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HDF 345- Peer Relationships

Professor Quimby

Peer Power: Cross Gender Relationships in Early Years Precis

In the book *Peer Power: Preadolescent Culture and Identity*, the authors explored a variety of factors that play into peer relationships throughout preadolescent years, such as friendships, bullying, social status, and gender. They did this through eight years of observation in the various communities and by getting first hand interviews from the children. The chapter this precis is over is “Cross Gender Relationship in Early and Middle Years”, however I kept the focus on the younger years.

During the younger years, children are subject to gender socialization and labeling as infants. However, they remain open to cross-gender friendships throughout pre-kindergarten and early elementary years. This is because the children are still learning about gender roles and figuring out their own self identity and what this means. They are not yet bound to strict gender norms and are not self-conscious, so they are much more comfortable with friendships involving the opposite gender. The more important factor for friendship during this age span is availability and convenience, so most kids are happy playing with whoever their parents or caregivers place them with.

Romantic relationships are not very common within this age group, though they are not completely out of the picture. Individuals in this age group usually keep any sort of romantic interests a secret. When one of the children participating in the study was questioned about whether she ever had romantic feelings for any boys, she talked about how she picked a boy and decided she liked him, but kept it to herself and even felt embarrassed about it. Adolescents of this age range also participate in “kissing” games that involve chasing others of the opposite gender. Even during these games, actually kissing someone was rare as most of the children

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would back out before anything could happen. Not everyone participates in these types of games or behaviors however, but those who do are generally seen as the popular kids. Another child interviewed on when he believed interest in the opposite gender began said that it varied for every one with some not starting to feel interest until the third grade, while his interest began in the first grade. When he was asked how many of his friends participated in the kissing games during the younger years, he said only about thirty percent.

The research and data for this book was collected in the 1990's, and is qualitative rather than quantitative. Society and technology have changed significantly since this book was published, which definitely affects how peer relationships develop and affect individual children with how common screens are even at the young ages. However, I believe this book and the data it provides is a good start in getting an understanding in some of the most important factors that play a crucial part in the lives of preadolescents.

Adler, P. A., & Adler, P. (2003). *Peer Power: Preadolescent Culture and Identity*. New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press.