me..	0...1...2...3...4
12. I like _____ more than I like any other kids.....	0...1...2...3...4