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AUTHOR Niebrzydowski, Leon
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ABSTRACT

A study examined youth expectations from their counterparts of the same age and sex, regarded as friends. Three different levels of friendship prevalent among 974 Polish adolescents (between 11 and 19 years of age) were compared: best friend, close friend, good friend. The research made use of "Friendship Scales" constructed by LaGaipa, which serve to examine expectations from friends. The scale consists of 28 statements and assertions forming 7 subscales or dimensions: (1) Positive Regard-Ego Reinforcement; (2) Expectations of Help-Support; (3) Similarity of Partners; (4) Admiration of Character Features (Strength of Character Admiration); (5) Self-Disclosure; (6) Authenticity-Genuineness; and (7) Empathic Understanding. The results of the study support the notion that adolescence opens up a new period in the development of social contacts (sociability) arising from the gradual dissociation with parents. The contacts mainly ripen up into friendship. The investigated adolescents expressed their social needs in relation to persons they call their friends, expecting full understanding and confidence. These needs were not homogenous, and are influenced by the period of adolescence, by gender, and by individual differences. (BAC)

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FRIENDSHIP AMONG ADOLESCENTS

Leon Niebrzydowski

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The present paper is aimed at presenting the results of research on origins, forms, and functioning of friendship among a total of 974 Polish adolescents (between 11 and 19 years of age) carried out using a multidimensional approach to friendship, the "Friendship Scale" constructed by LaGaipa (1978).

This scale consists of 28 statements and assertions forming seven subscales (dimensions): Positive Regard-Ego Reinforcement; Expectations of Help-Support; Similarity of Partners; Admiration of Character Features (Strength of Character Admiration); Self-disclosure; Authenticity-Genuineness; Emphatic Understanding.

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In the article three different levels of friendship prevalent among adolescents have been compared. Those were: the best friend, a close friend, a good friend. Friendship occupies an important role among numerous interpersonal relationships such as: comradeship, neighbourly, working relations. In this connection the question appears: What is friendship and how shall one understand it?

First of all one should be critical of the opinions that friendship means a feeling uniting two persons because such an attitude is contrary to Heider's theory of balance of interpersonal relations.

Heider (1959) is of the opinion that "Emotional fundamentals and perceptions of elements in a cognitive individual are interdependent which means experiencing feelings cannot be independent of noticing relationships between elements of a certain whole and vice versa a perception of these relationships is associated with the occurring emotional phenomena" (Heider, 1959). In a friendly relationship there are formal, normative rules. Therefore friendship is based on an individual and subjective manner of perceiving the partner and also on a subjective way of interpreting his behaviours.

According to Wright (1969) friendship is a relationship in which the persons are convinced that they are entering into contact with somebody original, unique and irreplaceable, somebody that is close to them and unselfishly devoted. Friendship is not a homogenous phenomenon; we can differentiate in it certain stages or levels of development in the relation of two persons who regard themselves as the best friend, a close friend or a good friend. In the present

article we are going to discuss these three kinds/levels of friendship.

THE AIM, METHOD, AND ORGANIZATION OF RESEARCH

The purpose of the present article is an analysis of youth expectations from their counterparts of the same age and sex, regarded as friends. When starting the research we assumed that our expectations would be different depending on the closeness of persons making up a given dyad. We shall expect something else from somebody whom we consider our best friend and something different from the so-called close friend or from a good friend.

We thought starting the research advisable for two reasons:

- 1/ In order to convince ourselves what the examined young people expect from other young people of the same age with different degrees of emotional closeness.
- 2/ In order to convince ourselves to what extent these expectations depend on the stage of development of young people and their sex. Moreover such research has not been conducted so far in Poland and other countries.

In our research we made use of "Friendship Scales" constructed by the Canadian psychologist LaGaipa (1977). These scales, as the author himself admits, serve to examine expectations from friends.

What do the examined persons expect from people they call friends?

The scale is composed of 28 assertions, statements forming 7 subscales (dimensions).

These are:

- Acceptance and Reinforcement of one's own Ego;
- Helping-Support;
- Similarity;
- Strength of Character-Admiration;
- Self-Disclosure;
- Authenticity-Genuineness;
- Empathic Understanding.

Our research covered 973 school boys and school girls from the city of Gdańsk including 339 seventh grade primary school students as well as 297 second grade and 337 fourth grade grammar school students. The average age of the examined student was 14.8; 15.9 and 18.9 respectively.

As it results from Table 1, the expectation of Acceptance and Reinforcement from a friend of the same sex and age is not too high if we consider the fact that the scale range of possibilities was from 50 to 90% and that the obtained average value was 65%.

The highest positive regard ego reinforcement is expected from their best friends by 2nd grade grammar school girl students and the lowest from 4th grade grammar school girl students. The figures for boys range from 60.45 in the 4th grade to 69.32 in the 2nd grade.

Somewhat greater differences in the results can be observed between the best friends and good friends. They are statistically significant on the level $p < .05$. The results are more differentiated as far as kinds of friendship are concerned among 7th grade primary school students than among grammar school students. That proves that grammar school students are more expected to achieve positive regard reinforcement but the differences are not essential and

unsignificant.

The data from Table 2 show that authenticity of friends in interpersonal relationships is fairly differentiated both in the vertical and horizontal cross-sections. Let us first consider kinds of friendship relations. Comparing the data we see that the older the young people are the more importance is attached by them to the authentic behaviour of their friends. Whereas the expectations in the 7th grade of primary school are about 78 - 79%, they reach 80 - 82% in the 2nd grade of grammar school and 83.75% up to 85.3% in the 4th grade of grammar school. It should be stressed that it is a marked increase and a statistically significant increase on the level $p < .05$. The following conclusion can be drawn: the more mature the adolescents are the more authenticity they expect from persons who are close to them.

AUTHENTICITY

It should be strongly stressed because in other kinds of friendship relations (close and good friends) another trend can be observed. The differences are considerable and statistically significant on the level $p < .05$.

Another regularity is connected with the age of examined students. It turns out that in the period from 15 to 17 years of age the expectation of authenticity from a good friend, and close friend increases from 64% and 67% in the 8th grade of primary school to 76% - 80% in the 2nd grade of grammar school. At a later development stage (the 4th grade of grammar school) however, a marked decrease of expectations both from a close and good friend can be observed.

The data from Table 3 provide exceptionally much information. The table says among others that expectation of Helping-Support is much differentiated. The differentiation depends both on the period of development and the kind of interaction in which the examined persons take part. As far as worth noting that Helping-Support is most expected by students of the 8th grade of primary school; it is least expected by 4th grade grammar school students. This regularity applies to all levels of friendship.

EXPECTATION OF HELPING-SUPPORT

It is worth while to note the following fact:
There is a considerable difference in expectations of Helping-Support from the best friend, a close friend and a good friend. This difference is particularly high if we compare the data regarding 8th grade primary school students with those referring to 4th grade grammar school students ($p < .01$).

That can prove:

- that as the young people grow up and acquire experience they get more and more convinced that they cannot always rely on the help support of friends; they can only reasonably expect more from their best friends;
- as to 8th grade primary school children it is believed that they are too optimistic in relying on helping-support of the young people of the same age and that the help-support is confined only to home-work problems.

SIMILARITY

A large proportion of the examined young people maintain that their friends are similar to them. This conviction need not be true but it performs its role all the same because it is not the genuine similarity that matters but the conviction of its existence.

It results from Table 4 that the similarity of partners (real or apparent) as the young people feel it, is closely connected with age. The younger the examined students are the more similarity they expect of their friends. The highest results were achieved by boys from 8th grade in primary school in contacts with the so-called best friend - 88.30% the lowest results were achieved by boys from 4th grade in a grammar school in contacts with a good friend - 60.45%.

The differences regarding similarity with respect to age, sex and type of friendship are significant on the level of statistical value $p < .05$.

STRENGTH OF CHARACTER-ADMIRATION

Admiration of one's partner is one element of expectations in friendship relations. As it well-known all of us expect admiration and appreciation. But it most expected by weak individuals, who are not sure of themselves and whose self-appreciation is rather low. The problem seemed interesting to us particularly with regard to adolescents.

The most admiration from friends of the same age and sex is expected by 8th grade students of primary schools.

Girls expect besides admiration for their capabilities, skills and character qualities also admiration for their outward looks. A slightly smaller expectation of admiration from friends is observed in grammar schools (the least one in the 4th grade). That is why it is believed that as the adolescents grow older they transfer a part of their admiration to adolescents of the opposite sex. The differences in the admiration expressed by the examined adolescents at different stages of development are distinct and are statistically significant on the level $p < .05$. It is also worth noting that greater differences are observed in respect of age of the examined than in respect of the kind of friendship.

SELF-DISCLOSURE

Outspokenness often described as self-disclosure is one of important expectations in friendship relations. Outspokenness is highly appreciated in human relations hence adolescents' opinions in this respect seem to be of great interest.

There result two irregularities:

- one regards the difference between the outspokenness (self-disclosure) of boys and girls;
- the other one regards the decrease of self-disclosure of boys as they grow up.

The thesis that girls are more outspoken in contacts with people they trust than boys are is commonly proclaimed both in the U.S.A. and Poland. The investigations conducted in the U.S.A. (Derlega and Chaikin, 1974) have shown that women are not only more outspoken than men but are also differently

evaluated by the public opinion. The opinion of the American society maintains that best life-adjusted persons are: a reserved man and an outspoken woman. We cannot always agree with such an assertion. But as long as there no other data available we can generally give credit to this assertion. In our research this assertion is not confirmed in all cases.

EMPATHIC UNDERSTANDING

We understand by empathy a process, in the course of which man not only unravels the mental and spiritual condition of other man but also attempts to adopt his rhythm, identifying himself with the other man and reconstructing his experiences in himself. It seems interesting to learn in what degree the examined adolescents expect such an understanding from their friends.

It results from the above comparisons that empathic understanding is mostly expected from the so-called best friends. It expected in the highest degree by grammar school girls (4th grade - 80.45%, 2nd grade - 78.38%). They are followed by grammar school boys (4th grade - 77.5%). It should be emphasized that also other groups of examined school children expect much from their best friends. Expectations from the so-called close friend are relatively high though they are much lower when compared with the best friend. They range from 58.75% among primary school boys (8th grade) up to 71.15% among grammar school girls (4th grade).

DISCUSSION

The results of our research on expectations of adolescents from their friends of the same age have confirmed the attitude, well-known in psychology, maintaining that adolescence opens up a new period in the development of social contacts (sociability). That need arises out of freezing and limiting contacts with parents. Former positive contacts with parents are replaced during adolescence by lively contacts with other adolescents. The contacts mostly ripen up into friendship. The adolescents not only desire to have somebody close among young people of the same age but they also expect full understanding and confidence. The investigated adolescents expressed their aspirations in the applied friendship scale designed by LaGaipa. It is owing to these researches that we have learned what the adolescents expect, what are their social needs in relation to persons they call friends. These needs are not homogenous among the persons investigated because they result from the period of adolescence, sex and individual differences of particular persons. The adolescents who are 14 - 15 expect something else from their friends than boys and girls who are 17 - 18. Schoolchildren in the 8th grade of primary school first of all expect help and support of their friends; they appreciate most similarity particularly similarity of interests and the expressed admiration. This admiration mostly applies to outward looks. Grammar school students prefer authentic behaviour of a friend, his empathic capabilities, outspokenness in the association with a friend as well as positive regard ego reinforcement. As to differences in expecting help and

support, one can say that primary school children expect help in its simple and immediate forms such as making it possible to copy one's homework, lending a book or protection against other adolescents' aggression. Grammar school students perceive help in a deeper and a more comprehensive sense. Primary school children understand similarity of friends simply as similarity of interests. However Wright's researches (1969) have demonstrated that the similarity of partners has only an essential effect when partners are similar in many respects; the only similarity of interests is not decisive. As far as authenticity of behaviour and the capacity for empathic understanding by their friends are concerned one must admit that these are typical expectations of grammar school students.

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Table 1. Expectation of Acceptance and Reinforcement
of one's own Ego from a friend of the same age

Kinds of friendship relations	Primary school		Grammar school students			
	8th grade		per cent			
	students		2nd grade		4th grade	
	per cent		Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
The best friend	68.40	69.75	69.32	69.80	64.25	65.18
A close friend	62.14	63.70	65.00	68.33	60.45	60.12
A good friend	67.50	66.75	62.00	54.12	62.50	61.43

Please note that the figures in tables are average percentage values.

Table 2. Expectation of Authentic Behaviour
from a friend of the same age

Kinds of friendship relations	Primary school		Grammar school students			
	8th grade		per cent			
	students		2nd grade		4th grade	
	per cent		Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
The best friend	78.16	79.45	80.23	82.43	85.30	83.75
A close friend	65.12	67.23	76.79	80.44	68.56	66.82
A good friend	64.85	66.83	69.50	77.22	67.79	65.48

Table 3. Expectation of Helping-Support from the young people of the same age occurring in three types of friendship relations

Kinds of friendship relations	3th grade students of primary school per cent		Grammar school students per cent			
			2nd grade		4th grade	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
The best friend	85.17	87.25	74.09	76.82	70.25	71.18
A close friend	68.25	68.50	64.64	77.50	62.55	63.18
A good friend	81.25	80.75	63.00	70.74	60.50	71.75

Table 4. Expectation of Similarity from a friend peer

Kinds of friendship relations	3th grade students of primary school per cent		Grammar school students per cent			
			2nd grade		4th grade	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
The best friend	88.30	85.15	76.36	78.97	65.70	67.40
A close friend	79.40	79.25	71.43	66.67	62.35	64.18
A good friend	74.20	75.50	64.50	68.82	60.45	61.50

Table 5. Expectation of admiration from friends

Kinds of friendship relations	8th grade students of primary school per cent		Grammar school students per cent			
	Boys	Girls	2nd grade		4th grade	
			Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
The best friend	85.50	90.00	71.36	75.61	68.15	65.50
A close friend	72.35	75.40	68.57	67.73	65.40	63.75
A good friend	70.45	72.15	55.75	71.62	62.35	63.75

Table 6. Expectation of Self-Disclosure
from a friend of the same age

Kinds of friendship relations	8th grade students of primary school per cent		Grammar school students per cent			
	Boys	Girls	2nd grade		4th grade	
			Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
The best friend	80.25	35.30	63.15	75.00	60.75	70.50
A close friend	71.50	75.50	55.20	68.50	58.45	55.70
A good friend	65.70	63.35	57.20	67.40	56.50	62.80

Table 7. Expectation of Empathic Understanding
from a friend of the same sex

Kinds of friendship relations	8th grade students of primary school		Grammar school students per cent			
	per cent		2nd grade		4th grade	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
The best friend	73.00	75.12	73.18	73.38	66.50	80.45
A close friend	58.75	60.18	62.50	75.83	68.20	71.15
A good friend	50.25	63.15	60.75	69.56	65.40	70.83