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**CHILDREN'S RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEERS**

by

**Carla Nelson**

Grateful appreciation is expressed to Dr. Drew G. Carter for his  
guidance and encouragement. Thanks is  
also extended to the other members of my graduate committee, Dr. Malcolm  
Alford, Mrs. Dorothy B. Lewis, and Mrs. Carroll C. Lechner, for the help  
which they have given. I wish to thank the administrative, teaching, and  
students in the Division of Child Development who cooperated with me  
in my investigations.

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree**

of

**MASTER OF SCIENCE**

in

**Family and Child Development**

*Carla Nelson*

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*Carla Nelson*

Carla Nelson

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## INTRODUCTION

The child is a member of two worlds: the world of adults and that of his peers. His experiences in each of these worlds are crucial aspects of his daily living and are significant agents in molding his subsequent development. (9, p. 289)

A child's family is the center of his world during infancy and extending into the preschool years. As a child nears school age and in succeeding years, he reaches out into the world beyond his home environment. He comes in contact with the world of other people who are not included in his family circle. In this new world of peers, the child finds something he does not find at home. Here are other individuals like himself who have many things in common, such as age, appearance, interests, and desires. We find in this peer culture, children who can better satisfy their growing needs of self-identification and social adjustment by being in a neighborhood gang or just playing together than they can in the home environment alone. Association with peers is an important supplement to a child's associations in the home.

Children do not break away from the adult world as their interests are heightened in peer groups. Their associations with adults continue to increase as they enter into school, clubs, and other supervised groups. Children seek the approval and advice of their parents, teachers, and other leaders. However, confirmation of a child's value is very important, especially when coming from his peers. The way a child is accepted or rejected by his peers can influence greatly his feelings about himself.

The satisfaction a child receives by just being "one of the gang" is sufficient to make him happy and to give him a feeling of importance. Each day in a child's life should be an important one. The friendships which a child forms during his preadolescent years can be a determining factor in the child's happiness during these years as well as in the years which follow.

An interest in elementary-age children and their friendships stimulated a probe into the research which has been done in the area of preadolescent peer groups and the formation of friendships. It was found that much research has been done in the past relating to the formation of children's friendships.

Some specific areas of interest were how a child relates himself to a broad-age peer group and to same-sex and opposite-sex friendships. Little information was found in these two areas. It is recognized that friendship on the same-age level is common, but many children choose their associates from children older or younger than themselves. Are there factors which relate significantly to the age of peers a child chooses? The majority of research relating to opposite-sex friendships was carried out several years ago. Current studies on opposite-sex friendships show new trends developing which differ from past studies and point to a need for further research in the area.

It is not the purpose of this study to do detailed research in these areas, but only to find patterns of friendship formations in the areas being tested and to see if family patterns have a significant bearing on the formation of these friendships.

Factors related to friendship choices which are to be considered in this study are age, sex, family size, and ordinal position of the child in the family.



It is recognized that many factors have an influence on friendship formations. Some factors which have been considered, but which are not a part of this study are religion, race, education, socio-economic level of the family, and parental attitudes about the child's friends. The factors of religion and race are held quite constant due to the population sampled in the study. The socio-economic level of the families in the locations where the sampling was made range generally from lower to middle class. No attempt was made to compare the parents' educational backgrounds or to find their attitudes about their children's friendships.

#### Statement of problem

The problem to be investigated in this study is the pattern of friendship relationships between children in the second, fourth, and sixth grade levels in school. An attempt will be made to study the influence of age, sex, family size, and ordinal position in the family on children's choices of friends of the same as well as of the opposite sex.

#### Hypotheses

1. It is expected that children will identify themselves more with peers of their own sex than with peers of the opposite sex.
2. It is expected that children will choose peers their own age more frequently than peers who are older or younger.
3. It is expected that children from a large family will relate themselves more frequently with children of a broader-age-range than those from a small family.

4. It is expected that a child's ordinal position in the family will affect his choice of peers. It is expected that oldest children will choose peers younger than themselves more often than will youngest children. It is expected that youngest children will choose peers older than themselves more often than will oldest children.

5. It is expected that the sex of a child's siblings will affect peer choices. It is expected that children with siblings of the opposite sex will have a higher percent of opposite-sex friends than those whose siblings are of the same sex as the child.

6. It is expected that rural families will be larger than urban families. Therefore, if family size is a factor in choice of peers, there should be a difference between the rural and urban findings.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

"Social scientific interest in and recognition of the importance of children's peer relations dates back at least to the turn of the century." (9, p. 291) Considerable research was done in the 1920's as interest in peer groups increased. The trend continued into the 1930's, but declined in the 1940's.

"Research and theory since 1940 have been not so much new as they have represented a refinement and an extension of the work of this earlier period." (9, p. 294)

Jenkins (15) made a study aimed at discovering definite factors which influence the forming of children's friendships. Many of the factors which are involved are of a personal nature and cannot be analyzed. Some factors which she did report were intelligence, age, play interests, and the social-economic status of the parents in the community.

Research relating to the present study consists of that pertaining to the age, sex, family size, and the ordinal position in the family of the elementary school child as they affect the child's choice of peers.

Bonney (3, p. 21) summed up the many studies, which have been done relating to children's friendships, with the following statement:

Numerous studies have been made dealing with factors related to mutual friendships. These studies have dealt with such factors as I. Q.'s, academic achievement, personality traits, chronological age, and various kinds of interest and attitudes. A review of these studies leaves the reader impressed with the lack of agreement on findings, and also with the generally low relationships found between the factors studied, on the one hand, and the mutual friendships on the other.

Research in the area of peer relations was intensive two decades or more ago. Current studies (6, 7, 20, 32) point to the need for new research which can help explain trends which vary from the findings of past research. The author does not propose to study mutual friendships, but only to study a few of the factors which may relate to the formation of children's friendships.

#### Age and sex

The age of a child seems to have considerable influence on his choice of peers. Age rates next to sex as the most important determinant in peer group formation (9, p. 299).

As a child grows from infancy into adolescence, he passes through a stage in which he moves from sole membership in the family to dual membership in the family and peer group (6, p. 206; 17, p. 173). Wright (35) observed that the average amount of time spent in family settings decreased and that spent in community settings increased with age throughout childhood and adolescence.

Bowerman and Kinch (6, p. 207), in their study of children from middle-class families, found that 87.1 percent of the fourth grade students were family oriented. Orientation towards the family continued to decrease to a level of 31.6 percent by the tenth grade.

Lombardi (22, p. 307) pointed out that "scientific data indicates that one's peer groups can be especially influential during certain developmental periods such as pre-adolescence and adolescence."

Peer group attachments become a source of great satisfaction. The peer groups provide appropriate social roles, norms, values, and attitudes for group members, and thus facilitate

group conformity patterns and means of gaining acceptance. A given social role may determine what pattern of behavior is expected. Adoption of the role can be a satisfying experience. (22, p. 308)

Another characteristic of school-age children is their (27, p. IV 3) "attempt to follow the standards of the next older age group rather rigidly." The child at this age (27, p. IV-3) "is attempting to establish a status in his own right." He wants to be accepted by his peers and looks toward the older child as a pattern though not necessarily as a playmate. The seven-year-old child (25, p. 20-21) "may attempt a pal relationship with an older child."

This is the beginning of a trend which gradually takes the child away from his home. New identifications are made with teachers and others the child can get close to until he is drawn almost completely away from his home environment.

As the child begins to expand his relationships, he begins to feel a need for active participation in a club or gang. In the large school setting a child may be a little lost unless he can become a part of a group. "He needs a feeling of 'belonging,' of becoming a member of the crowd; he needs to be accepted by his own kind in order to be comfortable and happy." (17, p. 173)

Koch (19, p. 24) stated that:

having more companions of his own sex, age, and choosing is probably very important for the child, for then he is more evenly matched with his associates and has more opportunity to develop self-confidence in his social relations.

Inference is made here and supported by other studies that a child is most happy when with others of his same age and sex.

Kepler (17, p. 173) further states that "becoming a member of an intimate gang of some kind is so fundamental and so strong a need, that it would be an odd child indeed who did not seek it."

Campbell (9, p. 295) reviewed a study by Withey, Foster, and Billingsley in which they interviewed boys ages eleven to thirteen and reported that nearly three out of four boys had "a bunch of fellows" with whom they spent "a lot" of their time.

The child not only desires peer group acceptance, but seeks it and shows particular need for acceptance from children of his own sex (18, 27).

Tuddenham (33) did a study on reputations of children and children's evaluations of their peers. Among first, third, and fifth grade children, votes for best friends were received almost exclusively from children of the same sex as the person named.

Campbell's study (8, p. 546) on social-sex development, "defined as the child's social relationships with the opposite sex, leading toward heterosexual adjustment in adolescence," reported the following:

In general, the social-sex pattern develops as follows: There is at first an undifferentiated social relationship with the opposite sex until about the age of eight years, then a rising preference for children of the same sex, until puberty, when heterosexual feelings begin gradually to develop.

Campbell (9, p. 299) commented in his review of peer relations in childhood that

The most visible indicator of the impact of age and sex categories on children's peer relations is the widespread evidence of segregated groupings in terms of these two factors and of concomitant pressures for behavioral

differentiation. From preschool up to adolescence, sex homogeneity is a prime element in friendships and clique memberships.

Koch (18, p. 80) says, "It should be no surprise to discover that children who have achieved a sex identification tend to prefer members of their own sex." She cited as an example that of similarity in physiological make-up which may be an element in causing children of the same sex to feel more comfortable with each other.

The Freudian concept of latency is another point to be considered which may be a factor influencing a child's friendship choices. However, the original concept, that a child's sexual interest and play are snuffed out during the latency period, is not borne out by current studies. Mussen and Conger (26, p. 315) stated that their thinking parallels the view of the neo-Freudians who "feel that it (latency) is dependent on cultural factors." There is a tendency for our culture to guide children into activities with others of their same sex (26, p. 313-315; 31, p. 231-233).

Cross-cultural evidence supports the view that right from the early years of childhood cultural pressures train the child in sex-differentiated behavior (1, 25). Meyer's (24, p. 56) study indicated that "early sex-typed behavior is maintained throughout the school years by means of a system of social reinforcements." Linton's (21, p. 594) study expressed the viewpoint that there is really very little difference between boys and girls before puberty "in their physiologically determined potentialities for work or social participation." He indicated that from infancy onward there is a distinction made between the sexes for the purpose of preparing them to meet the roles which they will have as adults. Due to this training, it is not surprising that

children should have more favorable attitudes toward members of their own sex.

Our culture seems to determine in part the age of one's peers as well as the sex. In a study by Jenkins (15) in which she asked for both the age of one's friends and the source of the friendship, she found the chronological age range to be greater among friends made outside the school. She stated that (15, p. 441) "there is no uniform or perceptible tendency for children to choose friends either older or younger than themselves." In her study of junior high age students, Jenkins' found that 54 percent of the children's friendships were reported to come from school associations while 25 percent came from the neighborhood. The remaining friendships came from other associations which the children had outside their school and neighborhood. The high percent of friendships emanating from the school environment and the smaller age range between friends indicated, in this study at least, that the school does have a tendency to limit the age of one's friends.

Harris and Tseng (14) made a study in which they asked boys and girls to complete sentences about their peers and parents. The comments which the children made were rated as being positive, negative, or neutral. It was found that (14, p. 410) "boys and girls were predominantly favorable to their peers, and at every age positive attitudes to own sex peers exceed those to opposite sex peers." They observed a tendency for young children to play together and to choose their best friends among both sexes. During the elementary school years there is (14, p. 410) "an increasing tendency to regard



with favor one's own sex peers and with disdain, if not enmity, members of the opposite sex."

During this period the child's view of himself is heightened as he seeks for acceptance from his peers, particularly those of his own sex.

Bowerman and Kinch (6, p. 208) stated that "the male in our society is given more independence at an earlier age than the female, and consequently might be expected to be less limited in peer group contacts and be oriented toward peers earlier." In contrast to this is Bonney's (2, p. 96) study which showed that the earlier maturation of the girl leads her to be more social and form closer friendships than the boy.

The findings of Bonney's (2, p. 93) study were "corroborated by other studies which have nearly always found that children" of ages seven and eight "form friendships primarily within their own sex rather than between the sexes."

Furfey (12, p. 76) did extensive research on boy-girl relations in the late 1920's. Factors influencing friendship choices which he studied have remained to be of interest today. He stated that the boy of eight "is not entirely averse to playing with the other sex. He plays jump-rope with his feminine companions and even joins them in playing 'fathers and mothers.'" This is supported by Gesell and Ilg (13, p. 150-151) who remarked that at age seven "sex lines are not clearly drawn but some discrimination against the opposite sex is beginning to appear."

Mussen and Conger (26, p. 422) reported a study by Moreno which showed a high percent of opposite-sex attractions among classmates in kindergarten, first, and second grade. In the second grade 17 percent of the interactions were across sex lines. There was a marked drop after the third grade to about

3 percent in the fourth to seventh grades.

Although same-sex friendships are the general trend, there are factors which influence trends toward opposite-sex friendships. A recent study by Kanous, Daugherty, and Cohn (16) brought out the point that socio-economic level is an important factor to be considered when testing for opposite-sex friendship choices. It was found that the results of Moreno's study held true for the upper-socio-economic level. However, the opposite-sex choices were significantly more frequent at an earlier age for the lower socio-economic level.

Another study (30, p. 173), which illustrated how peers effect one another in their relationships, found that the extent to which fifth grade boys were accepted by the girls was associated with the boys' acceptance by other boys.

The drop in opposite-sex friendships at the upper elementary school level has been well-established in past studies. Furfey (12, p. 101) claims that

a

phenomenon which distinguishes the gang age from the age which preceded it is the fact that girls are rigorously excluded from participation in masculine activities. The girl, however, does not feel this affront very keenly, since she is passing through a gang age of her own and has the same negative attitude toward boys that they have toward her.

Studies by Millard (25, p. 24) confirm Furfey's work. "The fourth grade demonstrates the first real separation of the sexes in their interest." The boys in general are inclined to keep away from the girls. Millard's study further shows that by the age of eleven, a reasonable theory for the separation of the sexes on the same-age level is the maturity advantage which the girls have over the boys. There is antagonism between the sexes because the (25, p. 69) "girls

are more successful in school work and in general adjustment to rules and regulations."

Another study on the separation of the sexes during the upper elementary school years was conducted by Sutton-Smith (32) and others are reported by Gesell and Ilg (13). The results of these studies are similar to those which have been cited.

Broderick (7, p. 27) proposed a need for new research in this area. He quoted a recent national survey (Lewis, Gertrude M., Educating Children in Grades Four, Five and Six, Washington, D. C.; U. S. Office of Education, U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1958, p. 30-31) which pointed out that "new patterns are emerging which promise to revolutionize boy-girl relationships at these ages." Some of the findings of this survey follow (7, p. 27):

. . . in some schools boys and girls do not seem to feel a strong need to separate. In fact, as low as the fourth grade and continuing through the sixth, they frequently ask for activities such as folk dancing and table games together, and dating begins in some cases . . . in fifth grade. . . . A few children wear 'steady rings' . . . In grade six, 'They show they like each other in a friendly way.' 'They aren't so antagonistic as formerly.' 'They don't pick on each other so much.' 'They get along better.' 'Their social relations are much more mature.'

Broderick commented that "further research must determine how widespread or unequal these changes may be throughout the nation." Broderick's own investigations in this area indicated that there is a trend toward a greater degree of cross-sex friendships than past studies have shown.

### Family size

The size of one's family has an effect on his adjustment with his peers. Bossard (4, p. 4) reported that the "interacting size of the family" is important. Although a child may come from a large family, he might not be closely associated with all family members. Often in a large family, older siblings are living away from home. In a large family many of the child's contacts will be with siblings as opposed to the adult interaction felt by children in small families. There is a greater "degree of interdependence" in the large family brought about by the "degree of specialization" in the family.

Bonney (2, p. 87) found that "without exception, straight through the mutual friendships, the only child is in a superior social position." The children from large families were consistently superior to those from medium-sized families, but below the level of the only child. "It was revealed that the most popular children . . . had the smallest number of brothers and sisters who could be considered playmates." (2, p. 89) Bonney indicated that the generalizations made about children in any given family size would not be of any particular help in explaining the personality of a given child within the family.

Bowerman and Kinch (6, p. 209) found that in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades "the large and small family orientation patterns were very similar."

Damrin (11, p. 95) made a study of adolescent girls in which she reported that "on the whole . . . the children of small families are somewhat better adjusted than are those of large families of five or more children.

This tendency is also found true in social acceptability."

Bossard and Boll (5, p. 167) have done extensive research with members of large families. They stated that "a number of children growing up in the same household would be expected to play a good deal with each other, and that such play would constitute a major phase of their younger years seems a normal assumption." Their study showed that 72 percent also spent part of their play time with other children not in their family.

Cavan's (10) study of the American family reported a trend for low income and large family and average income and small family to go together.

#### Ordinal position

"The structure of sibling relationships enters the picture of the child's orientation to his peer group, affecting both his interest in his peers and the way he relates to others." (9, p. 301)

It would seem that many reactions of a child could be attributed to his ordinal position. However, just as with family size, it may or may not be the cause of any given reaction or adjustment. The age and sex of siblings, as well as the parents' attitudes toward each individual sibling, are important factors to be considered.

Koch (19, p. 16) stated that the "frequency of significant interactions suggests the need for caution in generalization about the effects of birth-order."

Children's reaction to siblings may vary with age. The seven-year-old plays well with a sibling younger and close in age and admires his older siblings. At age nine children get on well with their older and younger siblings.

They will stand up for them, and are loyal to them (13).

Bossard and Boll (5, p. 185) reported that "the siblings in a family have a unity of their own, a unity which grows out of the number, nature, and relationship of its individual members."

Some studies concerned with reactions of children in different ordinal positions of the family have found the following:

A detailed study by Koch (20, p. 175), in which she studied five and six-year-old children from two-child families, showed that the children a child "prefers to associate with, as well as those that are available playmates, are determined in part by his sibs." She found a tendency for the first-born children to have younger friends more often than the second-born children. Also, though same-sex playmates were predominantly the choice, among children who made an opposite-sex choice there was a greater predominance of children whose sibling was of the opposite sex. It would seem that sibling relationships, to some extent, provide the pattern for establishing peer relationships.

Another article by Koch (19, p. 23) connected with the above study, reported that

We suspect that a child's reaching out to peers may be a function in part of his involvement with, or the degree of satisfyingness of, his sib. When the age difference between sibs is small, we think they tend to be more involved with each other . . . in real companionship and dependence.

Parsons (28) inferred in his study that discrimination in the family is not based on birth order. He indicated age as the basis for primary distinctions such as privileges, responsibilities, and treatment which the child would receive.

### Family influences

Campbell (9, p. 289) stated that along with cultural and subcultural factors, "Family influences serve to establish the framework within which peer relations operate, to set the stage on which the drama of peer relations unfolds."

Psathas (29) found that in families on lower socioeconomic levels parents apparently show less concern for their children's activities outside the home. They exercised less control over their children and were likely to have little influence on their children's choices of friends.

A study by Macdonald, McGuire, and Havighurst (23) reported that children from different social classes used their leisure time differently, even though they lived in the same neighborhood.

Campbell (9, p. 297) reported that several studies show children are aware of ethnic and racial differences at an early age, however research evidence available conflicts as to whether the perceived differences are reflected in children's actions.

Westley and Elkin (34, p. 244) reported that the peer group, "rather than serving as an opposition group to the parents, tends to encourage and reinforce many values and patterns of the adult world." In a review of this study, Campbell (9, p. 315) commented that "to a considerable extent children select friends on the basis of values acquired from their parents."

## METHOD OF PROCEDURE

A description of the procedure used in conducting this study includes the development of the questionnaire, composition of groups, administration of questionnaire, and tabulation of questionnaire.

### Development of the questionnaire

A closed-form questionnaire was constructed to obtain information for the study. Questions used in other studies were reviewed and some of them were adapted for use as the questionnaire was developed. It was decided to use some of the same type of questions as used by Broderick (7) and Bonney (2) in their studies. Due to the age group being sampled in the study, it was necessary to formulate questions which would be simple to understand and answer.

The rating scale was constructed first. Several possibilities for rating peers were considered. The form which appears in the questionnaire (See Appendix) was constructed for the purpose of enabling young children to report to us about their friends. It was necessary to construct a scale which would be simple enough for second grade and yet suitable for use in the fourth and sixth grades without being too simple. The scale was first administered to a group of first-grade children in the spring of 1963 to test for its validity and simplicity in answering. The children were given an explanation of the purpose of the questionnaire and they responded with full cooperation in filling it out. Since they were able to understand the form satisfactorily, it was decided



that it could be used in its present form as part of the questionnaire.

A pre-study was made in the fall of 1963. The questionnaire was administered to a class of second grade students. The results of the pre-study seemed to indicate that the questionnaire was satisfactory to gain the required information for the study. There had been some apprehension that the children might use repetitious patterns for marking the rating scale, but this did not appear to be a problem.

#### Composition of groups

The groups composing this study consisted of 167 urban children and 148 rural children. Each group consisted of two second grade, two fourth grade, and two sixth grade classes. The children in the study were, for the most part, white and members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon). The schools in both the rural and urban areas draw their population from a cross section of middle and lower socioeconomic levels.

The urban sampling was made in Salt Lake City, Utah, and the rural sampling came from Cache County, Utah. The main purpose of the rural-urban sampling was to test for factors which might be attributed to family size. Cavan (10, p. 51) reported the average family size to range from 2.4 in urban areas to 3.8 in the rural farm area. It is recognized that other factors also influence family size.

There was no attempt made to match the groups. The second, fourth, and sixth grades were chosen for convenience in testing a cross-section of the elementary school years. All children present at the time the study was

administered were tested. The children who were absent on the day the questionnaire was given were not tested.

Table 1. Number of children in study by grade, sex, and urban-rural residence

Grade	Urban				Rural			
	2	4	6	Total	2	4	6	Total
Boys	29	29	35	93	21	27	27	75
Girls	<u>20</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>74</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>73</u>
Total	49	57	61	167	43	51	54	148

#### Administration of questionnaire

Permission was received to administer the questionnaire in one school in the Granite School District and in two schools in the Cache County District. The school principals and teachers of the second, fourth, and sixth grade classes were contacted. After receiving their permission, arrangements were made for administering the questionnaire. The purpose of the study was explained to the teachers. They were very cooperative, both in allotting their class time and in helping the administrator where needed.

The questionnaire was given in late October and during November of 1964. School had been in session for two months and it was supposed that by this time the children would be familiar with their classmates and have established some friendships within their classes.

The questionnaire was administered by the author in six classes in Granite District. The purpose of the questionnaire was explained to the students. The students were told to leave their name off the questionnaire and to answer the questions as accurately as they could according to the way they felt about each item. Time was allotted for answering questions which the students might have and for helping students who needed individual assistance.

The assistance of two upper-division students in child development was obtained through Utah State University. These students administered the questionnaire in Cache County. Before administering the questionnaire, the students were given directions as to how to administer it. They were also given information to guide them in their verbal explanations. The teachers of the classes involved in the study introduced the student administrators and were very cooperative in helping to prepare their classes for the questionnaire.

The purpose of the first five questions in the questionnaire was to provide general information about the children in the study. These questions indicated the child's sex, grade in school, rural-ruban residence, family size, and ordinal position in the family. The sixth question asked for the age (older or younger) and sex of the best-liked sibling. This question was included to help determine a possible correlation with the child's preference for age and sex of peers.

Questions 7 and 8 were included to determine the children's actual associations during free time in contrast to their choice of associations during free time. On these questions, the children were asked only to indicate with whom they spent the most time. It is recognized that children's free time is

normally divided into association with many individuals, including most if not all of the choices given.

On questions 9 and 10 children were asked to indicate their first, second, and third choices for a same-sex or opposite-sex friend of their own age. In the explanation given, the children were asked to make a specific choice of a person in their class and then check the proper blank to indicate whether that person was a boy or a girl.

Question number 11 was included to see how parents rated in comparison with the child's peers among the different age groups in the study.

On the twelfth question, the children were told to indicate their choice as to the sex of members they would like to have in a club to which they would belong. Children in this age-range, especially the fourth and sixth grades, are often members of clubs or similar groups associated with their community, church, school, or neighborhood. The nature of some clubs dictates the type of membership they can have, but the children were told that there were no restrictions. They could choose their same sex, heterosexual grouping, or the opposite sex.

The rating scale consisted of several squares in which the children were to rate their peers. Peers to be rated included those older, the same age, and younger of the same sex and opposite sex. Figures were drawn to represent each of the above age and sex classifications. Each figure was rated on a three-point rating scale. The children were told to place an X in one of the three squares under each figure, indicating a positive, neutral, or negative response. An X in the top square (positive) received three points, the middle

square (neutral) two points, and the bottom square (negative) one point.

The children rated each of the figures on five different questions. The children were told to think of each figure and to rate it independent of the others. Therefore, each figure had the potential of receiving a rating of one, two, or three.

Following are the five questions and the areas which they were testing:

1. "Whom do you want most to be like?"

Children have models or individuals whom they look to as an ideal or with whom they identify themselves. It was supposed that for most children a model would be a person older and of the same sex.

2. "With whom would you like to have your picture taken?"

On this question, the children were told to think beyond the actual situation of having their picture taken and to think whom they would want to be with in a picture which they might have to keep over a period of time.

3. "To whom would you tell your secrets?"

Girls and boys alike have a certain fondness for secrets. It seems that in some esoteric way a shared secret intensifies both the private sense of self and the identification with another self. (13, p. 215)

This question was included to find the age and sex of children whom the child trusted and in whom he felt he could confide when there was a secret to share.

4. "Whom do you want most to like you?"

Question number 1 related to individuals who may or may not be wanted for friends. Maybe an identification is made with someone the child looks up to

but does not desire as a close friend. This question asks if you could have anyone of your choosing for a friend, whom would it be? Some children have a longing desire for a friendship with another child but the feeling is not reciprocated. What grouping does the child desire to be identified with or want to be a part of?

5. "If your family were going on a vacation for a week and you could take a friend, whom would you invite?"

This question necessitated thinking of a person with whom the child would prefer close association over a period of a week. The children were to think of the age and sex represented by each figure and to rate them according to their desire for the association represented over a week's time.

#### Tabulation of questionnaire

The questionnaire was divided into 67 categories for tabulation purposes. The information from the questionnaire was punched into Unisort Analysis cards, form Y9. Ratings given on page 3 of the questionnaire were written on each card for further tabulation.

A needle sorter was used to separate the cards. The cards were first sorted by grade and sex. They were further sorted to tabulate the responses by family size, ordinal position in the family, sex of siblings, and rural-urban residence.

## PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The presentation and discussion of findings is in two sections. Questions from the study which show patterns of friendship relationships between children in the second, fourth, and sixth grade levels in school are presented first. Three questions (9, 10, 11) show patterns for same-sex and opposite-sex choices. Question 11 also includes the child's parents in the choices. Also presented in the first section are the findings comparing children's free time associations with their choice for free time associations.

The second section presents information found on the influence of family size, sex of siblings, and ordinal position in the family on children's choices of friends of the same as well as of the opposite sex and on older, same-age, and younger age levels.

### Patterns of friendship relationships between children in the second, fourth, and sixth grade levels

The children were asked on three different questions (See Appendix, questions 9, 10, 11) to indicate their preference for same-sex and opposite-sex peers. Each question is discussed separately and tables are included which show the patterns which were found.

On question 9 ("If you could choose whom you sat by in school, would you pick?"), the children were asked to think of a specific child in their class whom they would like to sit by. They were then told to indicate whether that

child was a boy or a girl. It was further explained that maybe several children in the class would prefer to sit by the same child. The children were then told to make a second choice and a third choice and to indicate the sex of the child about whom they were thinking.

The responses (See Table 2) to this question are interesting, though there was little variance from what was expected. There was no choice on which opposite-sex peers received a higher percent of choices than same-sex peers.

The responses indicate that on the second grade level, for the first and third choices, the girls received a 50 percent higher rating from the boys than the boys received from the girls. The percentage on the second choice was the same for both sexes. A pattern is seen here in which the boys seem to be reaching for the girls, but the girls do not reciprocate and show a similar preference to sit by a boy. On the average, girls on this age level seem to be intellectually more mature than the boys. There is an indication that the boys may feel they can benefit in some way by sitting by a girl. Since the girls do seem to find themselves more capable in school subjects, this may explain in part their reason for preferring to sit by other girls. Gesell and Ilg (13) remarked that this is the age at which children begin discriminating against the opposite sex. Findings here indicate that girls may begin discriminating earlier than do boys.

A reversal of this situation is shown in the fourth grade pattern. The responses show the girls giving the boys a higher rating than they, in return, receive from the boys. However, it is important to note that there is little



Table 2. Choice of sex to sit by in school by grade and sex

Choice	Boys		Girls		
	Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl	
	%	%	%	%	
Second grade	1st	80	20	10	90
	2nd	76	24	24	76
	3rd	66	34	17	83
Fourth grade	1st	95	5	13.5	86.5
	2nd	87.5	12.5	31	69
	3rd	87.5	12.5	12	88
Sixth grade	1st	94	6	6	94
	2nd	74	26	26	74
	3rd	81	19	40	60

change between the pattern for second grade and fourth grade girls. The seeming difference between the sexes on these two grade levels is demonstrated in the marked change in the responses from the boys. The first choice for the boys was almost entirely for the same sex. The second and third choices received the lowest percentage for opposite-sex preference among the three grades. The findings here corroborate other studies which show a high degree of antagonism among children of the opposite sex on the fourth grade level. The boys prefer to be separated from the girls and having to sit by them is often considered, by the boys, to be a form of punishment. Informal observations of some fourth grade teachers indicate that children's attitudes toward the opposite sex change very much during the school year. The boys, who seem to avoid the girls during the first part of the year, have been observed to take much more notice of girls by the end of the fourth grade. The girls had a high opposite-sex preference on second choice, but their third choice was lower than their first. They seem to maintain a more even pattern than the boys for interest in the opposite sex.

Among the sixth graders, the percentages for first and second choices were the same for both sexes. However, the pattern is quite different from the other two grades. The first choice indicates a high preference for same sex, but on second and third choices a new pattern is developed. The second choice pattern is almost identical to that shown in the second grade. There is an emergence of both sexes reaching toward the opposite-sex peer. This pattern is not so pronounced for the boy as it is for the girl. The highest

opposite-sex preference shown is on third choice for sixth grade girls. Although the same-sex peer definitely received first preference, there is indication that girls' attitudes toward boys are changing when a boy is considered okay for second or third choice in preference to another girl.

Responses here confirm the findings of Broderick's study (7). The girls are reaching out for friendship from the boys and this reaching is being reciprocated to some extent. There seems to be a trend for the sixth grade children to have more friendly feelings toward their opposite-sex peers than has been indicated by past studies.

Children were asked again on question 10 ("Whom would you choose for a partner on a field trip?") to indicate their preference for same-sex and opposite-sex peers. This time the child was placed in a different situation, but reference was still made to the child's classmates. School children frequently go on field trips and it is the practice of many teachers to pair the children off in groups of two's. The children were given instructions similar to those given on question 9 for indicating their first, second, and third choices.

In general, there was little difference between the percentage pattern on this question (See Table 3) and that presented on Table 2. It is assumed that children might be expected to hold hands with their partner on a field trip and also that the children are going to be seen in public with the person whom they choose as a partner. These two assumptions may account in part for some of the differences shown in Tables 2 and 3. On the second grade level, a slightly higher preference for opposite-sex peers was shown by both sexes.

Table 3. Choice of sex for a partner on a field trip by grade and sex

		Boys		Girls	
	Choice	Boy %	Girl %	Boy %	Girl %
Second grade	1st	64	36	19	81
	2nd	76	24	24	76
	3rd	68	32	24	76
Fourth grade	1st	91	9	12	88
	2nd	84	16	25	75
	3rd	91	9	19	81
Sixth grade	1st	98	2	9	91
	2nd	85	15	11	89
	3rd	85	15	41	59

These children are often paired off with opposite-sex partners, and though most of them don't seem to mind it, the evidence in these findings is that a majority of the children do prefer a same-sex peer for a partner.

Responses on the fourth grade level are only slightly different from the responses which were shown on Table 2 for this grade. The boys show a higher preference for girls, but it is not a significant difference. The girls show a higher preference for their same-sex peers on the first and second choices. The percent of choices given to opposite-sex peers is large enough to indicate that there is not an extreme pattern of avoidance of the opposite sex.

The widest span is on the sixth grade level. Sixth grade boys showed a definite preference for their own sex on the first choice and their second and third choices were close to the fourth grade pattern. It is also indicated by the responses from the sixth grade girls that they would rather sit by a boy than accompany him as a partner on a field trip. However, a large percent of the girls did mark a boy as their third choice for a partner. This again seems to indicate that the girls are accepting their opposite-sex peers more on this age level even though they are not the first choice.

The similarity in patterns on Tables 2 and 3 may indicate that for several of the children the friends chosen for questions 9 and 10 were identical.

Child-parent relationships are not intended to be a part of this study, but some comparisons are made between children's choices of parents and peers. Throughout the elementary school years, parents seem to rate high with their children. However, during this period of a child's life, there is a general trend to turn gradually from the home toward the peer culture.

The findings on question 11 ("Would you like to go to a movie with— boy, girl, father, mother?") indicate that children rate their parents highly, though as the child gets older there is a tendency to prefer same-age peers above parents. The children marked three choices on this question. They were permitted to choose a boy or a girl more than once if they wanted to choose different friends; however, they could not choose their father or their mother more than once.

The responses (See Table 4) to this question show a general tendency for children to rate their peers and parents in the following order: same-sex peer, same-sex parent, opposite-sex parent, and opposite-sex peer. The second grade girls were the only group which did not fit well into this pattern. They showed a preference for both parents above their same-sex peers. The fourth grade boys deviated just slightly with the mothers receiving a higher percentage than the fathers.

A total percent of the responses received on first, second, and third choices (See Table 5) indicates some difference between boys and girls both in their choices for parents and their choices for peers.

Boys, on all three grade levels, had a near-equal percent on their choice for parents; though, as shown in Table 4, fathers were preferred before mothers on every grade level. The slight difference on fourth grade level which gives the mother a higher total score than the father might be accounted for by the low rating given to opposite-sex peers. It appears that for most fourth grade boys, mother is a much better third choice than a girl. The

Table 4. Children's first, second, and third choices for a partner to go to the movies, shown by grade level and sex

	Boy	Girl	Father	Mother
	%	%	%	%
<u>Second grade</u>				
<u>Boys</u>				
1st	34	14	34	18
2nd	20	18	24	38
3rd	48	22	14	16
<u>Girls</u>				
1st	12	26	22	40
2nd	5	14	48	33
3rd	14	45	17	24
<u>Fourth grade</u>				
<u>Boys</u>				
1st	41	9	30	20
2nd	18	7	45	30
3rd	59	5	4	32
<u>Girls</u>				
1st	16	38	4	42
2nd	4	27	50	19
3rd	21	44	19	16
<u>Sixth grade</u>				
<u>Boys</u>				
1st	42	22.5	21	14.5
2nd	14.5	19.5	40	26
3rd	39	24	10	27
<u>Girls</u>				
1st	15	40	15	30
2nd	13	21	32	34
3rd	19	51	17	13

Table 5. Total percent of responses on first, second, and third choices for a partner to go to the movies

		Boys		Girls	
Second grade	Boy	102	Mother	97	
	Father	72	Father	87	
	Mother	72	Girl	85	
	Girl	54	Boy	29	
Fourth grade	Boy	118	Girl	109	
	Mother	82	Mother	77	
	Father	79	Father	73	
	Girl	21	Boy	41	
Sixth grade	Boy	95.5	Girl	112	
	Father	71	Mother	77	
	Mother	67.5	Father	64	
	Girl	66	Boy	47	



extremely low rating given fathers on third choice might be explained by saying that boys who preferred their fathers gave them a first or second choice rating.

The percentage difference on girls' choices for their parents shows the mother preferred more often than the father on all three grade levels. A high percent of the second grade girls chose their mother on one of their three choices. This dropped some for fourth and sixth grade girls, but was the same for both of these grades. Responses here might indicate a closer companionship between the girls and their mothers than between the boys and their fathers, however the information in this study is not sufficient to support any hypothesis about this relationship.

The second grade boys show a pattern of reaching out from their home environment earlier than the girls. The boys chose a same-sex peer most often. This finding supports the statement of Bowerman and Kinch (6, p. 208), who found that males are oriented to their peers earlier than are females.

There are some interesting differences on the choices for peers when going to the movies is contrasted with a child to sit by in school or to have as a partner on a field trip. Some of the differences might be accounted for by the inclusion of parents on this question.

The pattern for the second grade boys stays about the same with the boys again showing about a 50 percent higher preference for the girls than they receive from the girls. It is on this level which the boys received the lowest total rating from the girls.

The fourth grade pattern is also similar to that shown in Tables 2 and 3. Most boys reject their opposite-sex peers. There is very little dating on

this age level and the peer culture seems to look down on friendship with the opposite sex. The girls showed a higher preference for the boy, but this can be accounted for somewhat by the shift from parents to peers between the second and fourth grades. The highest percent of choices in this shift went to the same-sex peer. However, the girls do not reject the boys at the level on which they are rejected by them.

The most interesting finding on this question came at the sixth grade level where the girls changed very little from the pattern of the fourth grade. The number of choices for father dropped slightly and choices for peers increased. Indications on the responses shown on Tables 2 and 3 seem to support the hypothesis that girls are reaching for the friendship of boys on this age level; however, this was not as strongly supported on this question. It seems that if the girls were socially more mature than the boys, as past studies have indicated, that the girls would have a higher percent of choices for boys. These findings indicate that boys are more interested in social relationships with the opposite sex than are girls at the sixth grade level.

The total percent of choices given to boys, father, and mother were lower for the sixth grade boys than they were for either the second or fourth grade boys. The shift of these choices went to the girls. The sixth grade boys were the only group to rate their opposite-sex peers above a parent on first choice. The girl received a total percent of choices almost as high as the father and mother received. This is a very surprising contrast when compared to how boys rated girls as a choice to sit by in school or as a field trip partner. The findings, for this population, do not bear out the traditional stereotype for

the girl to be socially more mature than the boy on the sixth grade level.

This same pattern holds true in Broderick's study (7). On the sixth grade level, 68.2 percent of the boys and 51.4 percent of the girls showed a preference for an opposite-sex companion to go to a movie. This pattern was also true on the fifth grade level, but the percentages were not as high. The percents shown here are higher than in Table 5. Two factors affecting this difference may be the populations studied and the inclusion of parents on the question in this study.

The overall pattern here indicates that boys show a trend toward acceptance, rejection, and acceptance of the opposite sex on the second, fourth, and sixth grade levels. Girls show the highest degree of rejection for the opposite sex on the second grade level and gradually shift toward a higher degree of acceptance on succeeding grade levels.

The questions presented have dealt primarily with children's associations with classmates. When children are outside their school environment, they are usually with different associates than they have in the classroom. With whom do children spend the most time when they are not in school? Are children satisfied in spending their free hours with the associates available to them? Are there other people with whom they would rather be spending most of their out-of-school hours? Questions 7 and 8 (7. After school and on weekends, do you spend most of your free time—alone, with brothers or sisters, with friends who are your same age, with friends who are different ages, with your parents, with others not included above. 8. If you had your choice with whom you could spend your free time,

would you like to be— alone, with brothers or sisters, with friends who are your same age, with friends who are different ages, with your parents, with others not included above.) revealed some interesting contrasts between children's actual out-of-school associates and those which they marked as their choice for out-of-school associates.

The six classifications from which the children had to choose are shown in Table 6. The table is based on all the children in the study. The first row of figures indicates the percent of children who marked each classification on question 7.

The percentages, from highest to lowest, for children's actual associations show the following sequence: brothers and sisters, same-age friends, different-age friends, parents, alone, and others. It is interesting to note that the first three classifications rank very closely. About 50 percent of the children indicated that they spent more time with friends, either same or different ages, than with family members.

The second row of figures shows the percent of children who, if given a choice, would prefer the associates they already have. The third row of figures represents the percent of children who would choose associates different than they presently have.

The sequence found when children were asked to indicate their choice of out-of-school associates portrays a somewhat different picture. Same-age friends and parents ranked first with an equal number of choices. The other classifications ranked in the following order: different-age friends, brothers and sisters, others, and alone. Choice associations also indicate about 50

Table 6. Percent of children's actual associations during out-of-school hours as compared to their choice of associates for out-of-school hours

	Alone	Brothers and sisters	Same-age friends	Different-age friends	Parents	Others
<u>Actual associates</u>						
Total %	4.8	25.5	24.8	23.9	17.2	3.8
% same as choice	7	41	60	51	50	33
% different	93	59	40	49	50	67
<u>Choice associates</u>						
Total %	3.5	15.6	28.3	20.1	28.3	4.2
% same as actual	9	67	53	60	30	31
% different	91	33	47	40	70	69

percent of the responses going for friends. It seems quite natural for elementary-age children to want to play with their friends.

There were a few children who indicated that they spend their time alone. Only one of these was among those who marked a preference to spend their time alone.

Brothers and sisters topped the list by a narrow margin on actual associations. Among the 25.5 percent of children who marked that they spent most of their free time with brothers and sisters, only 41 percent indicated that this would be their choice. It is possible that situations exist either in which parents insist on this association or in which other playmates are not available. The latter situation may be true for some of the rural children in the study. Only 15.6 percent of the children indicated a preference to spend most of their time with their brothers and sisters. Two-thirds of these were ones whose actual associations already were with brothers and sisters. It might be noted that when a choice was made different than the actual association, the least number of choices were transferred to brothers and sisters. The pattern here is about the same for both boys and girls in the rural and urban samples. The urban boys were the only group with over a 50 percent preference for their actual associations with their brothers and sisters. It would be interesting to know the reasoning behind the choices which the children made. It seems reasonable that children would change their associations, to some extent at least, if they are as dissatisfied as these findings indicate.

Preference for same-age friends shows a small increase in choice of associations. This category represented the highest number of children who

were satisfied with their actual associations. However, the percentage was surprisingly low with 40 percent of the children indicating that they would choose different associations. The urban sampling had a larger percent of those who spend their time with their same-age friends and who also marked it as their choice.

The percent of choices for different-age friends decreases by about the same percent that choices for same-age friends increases. A typical neighborhood is populated with children of several ages. It is usually not possible to compose a very large group of same-age children within boundary limits which might be set for children. The actual and choice associations for different-age friends were much higher for urban than for rural children. Children's comments revealed that frequently siblings are part of the neighborhood group. Children, who marked that most of their time was spent with different-age friends, were often playing with their siblings also.

Children's choices for a partner to go to the movies showed the child's parents rating high. Indications on questions 7 and 8 are that children would like to spend more time with their parents than they are presently spending with them. The fact that parents received a percentage equal to that for same-age friends raises some interesting speculations. Are parents neglecting the opportunity of doing things with their children? There were only 50 percent of the children who spend most of their time with their parents who marked parents as their choice. Of those who would choose their parents, 70 percent spend most of their time with someone other than their parents. There is evidence of urban-rural differences on the actual associations. A larger percent of the rural

children indicated that their time was spent with their parents. This difference is not indicated on choice associations. About an equal percent from both areas chose parents. It is recognized that rural children, who spend most of their time in the family setting, would be expected most often to indicate either parents or siblings as their actual associates. The age and sex of siblings and the type of activities engaged in by the family are likely to be some of the factors determining which classification receives the most time. The urban area more often has a larger number of available playmates than the rural area. Parents, whose work takes them away from the home, have fewer hours available to spend with their children. It has been observed by the author that many city homes and apartments have little indoor play area where children can be around the parents. Children are often sent outside to play and lose the contact with their parents which they seem to seek.

There are some children who spend most of their time with people other than their family or friends. A category called others was included for children who spend their time with baby-sitters, grandparents, relatives, adult friends, and others not mentioned. Only a small percent of the children marked this column and two-thirds of them showed a preference for something different.

More questions are brought out by the findings in Table 6 than are answered. Children seem to have a general dissatisfaction for their present associations. It is wondered if a change to the category which they marked as their choice would result in feelings of satisfaction. The validity of these findings may not be high enough to make too many assumptions. On questions such as these, it is hard to know if the child is revealing his true feelings. It



is not completely possible for children to differentiate their associations so as to designate one area receiving more time than another.

In spite of these complications, it is felt that some inferences can be made from these findings. Children, in the population studied, do show a definite preference for their parents and same-age friends. Children's high percent of actual associations with their siblings cannot be accounted for by the child's choice for this association. Other factors, not found here, must account for this difference.

Influence of family size, sex of siblings,  
and ordinal position in the family on  
children's choices of friends

The first section presented patterns of children's friendships. Findings presented in the second section compare children's friendship choices with the factors of family size, sex of siblings, and ordinal position in the family to see if these factors contribute significantly to the age and sex of friends chosen.

The patterns shown in the first section indicate that children have a higher preference for their own sex than for the opposite sex. It was found that for about 50 percent of the children, most of their free time was spent with friends of either same or different ages. There was no designation of the sex of these friends. Although children may prefer same-sex friends, heterosexual friendships are common among elementary school children.

When a child has to make a selection of one friend, the situation is different than when several friends can be chosen. Organized clubs for

children are operated in most areas by the community, school, or church. Some clubs have members all of the same sex while others are for children of both sexes. Question 12 ("If you were a member of a club, would you prefer to have as members--all boys, all girls, boys and girls?") was included to find children's preference for same-sex or heterosexual membership in a group.

The information found on this question is presented separately for the boys and for the girls. A break down of these findings was made to test for the influence of rural-urban residence and for family size.

Boys' preference for membership in clubs (See Table 7) shows 56 percent of the boys prefer same-sex grouping and 40.4 percent prefer heterosexual grouping. Patterns here follow the same trend shown in the first section with the highest number of same-sex choices being made by fourth graders. The highest number of those who prefer heterosexual grouping are in the sixth grade.

The rural-urban comparison revealed little difference. Boys on the second grade level had the biggest difference with the urban boys showing a higher preference for the same-sex.

A comparison of family size and boys' preference for membership in clubs reveals a pattern which may be significant. However, the small number of cases in some of the categories limits the validity of these findings.

Boys with one or two siblings had the highest preference for same-sex grouping in clubs (63.8 percent). Boys in families with 4-6 children were next with a 55 percent preference and boys in families with seven or more children indicated a 46.7 percent preference for the same-sex. A factor influencing the choice made by boys in large families might be the heterosexual grouping which

Table 7. Boys' preference for same-sex or heterosexual membership in clubs, by rural-urban residence and family size

	Boys	Boys and girls	Boys	Boys and girls	Boys	Boys and girls
	<u>All boys in study</u>		<u>Rural population</u>		<u>Urban population</u>	
2nd	28	20	10	9	18	11
4th	40	15	19	7	21	8
6th	26	33	11	16	15	17
Total %	56	40.4	53.3	42.7	58	38.8
	<u>Boys in families with 2-3 children</u>		<u>Boys in families with 4-6 children</u>		<u>Boys in families with seven or more children</u>	
2nd	10	4	17	10	1	6
4th	12	4	19	10	9	0
6th	8	6	14	19	4	8
Total %	63.8	31.9	55	42.8	46.7	46.7

they find in their own home.

The pattern for girls, presented in Table 8, is nearly identical to that of the boys when viewing the findings as a whole. The rural-urban pattern is somewhat different. Rural girls showed a preference of 64.4 percent for heterosexual grouping and urban girls a 50 percent preference. Factors which might account for this difference were not found in the study. The activities engaged in by rural children and the probability of a fewer number of same-sex children as available playmates may account in part for this difference, however, this pattern was not revealed in the boys' preferences.

A comparison of girls' preferences and family size is not consistent with the pattern on boys' choices. Girls in small families (1-3 children) indicated a 53 percent preference for heterosexual grouping. The largest percent of choices for heterosexual grouping (63.4 percent) were made by girls from middle-size families (4-6 children) and the smallest number of choices (48 percent) was made by girls in families of seven or more children. In all instances, girls had a higher preference for heterosexual grouping than did boys. The smallest percent for girls was slightly more than the largest preference made by boys.

Furfey's (10) studies, in the 1920's, found children excluding their opposite-sex peers. Today, though exclusion of opposite-sex peers still exists, the attitudes children have toward their opposite-sex peers do not appear to be so negative as in the past. Furfey's study indicated that boys and girls have similar feelings about being excluded from activities with their opposite-sex peers. Findings in this study leave the impression that girls might feel the

Table 8. Girls' preference for same-sex or heterosexual membership in clubs, by rural-urban residence and family size

	Girls	Boys and girls	Girls	Boys and girls	Girls	Boys and girls
	<u>All girls in study</u>		<u>Rural population</u>		<u>Urban population</u>	
2nd	13	29	4	18	9	11
4th	27	24	13	11	14	13
6th	21	31	9	18	12	13
Total %	41.5	57.1	35.6	64.4	47.3	50
	<u>Girls in families with 1-3 children</u>		<u>Girls in families with 4-6 children</u>		<u>Girls in families with seven or more children</u>	
2nd	5	13	7	15	1	1
4th	12	4	9	14	6	6
6th	7	10	8	16	6	5
Total %	47	53	33.8	63.4	52	48

exclusion more than boys, as girls showed a considerably higher preference for heterosexual grouping. A small number of children indicated they would prefer membership in a club with children of the opposite-sex. This accounts for the total percent of choices equaling less than 100 percent.

Another factor tested, which may affect a child's choice of peers, was the sex of the child's siblings. There are six categories shown (See Table 9) for the sex make-up of siblings in the family. Question 6 ("Which of your brothers or sisters is the one you like best? a brother who is older, a brother who is younger, a sister who is older, a sister who is younger, I have no brothers or sisters.") was used as a basis for making these six categories. There were no boys, in the population studied, who were only children. The purpose of this question was to compare children's preference for age and sex of siblings and their ratings given to peers of different ages and sexes. Is there a significant carry over from sibling associations to peer associations?

Older, same-age, and younger peers of the same and opposite sex were rated on the following questions:

1. Whom do you want most to be like?
2. With whom would you like to have your picture taken?
3. To whom would you tell your secrets?
4. Whom do you want most to like you?
5. If your family were going on a vacation for a week and you could take a friend, whom would you invite?

A total rating score was given for each figure. A rating of 15 was the highest possible and a rating of 5 was the lowest possible. A rating of 10

Table 9. Boys' mean ratings of older, same-age, and younger peers of the same and opposite sex based on sex of siblings and sibling preference

	Older boys	Same-age boys	Younger boys	Older girls	Same-age girls	Younger girls
Boys with brothers only	10.9	11.8	7.8	8.4	8.0	6.0
Boys with sisters only	11.6	11.4	7.0	9.1	8.6	6.4
Boys with both sex siblings (preferred older brother)	11.4	11.4	7.2	9.4	9.0	6.3
Boys with both sex siblings (preferred younger brother)	10.6	12.3	7.5	8.3	9.1	6.6
Boys with both sex siblings (preferred older sister)	11.6	12.3	7.4	9.9	10.5	7.2
Boys with both sex siblings (preferred younger sister)	11.0	11.9	8.4	9.3	9.9	7.5

indicates a neutral or indifferent preference for the figure being rated. A rating between 10 and 15 indicates a positive preference with an increase in rating signifying a greater degree of preference. A decrease in rating from 10 to 5 indicates the negative degree of preference.

There are patterns in Table 9 which indicate that there might be some relationship between sex of siblings and choice of peers. Boys, with brothers only, gave the lowest rating to girls. Boys, with sisters only, rated girls lower than did boys who had both brothers and sisters. Boys who preferred an older sibling, either brother or sister, rated older peers higher than did boys who indicated a preference for a younger sibling. Boys who preferred a younger sibling rated younger peers higher than did boys who indicated a preference for an older sibling.

The manner in which this rating scale was administered and the type of questions asked does not make it valid for assessing any rank order for a preference for older, same-age, and younger peers. Each category was rated independent of the others and often older peers received the same or a higher rating than same-age peers. It is not felt that this would be the case if the children had been ranking their older, same-age, and younger peers in a 1, 2, 3, order.

Girls' mean ratings of their peers compared with sex of siblings and sibling preference (See Table 10) show a pattern somewhat similar to that shown in Table 9. An overall view of the ratings shows girls giving a higher degree of positive preference to the opposite sex than given by boys.



Table 10. Girls' mean ratings of older, same-age, and younger peers of the same and opposite sex based on sex of siblings and sibling preference

	Older girls	Same-age girls	Younger girls	Older boys	Same-age boys	Younger boys
Girls with sisters only	12.8	11.5	9.6	10.0	9.1	7.5
Girls with brothers only	12.0	12.0	9.0	9.7	9.1	7.6
Girls with both sex siblings (preferred older brother)	11.3	11.8	7.0	10.9	10.0	6.7
Girls with both sex siblings (preferred younger brother)	12.3	11.1	7.7	10.7	9.2	7.6
Girls with both sex siblings (preferred older sister)	12.4	11.8	8.2	9.9	9.8	7.5
Girls with both sex siblings (preferred younger sister)	11.5	11.7	8.1	10.1	9.6	6.9

The ratings given by girls are not consistent for peers of both sexes, as they were for boys. Girls, who preferred an older brother, had the highest rating for older boys and the lowest rating for older girls. There does not seem to be any noticeable carry over between preference for an older sibling and preference, in general, for older peers. The same is true for girls who preferred an older sister. They gave a high rating to older girls and a low rating to older boys. A similar pattern is shown for preference of younger siblings and ratings given to younger peers.

For the girls in this population, there does seem to be a correlation between sibling preference and ratings given peers. The findings do not show evidence of a carry over to peers of the sex opposite that of the preferred sibling.

A comparison between peer ratings and ordinal position in the family is shown in Tables 11 and 12. A division is also made between the urban and rural populations. The ratings used are the same as those used for Tables 9 and 10.

An analysis of the urban sampling shows boys, in all ordinal positions, giving the highest rating to same-age boys. Oldest boys gave the lowest rating to older boys and youngest boys gave the lowest rating to youngest boys. It was expected that this would be the findings. Oldest children have younger siblings around them and often play in groups where the mean age of the group might be expected to be below that of oldest children. The oldest child may have a responsibility to help watch younger siblings and also peers of the siblings.

Table 11. Boys' mean ratings of older, same-age, and younger peers of the same and opposite sex based on the child's ordinal position in the family

	Older boys	Same-age boys	Younger boys	Older girls	Same-age girls	Younger girls
<u>Urban</u>						
Oldest child	10.3	12.3	9.0	6.7	8.2	6.4
Middle child	11.6	12.8	9.0	7.6	8.3	6.7
Youngest child	10.7	12.5	7.7	6.7	8.1	6.8
<u>Rural</u>						
Oldest child	11.5	10.5	6.2	11.0	9.9	6.7
Middle child	11.4	10.8	5.8	11.0	9.7	7.1
Youngest child	10.3	11.4	5.9	11.1	10.9	5.1

Table 12. Girls' mean ratings of older, same-age, and younger peers of the same and opposite sex, based on the child's ordinal position in the family

	Older girls	Same-age girls	Younger girls	Older boys	Same-age boys	Younger boys
<u>Urban</u>						
Oldest child	12.8	12.4	10.6	7.3	8.7	8.8
Middle child	12.6	13.3	10.9	8.4	9.8	7.9
Youngest child	13.6	12.9	9.3	9.6	9.4	6.6
<u>Rural</u>						
Oldest child	12.0	10.8	6.2	13.3	9.1	6.1
Middle child	11.3	10.6	6.5	11.5	9.5	6.9
Youngest child	11.5	10.6	6.3	11.8	10.2	6.5

Youngest children in the home have frequent contact with their siblings and their siblings' peers. Informal observations by the author indicate that these children would rather be with older children than with children younger than themselves. These observations are confirmed by the findings here, as well as by the findings of Koch (20). Middle children gave the highest ratings to older, same-age, and younger peers. The middle child is in a position where contacts in all three categories are quite possible. A smaller degree of negative feelings toward peers in any category indicates that middle children might be expected to get along best in a broad-age-range peer group. Boys gave negative ratings with an increasing degree of negativism in the following categories: younger boys, same-age girls, older girls, and younger girls.

The pattern for rural boys shows oldest boys rating older boys higher than they were rated by youngest boys. Rural boys, in all ordinal positions, rated younger boys very low. Older and same-age girls received higher ratings from rural boys than from urban boys. The fact that different administrators were used in the rural and urban populations may account, in part, for these differences. It would be interesting to know what factors in the rural-urban environments might account for the differences shown in Tables 11 and 12.

The urban sampling of girls' mean ratings of peers based on ordinal position in the family (See Table 12) again shows the girls' pattern to be inconsistent and different from the boys' pattern. There was one basic similarity. Oldest girls gave a lower rating to older girls than did youngest girls. Youngest girls gave younger girls a lower rating than did oldest girls. This pattern was also true for their ratings of opposite-sex peers. Oldest and

youngest girls rated older girls higher than they rated same-age girls. Middle girls rated same-age girls and same-age boys higher than did oldest or youngest girls. Girls gave negative ratings to all the boys. The younger girls received a negative rating from youngest girls. Girls had a general tendency to give higher ratings than did boys. They had more positive ratings and their negative ratings for the opposite-sex were not so negative as the ratings they received from the boys.

Rural girls rated older girls higher than same-age girls and gave very low ratings to younger peers. Older boys received a higher rating than older girls from oldest girls. The findings in the rural sample do not confirm the hypothesis that oldest children will give higher ratings to younger children than youngest children or that youngest children will give the highest ratings to older children.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

### Summary

Patterns of friendship relationships between children in the second, fourth, and sixth grade levels in school show the boys prefer their same-sex most strongly at the fourth grade level. Boys' acceptance of opposite-sex peers on the second grade level gradually changes to a high degree of rejection by the fourth grade and then reverses back to acceptance. Sixth grade boys did not show as high a percent of choices for the opposite-sex as did second grade boys when asked whom they would choose to sit by in school or have as a partner on a field trip. However, as a partner to go to a movie, girls rated highest with sixth grade boys.

The pattern for girls was not so pronounced in the degree of acceptance and rejection of the opposite sex. The girls did show, with less variance in choices, a similar pattern of acceptance-rejection-acceptance of the opposite sex for a child to sit by in school and for a field trip partner. Girls choices for a partner to go to the movies showed the highest level of rejection at the second grade level. An increase in acceptance paralleled an increase in grade level, but did not reach a preference at the sixth grade equal to that which the girls received from the boys.

Peers, of both the same and different ages, rate high with elementary school children as out-of-school associates. Parents were chosen as often as

same-age peers for out-of-school associates. Children's high frequency of associations with their siblings is not consistent with their choice of the person with whom they would most prefer to spend their free time.

A comparison between family size and preference for same-sex or heterosexual membership in a club revealed a consistent pattern in boys' choices. An increase in family size paralleled an increase in preference for heterosexual club membership. A similar pattern was not true for girls' choices. However, in small and middle-sized families, girls' choices for heterosexual club membership were much higher than boys' choices.

A rural-urban comparison found that rural children chose heterosexual club membership more often than did urban children, with girls showing the biggest contrast.

The sex of a child's siblings does seem to influence his preference for sex of peers. Children, with no opposite-sex siblings, rated opposite-sex peers lower than did children who had opposite-sex siblings. Children, who had siblings of both sexes, tended to give higher ratings to peers of the same sex as their preferred sibling. The age of the preferred sibling also seemed to influence the age of one's peers. Ratings given by boys formed a more consistent and uniform pattern than ratings given by girls.

Indications, from a correlation of peer ratings and ordinal position, are that oldest children rate younger children higher than do youngest children. The youngest children rated older children higher than did oldest children. This pattern held true more often for the urban population.



### Conclusions

Children's relationships with their peers are changing. There is a trend toward less negative feelings for associations with opposite-sex peers. Indications are that more choices are being made for opposite-sex peers, although the same-sex peer still rates first with elementary school children.

Boys and girls seem to be maturing socially at an earlier age than past studies have indicated. The findings of this study indicate that this change is more rapid for boys than for girls. The frequency of choices for an opposite-sex partner to go to the movies was higher for sixth grade boys than for any other group in the study.

The nature of children's attitudes toward associations with opposite-sex peers is different for the different sexes. The boys followed a definite pattern of acceptance, rejection, and acceptance for associations with opposite-sex peers. The girls followed a more even pattern, progressing gradually from rejection toward acceptance.

Parents are important to elementary school children. Children, in the process of reaching toward their peer culture, do not reject their parents, but continue to value them highly. Children not only rate parents high, but choose association with them more frequently than the parents are accessible to them.

Children's experiences in social relationships in their family and community prepare them for their associations with their peers. Children with siblings of both sexes seem to be prepared earlier for the enjoyment of associations with peers of the opposite sex. Children in the rural environment

preferred heterosexual associations at an earlier age than did children in the urban environment.

As expected in the hypotheses, children did identify themselves more with peers of their own sex than with peers of the opposite sex. Same-age peers were chosen more frequently than older or younger peers.

The findings supported the hypothesis "that a child's ordinal position in the family will affect this choice of peers." As expected, oldest children chose peers younger than themselves more frequently than did youngest children and youngest children chose peers older than themselves more frequently than did oldest children. It was also found that children with both sex siblings rate opposite-sex peers higher than do children who have siblings of only one sex, either the same sex or opposite sex of the child in the study. The limited number of cases involved in this study does not justify a definitive conclusion about the influence of ordinal position and sex of siblings on children's choices of peers.

A rural-urban sample was included to test for differences which might be attributed to family size. The mean difference between family size in the rural-urban populations was small and contributed little to this study as a test for the influence of family size. However, differences were found between the rural-urban populations which must be accounted for by factors other than family size.

#### Suggestions for further study

Suggestions for further research and study about children's peer relationships:

(a) We need to explore the reasons for the differences which exist between children's actual associations and their choice of associations during out-of-school hours. Why don't children spend more time with their parents? Do children spend most of their time with their siblings because they are forced to? If children could change to the associations they chose, would they be satisfied with the change?

(b) Testing in school populations which are more homogeneous in socioeconomic level might better reveal the significance of other factors studied.

(c) Widespread differences were found between boys' and girls' friendship patterns. It would be interesting to know what factors have a significant affect on these differences.

(d) It was found that differences exist in the rural-urban environments. Further research is desirable to determine what factors might account for these differences. Is there a tendency for the rural environment to have more primary friendship groups with heterosexual membership?

(e) Recent studies have validated the fact that changes are taking place in children's peer relations. A new dimension found is that boys are changing faster than girls. Additional studies in other populations are necessary to validate this finding. A validating study is also necessary in this same population to see if this change is as true as this study indicates.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire

1. I am a: Boy \_\_\_\_\_ Girl \_\_\_\_\_
2. The grade I am now in is: 2nd \_\_\_\_\_ 4th \_\_\_\_\_ 6th \_\_\_\_\_
3. The name of my school is \_\_\_\_\_
4. How many children are there in your family?
 

1 _____	4 _____	7 _____	10 _____
2 _____	5 _____	8 _____	11 _____
3 _____	6 _____	9 _____	12 or more _____
5. (Check one on each row)
  - a. Number of older brothers 0 \_\_\_\_\_ 1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 or more \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Number of older sisters 0 \_\_\_\_\_ 1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 or more \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Number of younger brothers 0 \_\_\_\_\_ 1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 or more \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Number of younger sisters 0 \_\_\_\_\_ 1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 or more \_\_\_\_\_
6. Which of your brothers or sisters is the one you like best? (Check one)
 

\_\_\_\_\_ a brother who is older

\_\_\_\_\_ a brother who is younger

\_\_\_\_\_ a sister who is older

\_\_\_\_\_ a sister who is younger

\_\_\_\_\_ I have no brothers or sisters
7. After school and on weekends, do you spend most of your free time (Check one)
 

\_\_\_\_\_ alone

\_\_\_\_\_ with brothers or sisters

\_\_\_\_\_ with friends who are your same age



\_\_\_\_\_ with friends who are different ages

\_\_\_\_\_ with your parents

\_\_\_\_\_ with others not included above

8. If you had your choice with whom you could spend your free time, would you like to be (Check one)

\_\_\_\_\_ alone

\_\_\_\_\_ with brothers or sisters

\_\_\_\_\_ with friends who are your same age

\_\_\_\_\_ with friends who are different ages

\_\_\_\_\_ with your parents

\_\_\_\_\_ with others not included above

9. If you could choose whom you sat by in school, would you pick (Check one on each row)

1st choice Boy\_\_\_\_\_ Girl\_\_\_\_\_

2nd choice Boy\_\_\_\_\_ Girl\_\_\_\_\_

3rd choice Boy\_\_\_\_\_ Girl\_\_\_\_\_

10. Whom would you choose for a partner on a field trip? (Check one on each row)

1st choice Boy\_\_\_\_\_ Girl\_\_\_\_\_

2nd choice Boy\_\_\_\_\_ Girl\_\_\_\_\_

3rd choice Boy\_\_\_\_\_ Girl\_\_\_\_\_

11. Would you like to go to a movie with (Check one on each row)

1st choice Boy\_\_\_\_\_ Girl\_\_\_\_\_ Father\_\_\_\_\_ Mother\_\_\_\_\_

2nd choice Boy\_\_\_\_\_ Girl\_\_\_\_\_ Father\_\_\_\_\_ Mother\_\_\_\_\_

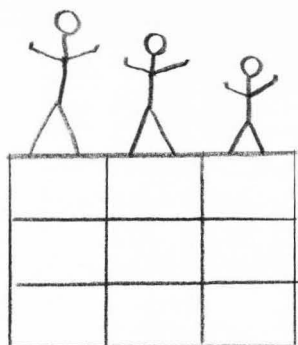
3rd choice Boy\_\_\_\_\_ Girl\_\_\_\_\_ Father\_\_\_\_\_ Mother\_\_\_\_\_

12. If you were a member of a club, would you prefer to have as members  
(Check one)

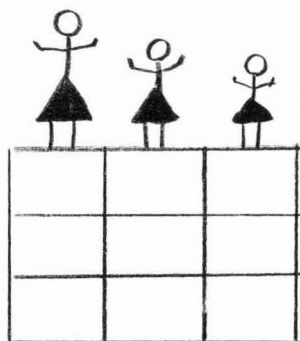
all boys

all girls

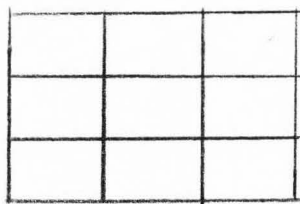
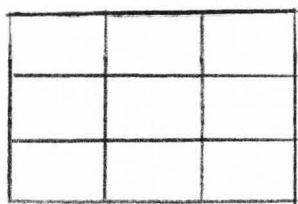
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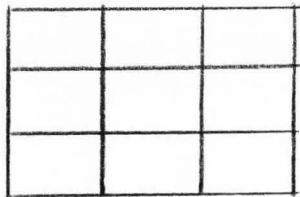
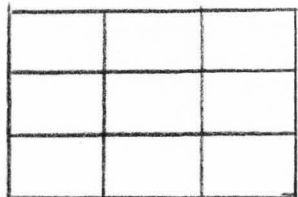
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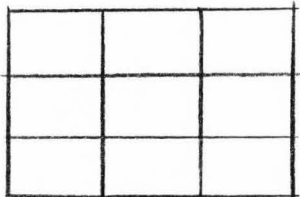
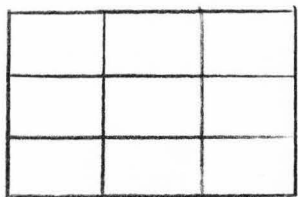
2



3



4



5

