

Haley Comstock

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Differences in Children's Friendships

In the novel *Children's Friendships: The Beginnings of Intimacy*, Judy Dunn gives her readers a look into the relationships of toddlers, preschoolers, and school children. Chapter 4 talks about what factors might contribute to the different types of friendships children have at a young age. Although she lists some potential factors that contribute to her research question, none have been proven true. A reason for this is that children in preschool and kindergarten are too young, so she cannot give solid evidence.

Some friendships are based on an emotional connection. Girls in preschool or kindergarten are more likely to become friends from sharing their feelings. They bond over having the same emotions towards certain things. Boys are more likely to bond over activities and rarely have deep conversations with one another. In one study, she observed two different aspects of a relationship: emotional quality and playmate quality. Dunn explains how there is no such thing as one kind of friendship. You can have more than one best friend. It is common for kids in preschool and kindergarten to change who their best friend is weekly. You might have one friend that you have a strong emotional connection with, but do not play well together. You might also have another friend whom you play well with, but do not have that emotional connection. She concluded that the two aspects were independent of one another. There can also be a difference in power in some children's relationships. It is common for one friend to be defined as the "leader" and the other to be the "follower." Sometimes this can cause tension in the relationship, but not necessarily. There are some children who do not mind being bossed

around and are willing to follow orders. In another study, she concluded that 17 percent of the children were happy being a “follower,” and 29 percent were the “boss” in the friendship. About half of the children explained that they were happy with this sort of dominant and submissive relationship.

Dunn concludes the chapter by answering her research question from the beginning: what are the factors that make for different friendships? She explains how she cannot give a direct answer as to why there are different types of friendships, one of the reasons being that these children are in preschool and kindergarten – too young to tell. Though she elaborates on that the quality of children’s preschool and kindergarten friendships affect their later life friendships.

The chapter of the book gives great studies and theories as to why there are differences in children’s friendships, but none seem to be reliable since the children are too young to gain strong evidence from. Dunn went into great detail with her theories, and had them applicable to real-world situations. However, most of the chapter she spent exploring what effects later life friendships.

Dunn, J. (2006). *Children’s Friendships: The Beginnings of Intimacy*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.