

Face-to-face Interaction Behaviors of Preadolescent Same-Sex and Opposite-Sex Friends and Acquaintances

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine whether pre-adolescents interacted more similarly and more positively in best friend pairs than those in acquaintance pairs and whether same-sex dyads interacted more similarly and more positively than opposite-sex dyads. Archival videotapes were coded for the face-to-face interaction behaviors of preadolescent best friend and acquaintance dyads and same-sex and opposite-sex dyads. The dyads had been identified by sociograms completed by 56 sixth grade children. The dyads were then videotaped in face-to-face interactions. The videotapes were coded in the current study for: 1) similar behaviors (vocalizations, body movements); 2) affect (smiling, laughing, animated); 3) communication signals (latent responding, interrupting, talking at the same time); and for 4) accord (agreeing, disagreeing). The best friend versus acquaintance pairs had more similar vocalizations, they laughed more, they interrupted and talked at the same time less often and they expressed agreement more often. The best friend same-sex versus opposite-sex pairs showed more similar vocalizations and body movements, they laughed more often, they showed less latent responding and expressed more agreement. These data suggest that more positive interactions occur within best friend than acquaintance dyads and within same-sex versus opposite-

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Sample

The sample had been recruited in the Field et al study from the two sixth-grade classes at the West Laboratory Elementary School. Following parental informed consent and child informed assent, 56 children (26 boys and 30 girls) were enrolled in the study. The children represented a fairly heterogeneous ethnic sample (Caucasian, Black, and Hispanic) and were middle socioeconomic status (SES). The children averaged 11.5 years of age, and they had known each other for 4.4 years on average.

Procedures

Sociograms for selection of close friend and acquaintance pairs. The children were first asked to orally name their "best" friend and their acquaintance. More specific questions were then asked to confirm the children's choices. These questions appeared on a xeroxed drawing of a happy face with several cartoonlike message clouds emanating from the happy face with the messages "I know--the best," "I know--the least," "I play with --the most," "I play with -- the least," "I study with -- the most (least)," and "at lunch I sit next to -- the most (least)." The children's teachers were also given a class roster and asked to list, for each child, two of the child's closest friends in their rank order. For the pairing of children, we then did the following. For the selection of the acquaintances, we simply matched children who said that they knew, played with, or sat next to each other the least. This appeared to be a more difficult

Behavior	Same- sex	Opposite-sex	F
Similar behaviors			
Vocalizations	84.8 (13.4)	16.0 (9.7)	69.21 ³
Body movements	72.1 (21.8)	27.0 (14.1)	39.04 ³
Affect			
Smiling	86.0 (18.4)	83.9 (21.6)	.52
Laughing	59.3 (27.5)	33.7 (16.5)	11.28 ²
Animated	65.2 (28.0)	54.2 (11.9)	1.19
Communication signals			
Latent responding	32.9 (22.9)	42.4 (26.2)	1.39
Interrupting	11.0 (15.1)	17.3 (14.6)	2.10
Talking at same time	16.3 (19.0)	21.2 (16.4)	1.89
Accord			
Agreeing	33.0 (20.2)	18.7 (11.3)	4.89 ¹
Disagreeing	15.6 (16.5)	22.9 (19.3)	4.13 ¹

(1p<.05, 2p<.01,3p<.001)

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