

Bullying within friendships among primary school pupils

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The nature of children's friendships

Reciprocal 'horizontal' relationships (Bagwell & Schmidt, 2011)

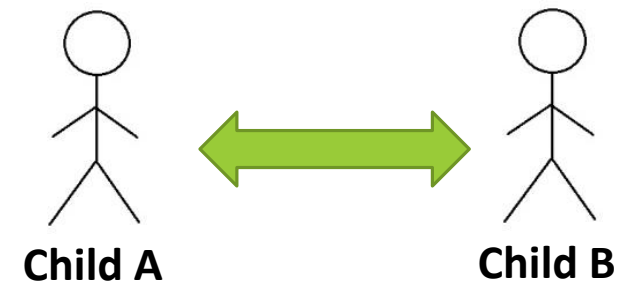
Social and emotional development: positive and negative (Hartup, 1996; Berndt, 2002)

Linked to well-being, emotional 'buffer', school belonging and achievement (Hartup & Stevens, 1999; Hamm & Faircloth, 2005; Waldrip et al, 2008; Wentzell & Caldwell, 1997)

Effects of problematic relationships (Bierman, 2004; Laursen et al, 2007)

Reciprocated friends

Friendship quality



Bullying and friendship

Are bullies liked/disliked?

- Adolescents identified as bullies less likely to be 'liked' by peers (peer avoidance)
- They liked peers with similar levels of bullying (i.e. Bullies like each other)
- Individuals who are friends with bullies more likely to increase bullying behaviour (influence effect)

(Sentse et al, 2014)

- Being relationally aggressive positively predicted friendship quality (Rose et al, 2004)

Who are bullies friends with?

Children form friendships with similar peers:

- Aggressive children are friends with similarly aggressive children (Sijtsema et al, 2009)
- Shared targets of aggression (Card & Hodges, 2006)
- "Selection similarity" and peer influence

Popularity of the group may be more important (Witvliet et al, 2009)

Bullying within friendship groups

Friends may not always be positive experiences:

Mishna et al. (2008) bullying occurs within friendships

Wei & Jonson-Reid (2011): coexistence of friendship and bullying

Brendgen et al. (2015) differentiated between bullying by a close friend or bullying by peers

Crick & Nelson (2002) related to negative outcomes for boys and girls; physical particularly for boys and relational for girls

Aims of the current study

- 1) Do aggressive children have friends, and are these reciprocated?
- 2) Are aggressive children friends with other aggressive children?
- 3) Do aggressive children report more conflict in their friendships and have poorer quality friendships?
- 4) Are children aggressive towards their friends?

Method

Participants:

286 children (152 Girls, 53.1%) aged 7-11 years from 2 schools in the Midlands and 2 schools in Southeast England

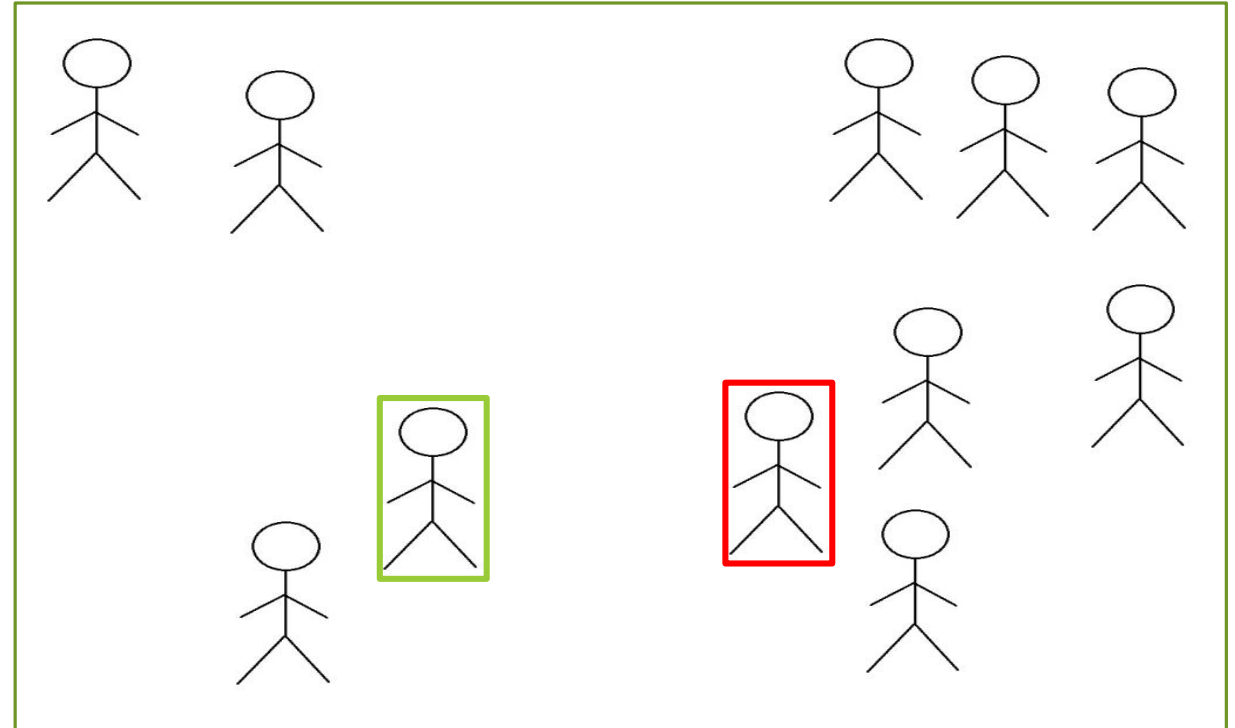
Measures:

- Friendship and best friendship nomination
- Friendship Quality Scale (Bukowski et al., 1994) about their best friend (Companionship; Conflict; Help; Security; Closeness)
- Peer-nomination for bully, assistant, defender, victim and bystander (Salmivalli et al., 1996) but also including *by whom* and *to whom*

Bullying and the peer group



Photo: "Bullying - Vicky" by Twentyfour Students (Available from Flickr.com under Creative Commons License CC BY-SA)



Participant roles in bullying situations: Bully, victim, assistant, reinforcer, defender, outsider (Salmivalli et al, 1996)

We are interested to know who your friends are in the class.

Think about the people **in the room at the moment**, and write who you are **friends** with.

You can write up to 3 names here. If you have lots of friends, try to pick the ones who you feel are your main friends

My friends are:

Part 4: Your best friend

We would like to know who your best friend is in the class.

From the list of friends you told us about earlier, who would you say is your very best friend?

Write their name here:

My friend and I spent all our free time together

Not at all true	A little true	Somewhat true	Pretty true	Really true
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My friend thinks of fun things for us to do together

Not at all true	A little true	Somewhat true	Pretty true	Really true
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My friend and I go to each other's houses after school and on weekends

Not at all true	A little true	Somewhat true	Pretty true	Really true
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I can get into fights with my friend

<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all true	A little true	Somewhat true	Pretty true	Really true
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My friend can bug me or annoy me even though I ask him/her not to

Not at all true	A little true	Somewhat true	Pretty true	Really true
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My friend and I can argue a lot

Not at all true	A little true	Somewhat true	Pretty true	Really true
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Who is unkind **to you**?

Who is most likely to **leave you out** of games and activities?

Who **talks about you** behind your back?

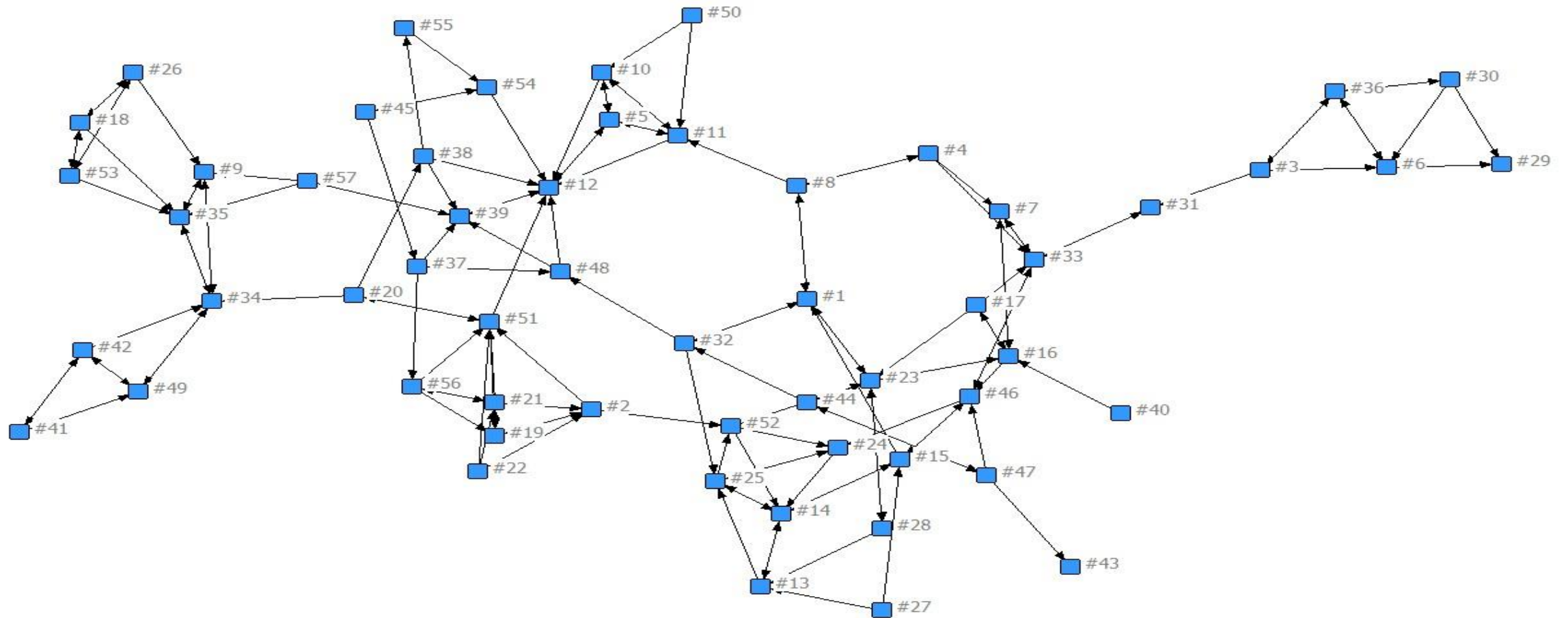
Who is **unkind to other people** in your class?

Who are **you unkind to**?

Who **sticks up for you** if someone else is unkind to you?

Who do **you leave out** of games and activities?

Example of a friendship network



Results

Do aggressors have friends? Are their friendships reciprocated?

No significant differences between Aggressors and Non-Aggressors in number of friend nominations received: $t(284df) = .51, p=.61$

No significant differences between Aggressors and Non-Aggressors in number of reciprocated friend nominations received: $t(281df) = -.61, p=.54$

No association between aggressors and reciprocal best friend nominations: $\chi^2 (df=1, n=262) = .04, p=.84$

	Non-aggressors	Aggressors
BF Reciprocated	50.2% (n = 117)	48.3% (n = 14)
BF not reciprocated	49.8% (n = 116)	51.7% (n = 15)

Results

Are children friends with others who are similar to them in aggression?

Homophily analyses were conducted using Geary statistics in the Friendship network and peer-nominations for bullying. No consistent findings.

Homophily analyses were also conducted for Best Friend network and peer-nominations for bullying. No consistent relationship.

Friend of Aggressor (nominated by Aggressor)

A logistic regression with role and gender was performed for FRIEND OF AGGRESSOR

Model: χ^2 (6df) = 28.95, $p < .001$

- Being an Assistant was a significant predictor
- Being a Defender was a significant predictor

	Wald (1df)	Exp(B)
Gender	.06	.93
Aggressor	.82	.55
Defender	13.38**	7.26
Assistant	4.8*	2.87
Bystander	.05	1.05
Victim	.12	1.23

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

Best friend of Aggressor (nominated by Aggressor)

A logistic regression with role and gender was performed for BEST FRIEND OF AGGRESSOR.

Model: $\chi^2 (6df) = .17.42, p < .01$

- Being a Defender was a significant predictor

	Wald (1df)	Exp(B)
Gender	.72	.67
Aggressor	.00	.94
Defender	7.06**	18.16
Assistant	2.10	4.90
Bystander	1.54	4.32
Victim	1.52	4.23

Children who nominate friends who are Aggressors

Children who identify an AGGRESSOR as one of their friends: $\chi^2 (5df) = 11.13, p=.049$

The only significant role was Defender (wald = 6.796, $\exp(b) = 3.706, 1df, p=.009$)

Children who identify an AGGRESSOR as their best friend: $\chi^2 (5df) = 13.28, p=.021$

The only significant role was Defender (wald = 6.195, $\exp(b) = 6.029, 1df, p=.013$)

Children who identify a reciprocated friendship with an AGGRESSOR: $\chi^2 (5df) = 14.677, p=.012$

The only significant role was Assistant (wald = 4.237, $1df, \exp(b) = 6.50, p=.04$)

Results

Do bullies report more conflict in their friendships than other children and do they have poorer quality friendships?

Significant and positive correlations between standardised aggressor nominations and companionship ($r=.15$, $p<.05$) and conflict ($r=.13$, $p<.05$)

A MANOVA indicated that aggressors differed in friendship quality to non-aggressors $F(5,251)=2.46$, $p=.05$. Univariate analyses found that only HELP was significant ($p<.05$). Aggressors reported *more* HELP in friendships than Non-Aggressors.

FQS Dimension	Role	Mean	Sd	N
Companionship	Non aggressor	13.96	3.11	231
	Aggressor	14.73	3.08	26
Conflict	Non aggressor	7.84	3.44	231
	Aggressor	8.92	3.72	26
Help	Non aggressor	20.45	3.82	231
	Aggressor	22.42	2.32	26
Security	Non aggressor	20.19	4.04	231
	Aggressor	20.88	3.49	26
Closeness	Non aggressor	21.45	3.61	231
	Aggressor	22.69	2.24	26

Results

Are children aggressive towards their friends?

QAP correlations were conducted to examine the relationship between the Friendship Network and the Aggressor-Victim Network:

- It was not common for children to aggress towards someone in their friendship network, but there were a few significant pockets of within- friendship aggression in some classes.

QAP correlations were conducted to examine the relationship between the Best Friend Network and the Aggressor-Victim Network:

- Children did not aggress towards their best friends, this was not significant or negatively correlated across all classes

Summary

Children who are aggressors do not have lower quality friendships than non-aggressors

They are not less likely to have friends, or best friends

Aggressors tend to be friends with assistants and defenders, but level of aggressive nominations is not clearly related to friendship nominations

There is some evidence of within-friendship group aggression, but not between best friends

Discussion points

Bullies are not necessarily more disliked (Sentse et al 2014): implications for intervention

Social benefits of peer aggression (dominance, hierarchy, strategic gains, maintaining popularity) (Witvliet et al, 2009)

Does the type of aggression matter?

Limitations:

Perceived friendship quality: possibility of socially desirable response

Change over time: length or stability of friendship

No class list – but responses potentially more salient?

Measure of popularity/peer acceptance

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Obrigadas pela sua atenção
Thank you for your attention

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We would like to thank the following people for their assistance on this project:
The children and their teachers, Suzanne Bartholomew, Denisha Makwana, James Crosby
Financial support from the University of Greenwich