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Predicting Children's Friendship Status from Their Dyadic Interaction in Structured Situations of Potential Conflict

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Dyads of 8-year-old friends identified by sociometric friendship nominations were followed through the end of the school year to determine if they remained friends. These dyads as well as a control group of nonfriends were observed while participating in two structured tasks designed to simulate real life social situations of potential conflict. When negotiating the sharing of an object, friends made more proposals than nonfriends, spent more time negotiating, and compromised more in making their counterproposals. Compared with dyads in which the friendship did not continue through the end of the school year, dyads of continuing friends exhibited greater sensitivity in their negotiations. During a fast-paced, competitive game, friends engaged in more competitive behavior and followed the rules more closely than did nonfriends. However, behavior in this game was unrelated to the continuation of friendship.

INTRODUCTION

Most research on children's friendships has been directed at determining what attracts youngsters as friends and at understanding the expectations friends have of each other (see review by Schneider, Wiener, & Murphy, 1994). Much less attention has been paid to the determinants of the continuation and survival of a friendship (Hartup, 1992). The variables leading to the initial attraction and formation of a friendship could well be different from the factors involved in its continuation. Conflict is one factor that has been discussed as a possible element in the continuation or termination of friendships. In their review of the positions of the major developmental theorists, Shantz and Hobart (1989) emphasized that, whether theorists regard conflict as fostering growth representing regression, they concur in presenting moments of interpersonal conflict as very potent experiences. Some theorists maintain that conflict can have important positive functions within relationships and can therefore cement, rather than terminate, a friendship (e.g., Coser, 1956). Rizzo (1992) went as far as maintaining that children enter conflicts to change their partners into individuals who would be better friends.

It is conceivable that friendships may terminate not because of the presence or absence of conflict, but because of inadequate means of *conflict resolution.* Hartup (1989) observed that friends seem to resolve their conflicts in ways that differ from nonfriends. Furthermore, their stake in their future relationship may motivate friends to resolve a conflict at hand in such a way that the resolution also serves to consolidate their continued relationship as one in which both partners can meet their needs and fulfill their desires.

Friends' negotiation behavior reflects the extent of each partner's self-interest as well as their awareness and concern for the needs and desires of their partners. The ability of a dyad to resolve conflicts could be one reason for both the initial crystallization of a friendship and its continuation over time, despite any obstacles that might arise. It is, however, also possible that the time spent together as friends affords greater opportunities for practicing interpersonal communication than those available to nonfriends. Accordingly, proficiency at resolving conflicts could be the result and not the cause of the relationship's maintenance.

Studies using interviews with children (Berndt, Hawkins, & Hoyle, 1986; Rizzo, 1989) and rating scales (Schneider, Fonzi, Tani, & Tomada, in press) have reflected the theoretical elucidation of costs and benefits of conflict between friends. According to most of the results, conflict does not in itself seem to be associated with the termination of friendship, although participants in Bigelow's (1977) study of children's written descriptions of their friendship mentioned it as a factor in ending friendships. Hartup (1992) summarized previous research as indicating that friends tend to agree more and disagree less than nonfriends, although the extent of conflict between friends seems to depend on the age of the children and the social context. In an "open-field" setting, such as a playroom or schoolyard, children tend to minimize their conflicts with friends rather

than risking the loss of their company. Conflicts between school-aged friends are more likely to be observed in "closed field" situations, that is, where the situation itself entails engaging in a specified activity with a prescribed play partner. The characteristics of the setting provide no realistic choice but to maintain interaction with one's partner. In these situations, friends may disagree more than nonfriends, because they feel more secure with friends and seek to avoid the negative self-evaluation that ensues the loss of an important argument to a friend (Hartup, 1992; Hartup, French, Laursen, Johnston, & Ogawa, 1993; Tesser, Campbell, & Smith, 1984).

Previous studies also provide few clear indicators of the roles of negotiation and conflict resolution in the life cycle of children's friendships. Jones (1985), in a closed-field study conducted with elementary-school pupils of three age levels, found no difference between friends and nonfriends in the rate of yielding to the partner's appeals. However, friends' responses to appeals were more extended and articulate. Similarly, Nelson and Aboud (1985) found that elementary-school children gave more explanation of their positions in arguing with friends than with nonfriends and moved to more mature solutions in trying to resolve disagreements. However, because these were not longitudinal studies, they cannot help determine whether negotiation ability is related to the continuation of relationships with friends.

This research was designed to determine whether some of the important characteristics that distinguish friends from acquaintances are also useful in distinguishing children who decide to continue their friendships from those who do not. Our first objective was to demonstrate that the quality of children's negotiations in situations of potential conflict is related to friendship and friendship continuation. We also wanted to determine whether competitive behavior and rule adherence in a game situation was related to friendship and its continuance. Although the conflicts of younger children may center on the sharing of objects (e.g., Lafrenière & Charlesworth, 1987; Matsumoto, Haan, Yabrove, Theodorou, & Carney, 1986), the conflicts of older children may relate to behaviors occurring during games with rules (Hartup, 1983). In contrast with younger children's play, interactive play during the elementary school years typically involves games with fixed rules in which individuals either win or lose (Rubin, Fein, & Vandenberg, 1983). Boulton (1993) found that the most common cause of fighting among middle-school children was over some aspect of a rule-governed game, and this could conceivably extend to dyadic as well as large-group situations. Thus, competent play at this age may require an interest in winning, together with the ability to adhere to the rules of the game. Some confirmation that this ability is associated with friendship stability is provided by Berndt et al. (1986), who used a close-field laboratory situation involving competition for a scarce resource. Competition was indeed more intense among stable friends than unstable friends in their younger cohort of 9-year-olds. However, the converse was found for the older cohort of 11-year-olds. There may also be important gender differences in competition among friends. In his comprehensive review, Hartup (1992) concluded that competition is normative in the friendships of school-age boys, but less common between their female counterparts.

Present knowledge of the behavior of school-age friends in closed-field situations is based on a handful of studies conducted in the United States, largely with members of the majority culture. This culture has been found to be more competitive than most others (Madsen & Shapira, 1977). In contrast with Western European cultures, it places higher value on the promotion of one's own interests and lesser value on egalitarianism (Schwartz & Ros, 1995). These culturally ingrained values could conceivably influence the impact of competitiveness, assertiveness, and negotiation skill on friendship and its continuation. Therefore, we deemed it important to add data obtained from Western European children to the literature. Our Italian sample is particularly valuable in the study of the impact of the processes of negotiation, because, as noted by many North American observers of Italian school, community, and family life, Italians are very active in socializing their children to understand and articulate different perspectives on social situations (Corsaro, 1988; New, 1994). To the extent that these socialization experiences facilitate the development of a specific ability for argumentation (Volzing, 1979) in Italian children, they may be enabled actively to cooperate in the co-construction of solutions as part of the ongoing dialectic of agreements and disagreements (e.g., Hartup, 1992) within the context of their relationships.

We hypothesized, first of all, that children who are friends would be more adept than nonfriends in their negotiations regarding the sharing of an object. By adept, we mean that they should be more responsive to their partner's needs without sublimating their own, not that they will concede or withdraw from the negotiations. We also expected friends to maintain respect for the rules of a game and to sustain involvement and positive affect in a competitive game situation. Furthermore, we expected these qualities—negotiation skill and friendly competition without cheating—to predict the continuation of the

friendships between members of the dyad until follow-up at the end of the year.

METHOD

Materials

Rationale and development. Our objective was to examine the behavior of dyads of children in situations involving negotiation, competition, and potential conflict. We decided to study these aspects of children's relationships in a closed-field situation (e.g., Hartup et al., 1993) because the contexts in which they occur naturally might not be readily accessible to observers. The structured situations were designed as far as possible to simulate situations of potential conflict that might arise in the daily lives of school-age children.

One of our two tasks involved negotiating the sharing of an object in a situation where resources were insufficient to provide one to each partner. We considered it important to determine the extent to which the dyad members were capable of extended negotiations that would be most successful if they learned most about each other's needs and interests in the situation. Therefore, it was necessary to avoid a task in which friends would be likely to know from prior experience exactly how the other would feel. To achieve these aims, we developed a task in which children were to share a novelty item that was currently in high demand among children the same age, but not one that was usually shared or easily divided.

We designed the second task to elicit competitive behavior and to permit a distinction between competition that is friendly, enjoyable, and fair and that which is less amicable in tone and that might involve cheating. Although there were a great many potential activities that could entail competition, it was important for our purposes that the activity be one in which the children could either play cooperatively or, even at their partner's expense, act in their own interest. It was necessary that the children be in a situation where, if their own interest warranted it, they were able to break the rules of the game. For purposes of comparison with the first task, we wanted to avoid a situation that would be readily resolved through verbal negotiation. We also wanted this task to have explicit rules and to be fast-paced, as are many of the activities of children this age, such as video games. Although many standard play and sports activities might potentially elicit these decisions over an extended period, they seemed unlikely to provide the information needed within reasonable observation time. Furthermore, many of them did not constitute a face-to-face encounter in which there is a clear link between each player's mode of competing and the outcome. For example, in most board or card games, the dice or cards determine success to a considerable extent. In most video games, players can decide how intensively they wish to be involved but are not confronted with the active juxtaposition of their own needs and those of their opponents; they have little choice regarding obedience toward rules. The car-race task described below is characterized by the parameters we wished to study and has been found to yield a range of scores for engagement, rule adherence, and affect in previous studies conducted with elementary-school children (e.g., Fonzi, 1991). It also had the advantages of not requiring previous training or skill and not placing children with any type of previous training or skill at an advantage.

Chocolate-egg-sharing task. Participating dyads were given a chocolate egg with a toy inside it. The experimenter instructed them to decide between themselves how the egg would be divided, and tell him or her what decision they reached. There was a 3 min time limit. The children were told that they would not be permitted to open the egg until they reported their solution.

The children's negotiations were scored, first of all, for their duration in seconds and then for the numbers of proposals and counterproposals. Table 1 contains a list of the categories used in describing the quality of the negotiation. The categories pertaining to the quality of the proposals and responses were first analyzed in terms of their frequency. Negotiation sequences were taped and subsequently coded by a research associate who had not administered the task to the same dyad. Twenty percent of the videotapes were coded by a second research associate to establish the interrater reliability of the scoring. Kappa coefficients for interrater reliability, along with definitions of the categories, are listed in Table 1.

Car-race task. The car-race task is portrayed in Figure 1. Conceptually, children have three alternatives while engaged in this task: (1) to compete energetically with their opponents, although without breaking the rules; (2) to compete even in violation of the rules; and (3) to avoid conflicts with their opponents even if this reduced their own chances of winning. The object of this game was to be quicker than the opponent in transporting five 4 cm × 4 cm × 2 cm wooden blocks from a starting mark to a finish line. The blocks had to be transported one by one in the back seat of a 7 cm × 18 cm toy car. The car had to travel inside a 13 cm × 72 cm runway with walls 2 cm high from both starting point to finish line and

Table 1 Definitions of Chocolate-Egg Task Categories

Category	Kappa	Definition
Proposals:		
Initial	.77	The first proposal made by either partner regarding the sharing of the chocolate and/or the toy
Sensitive Counter	.90	A proposal that reflects accommodation to the partner's previous proposal(s) and/or remarks
New	.86	A proposal made after the Initial Proposal that does not meet the criteria for Sensitive Counterproposal
Responses:		
Total Acceptance	.74	Unqualified acceptance of a proposal
Partial Acceptance	.68	Conditional or partial acceptance, or minor modification of a proposal
Rejection	.68	Total rejection of a proposal
Discrepancy	.90	Difference in form and content between the initial and final propositions

back. According to the rules, all four wheels had to remain on the floor of the runway at all times. Because the runway was too narrow for two cars at the same time, there were many instances in which the children had to decide what to do when both players wanted their cars to proceed through the same area at the same time. Three car races were held in each session. The data from each race were used separately in the calculation of interrater reliability. However, in the interests of parsimony, data on conflict engagement and avoidance were summed across all three races.

The coding categories and their definitions are listed in Table 2, along with kappa statistics for interrater reliability (procedures for scoring and reliability are identical to those used for the chocolate-egg task above). Frequency recording was used for all categories except Affect for which the raters coded the emotion displayed by each partner in each of the three races: anger, boredom, positive emotion, mixed

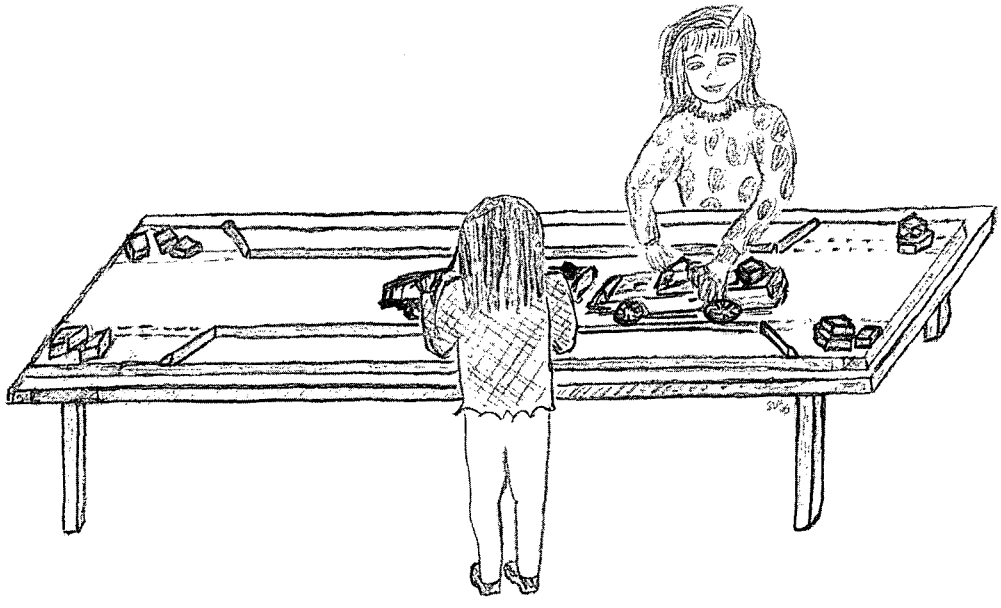

Figure 1 Dyad engaged in car-race task

Table 2 Definitions of Car-Race Coding Categories

Category	Kappa	Definition
Legal Conflict Avoidance	.79	Avoiding contact with the partner's car by such legal means as pulling one's car backwards or waiting before entering the runway to allow the partner through
Illegal Conflict Avoidance	.84	Avoiding contact with the partner's car by breaking the rules, e.g., lifting one's car into the air
Legal Conflict Engagement	.90	Making contact with the partner's car without breaking any rules
Illegal Conflict Engagement	.91	Making contact with the partner's car while one's own car is in an illegal position, e.g., driving up the sides of the runway
Legal Loading/Unloading	.93	Car and blocks in proper position at times of loading and unloading; waits for the start signal
Illegal Loading/Unloading	.88	Infraction of rules during loading or unloading

positive/negative emotion, or no expression. We adopted as a convention the rule that any expression of emotion took precedence over no expression. The kappa statistic for the affect ratings was .74. Anger and boredom were eliminated from the analyses because of their very low frequencies (together 6 out of 726 data points).

Participants and Procedure

Approximately 400 grade 3 pupils of both sexes in seven schools in middle-class areas of Leghorn and Florence, Italy, completed friendship nomination procedures and sociometric choice nominations (see below) in October and November 1993. In Italy, consent for research is often transmitted through the parents' council of each school. Due to their facilitation, the consent rate was 99%. Two types of dyad were selected for further study: (1) consenting same-sex youngsters within the same school who had both indicated that they were good friends in their friendship nominations and (2) comparison dyads of same-sex nonfriends whose names were missing from each other's nominations of friends, as well as from their nominations for classmates whom they indicated as likely and unlikely choices for play and work partners (see "Sociometric Choice Nominations for Friendship" below). In some cases (n = 25 participants) it was necessary to select the second choice because the child was also listed first by another participant. Thus, no participant was a member of more than one participating dyad. The composition of the final sample consisted of 47 dyads of male friends and 48 dyads of female friends. The sample of nonfriends consisted of 14 male and 12 female dyads. A greater number of friends than nonfriends were sampled, even though the population contained more dyads of nonfriends, because the research design called for the friends to be followed until the end of the school year. We could not know at the time of the initial data collection exactly how many dyads would remain friends to the end of the school year, but we wanted to have viable groups of friends and nonfriends for the analyses.

A few days after they had completed the sociometric measures, dyads, both of friends and nonfriends, took part in the chocolate-egg and car-race tasks. These were administered in counterbalanced order in small seminar rooms at their schools. At the end of the school year (May 1994), the entire group of consenting potential participants completed the sociometric and friendship nominations a second time to demonstrate which of the dyads had remained friends. Sixty-five dyads (31 male and 34 female) were still friends. Neither partner still considered the other as a friend in eight dyads (four male and four female). In the remaining 19 dyads, only one friend nominated the other. Three dyads were deleted because of missing data.

Sociometric choice nominations for friendship (Bukowski, Hoza, & Boivin, 1994) entailed asking each child to indicate which were her or his good friends

from among the roster of participating students at the same school. In addition, children were asked to list the three classmates whom they would most likely choose and the three whom they would most likely not choose as partners for a play activity, and the three they would most and least likely choose for a work activity.

RESULTS

Analytic Strategy

Our first decision was to use the dyad as the unit of analysis. This relates logically to the hypotheses, which pertain to the status of relationships. Furthermore, the individual responses of the two members of each dyad are not independent of each other. Therefore, use of individual scores in the analyses could lead to inflated estimates of effect size (Kenny, 1995). This was confirmed by significant intraclass correlations among the variables, ranging from .45, $F(120, 121) = 2.66, p < .01$, to .96, $F(120, 121) = 50.98$, $p < .001$.

We present two sets of analyses. We first performed the analyses necessary to compare the dyads of friends with the initial comparison group of nonfriends on each of the two experimental tasks. The second set of analyses involved comparisons between the members of dyads who had continued their friendships through the end of the school year and dyads who had considered themselves friends at the time of the initial data collection, but who did not mention each other as friends at the end of the year. We followed the practice of Berndt (1986) and of Bukowski et al. (1994); continuing friends were compared with members of dyads in which *either* or *both* members failed to list the other as a friend at the end of the year. Thus, the dyads who participated in the longitudinal segment of the study were separated into two types: continuing and noncontinuing friends. The alternative of forming a third group of dyad members who disagreed about the ultimate status of their friendship was undesirable for two reasons. First of all, it would have resulted in some cells of small size and in highly unequal groups. Second, such differences within dyads limit the range of statistical procedures that can be applied to dyadic data (Kenny, 1995).

Additional decisions were taken on the basis of the nature and distribution of the data and the intercorrelations of the variables. Logistic regression was used to predict the dichotomous outcomes under study. In the first set of analyses, the car-race and chocolate-egg data were used as predictors of membership in groups of friends and nonfriends. In the other set, the same predictors were used to distinguish continuing and noncontinuing friends. Logistic regression has been found to be more robust to violations of assumptions about the data, including the assumption of normal distribution, than most alternatives (Klecka, 1980; Press & Wilson, 1978). As detailed below, several of the predictor variables were significantly intercorrelated. Therefore, a multivariate approach was more appropriate than repeated univariate tests. However, there were no significant associations between any of the car-race variables and chocolate-egg variables. Therefore, the data from the two tasks were analyzed separately.

The nonnormality of the negotiation variables most central to the hypotheses was logical and expected. For example, one would not expect the number of sensitive propositions to be normally distributed. If a proposal is sensitive, it should lead to an acceptable solution. This was confirmed in a sequence analysis: 64% of sensitive proposals were followed by total acceptance; another 26% of sensitive proposals were followed by partial acceptance. Therefore, the fact that most dyads had 0 or 1 sensitive proposals relates to the nature of the category rather than to any limitation of the concept or of the coding procedures. Accordingly, the qualitative categories of the chocolate-egg task (Sensitive Counterproposal; Partial Acceptance; Novel Counterproposal) were rescored as categorical variables (i.e., present or absent). This was not necessary for conceptual reasons, nor because of any limited range, for the quantitative aspects of the chocolate-egg task (Elapsed Time, Discrepancy, total number of proposals).

To facilitate parsimonious analysis despite the inherent loss of power when dyadic scores are used, we summed the car-race scores into three broad categories that corresponded with the hypotheses. This parsimony was also crucial because the sample size is quite modest for logistic regression analysis (Aldrich & Nelson, 1984). These categories were: Proportion of Legal moves (the sum of Legal Conflict Engagement, Legal Conflict Avoidance, and Legal Loading / Unloading divided by the total of their Illegal counterparts), Total Contact (Legal Conflict Engagement + Illegal Conflict Engagement), and Proportion of Positive Affect (ranging from 0 to 6, depending on whether positive affect was coded for each of the two members of each dyad for 1, 2, or all 3 of the races). Negative affect was not analyzed because it was coded for less than 1% of the data.

Gender and the interactions of Gender with the other independent variables were added as a pre-

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics for Chocolate-Egg Scores by Initial Friendship Status

	Friends (N = 94 Dyads)		Nonfriends (N = 26 Dyads)	
Variable	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Initial Proposal	1.66	.68	1.27	.53
Discrepancy	2.12	.95	1.96	.91
Time	1.74	.30	1.42	.32
	N	%	*N*	%
Sensitive Counterproposal	39	41.5	13	50.0
Novel Counterproposal	39	41.5	4	15.4
Partial Acceptance	32	34.0	3	11.6

dictor in a series of subsidiary analyses. In no case was there a significant improvement in the prediction.

Friends versus Nonfriends at Time 1

Chocolate egg task. Table 3 displays the descriptive statistics. There were significant positive associations between two of the three pairs of categorical variables, $\chi^2 = 41.18$, $p < .001$, for presence/absence of Sensitive Proposals and presence/absence of Partial Acceptances and $\chi^2 = 5.22$, $p < .05$, between presence/absence of Novel Proposals and presence/absence of Partial Acceptance. Not surprisingly, there was a significant correlation between total elapsed time and number of proposals made: $r = .63$, $p < .001$.

The results of the logistic regression analysis are displayed in Table 4. As shown, the total elapsed time was the most significant predictor of group membership, with friends spending much more time negotiating than nonfriends. Sensitive counterproposals made a smaller contribution to the equation; in opposition to the direction we had anticipated, sensitive counterproposals were present in the negotiations of a higher proportion of nonfriend than friend dyads, but opposite the predicted direction. The model chi-square at the final step was 23.46, $p < 001$.

Car-race task. Descriptive statistics for the three macro-categories appear in Table 5. Zero-order intercorrelations of the predictor variables ranged from .24 to .38, all $p < .05$. As detailed in Table 4, the logistic regression results indicated that positive affect was the most powerful predictor of membership in the friends category; it was coded far more often for friends than for nonfriends. The proportion of legal

Table 4 Summary of Logistic Regression Results: Variables Included in Final Models

Variable	Odds Ratio	Wald	Wald p
1. Initial friendship status (friends versus nonfriends):			
Chocolate-egg task:			
Sensitive Counterproposal	3.81	5.23	.022
Qualified Acceptance	.23	1.14	.041
Elapsed Time[a]	.05	4.71	.001
Car-race task:			
Total Contact	.51	3.99	.005
Legality Index	.01	4.07	.040
Positive Affect	.55	6.79	.010
2. Predictors of year-end friendship status (continuing versus noncontinuing):			
Chocolate-egg task:			
Sensitive Counterproposal	.16	5.27	.020

[a] Log-transformed in order to facilitate interpretability.

Table 5 Descriptive Statistics for Car-Race Scores by Initial Friendship Status

	Friends (N = 95 Dyads)		Nonfriends (N = 26 Dyads)	
Variable	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Legal Conflict Avoidance	1.68	2.68	1.04	1.31
Illegal Conflict Avoidance	1.07	2.10	2.23	3.74
Legal Conflict Engagement	11.12	5.77	7.69	4.66
Legal Loading/Unloading	1.30	4.69	1.30	4.69
Illegal Loading/Unloading	5.64	7.27	6.23	5.89
Legality Proportion	1.96	1.10	.88	.09
Positive Affect Proportion	1.82	1.01	1.06	1.03
Contact Index	6.48	3.36	4.90	2.63

moves was a smaller but significant predictor, with friends displaying a higher proportion of legal moves than nonfriends. Total Contact made a small, nonsignificant contribution. The model chi-square at the final step was 34.28, $p < .001$. Thus, as expected, friends were characterized by greater adherence to the rules and by greater enjoyment of the game.

Continuing versus Noncontinuing Friends at the End of the School Year

Chocolate-egg task. Means and standard deviations for continuing and noncontinuing friends are indicated in Table 6. The chi-square between one of the three pairs of categorical variables was significant, $\chi^2 = 44.7$, $p < .001$, between presence/absence of Sensitive Proposals and presence/absence of Partial Acceptances, as was the correlation between time elapsed and proposals made ($r = .65$, $p < .001$; it was necessary to repeat these analyses because, unlike the data used in the parallel analyses reported above, the data from dyads who were not friends at the beginning of the year and who, therefore, were not included in the follow-up were excluded). The logistic regression results, summarized in Table 4, indicated that only the presence of Sensitive Counterproposals contributed uniquely to the prediction of group membership. Sensitive Counterproposal was scored as present more frequently in dyads of continuing friends. The model chi-square at the final step was 5.20, $p < .05$.

Car-race task. The logistic regression results revealed no significant effects for the car-race data in predicting membership in the continuing-friend and noncontinuing-friend groups. The model chi-square at the final step was 2.82, $p > .05$.

DISCUSSION

These results indicate that children's behavior in structured situations of potential conflict is of some value in distinguishing friends from nonfriends and predicting the continuation of friendship. On the whole, the variables considered were much more

Table 6 Descriptive Statistics for Chocolate-Egg Scores by Year-End Friendship Status

	Friends (N = 65 Dyads)		Nonfriends (N = 27 Dyads)	
Variable	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Initial Proposal	1.65	.67	1.63	.69
Discrepancy	2.20	1.00	1.96	.85
Time	1.76	.30	1.70	.31
	N	%	*N*	%
Sensitive Counterproposal	31	47.7	7	13.0
Novel Counterproposal	30	46.2	9	33.3
Partial Acceptance	23	35.4	8	29.6

useful in differentiating friends from nonfriends than in differentiating continuing and noncontinuing friends. Sensitivity to the needs and wishes of the partner in the verbal negotiation task emerged as a salient predictor of the continuation of children's friendships according to results obtained using the chocolate-egg task, which was designed to elicit protracted verbal negotiation. Although this was only one of four predictors tested, it may be argued that, given the centrality of reciprocity and mutual perceptions of benefit to the literature on friendship (e.g., Selman & Schultz, 1990; Youniss, 1980), it is the most important from a theoretical standpoint. Furthermore, such sensitivity was highly correlated with other qualitative indices of proficiency in negotiation, namely, the generation of novel propositions and of responses involving qualified or conditional acceptance of the partners' proposal, which indicate the ability to compromise. Thus, the negotiating style of continuing friends seems to be characterized by higher-level strategies in general, although only Sensitive Proposals emerged as a significant unique predictor.

Sensitive Counterproposals also emerged as one of the variables that differentiated friends from acquaintances at the beginning of the year, although as noted above, the effect was in the opposite direction from that which we had anticipated. This counterintuitive finding could be an artifact of the small sample of nonfriends, because it is difficult to conceive of a reason why sensitivity might constitute an obstacle to friendship. Perhaps this way of expressing concern for the needs of the other emerges as a result of the friends' shared experience of resolving conflicts, thus constituting the result rather than the cause of the decision to maintain the relationship, and is therefore more evident when friendship is measured at later than at earlier stages, as in the data reported above. The fact that sensitivity predicts friendship continuation suggests that the partners in a friendship may have a certain investment in the process itself. Negotiating the solution to a single problem in a relationship may establish or strengthen the confidence in the durability of the relationship and identify it as one that is reciprocally rewarding. Except for this contribution to the relationship, it might have been easier for the partners to accept their friends' proposals than to bother negotiating a compromise.

In contrast to the chocolate-egg task, the car-race results provided only limited support for our hypothesis that the proclivity to friendly competition, respect for the rules of the game, and positive affect while playing would be associated with the continuity of friendship, despite the fact that these variables did differentiate dyads of friends and nonfriends at the study's outset. Accordingly, these qualities may be among those that bring friends together in the first place, even if they have less to do with the continuity of the friendship. There are suggestions in the literature that enjoyment of common activities is a feature of friendship at all ages. Accordingly, conflicts arising during games with rules could interfere with the common enjoyment of the activity and thus weaken the relationship (Argyle, 1992; Price & Ladd, 1986; Selman & Selman, 1979). However, Furman and Bierman (1983) noted that enjoyment of common pastimes, which is crucial in preschoolers' friendships, declines in importance in middle childhood and adolescence. Our results suggest that the game behaviors we considered are not irrelevant to friendship, but that they are not decisive determinants of its life course as they might be in a younger sample. In comparison with the chocolate-egg task, the major parameters of the car-race task are specified in advance by the experimenter. The car race is much less of a test of the dyad's ability to co-construct both a process for resolving problems and a mutually acceptable solution. This ability does seem to be at least somewhat related to the maintenance of friendship in middle childhood.

The tasks we developed are probably not very different from situations that occur regularly in children's play. Children often get into conflict because of wanting the same object or privilege; this is analogous to the Kinder-Surprise task. Many of contemporary children's games are fast-paced like the car-race task and involve an element of competition in a situation wherein only one child can win. Nevertheless, these tasks probably involve relatively little ego investment and, therefore, may not generalize to tasks that are more closely connected to the children's sense of self-worth. Tesser et al. (1984) found that interpersonal processes relating to tasks in which there is high ego investment had more to do with friendship formation than activities that the children see as more routine. Had the negotiations or the competition in our study centered around activities or objects that were of enormous importance to some of the individual participants, these conflict-resolution behaviors might have had even more predictive value. We also wonder whether the results from the car-race task were attenuated by the fact that virtually all the participants enjoyed the task to a considerable degree. Accordingly, it only elicited differences between positive and neutral affect. It is very possible that negative affect in a game might have predicted the disruption of relationships better than positive affect. In any case, as with any study featuring situa-

tions contrived by the examiners, our results would be complemented by a study examining the same processes as they occur naturally in children's play.

Our findings may not generalize to all cultures. Central Italy is similar to the major English-speaking cultures in a number of respects, including overall collectivism. However, in a cross-cultural comparison by Schneider et al. (in press), children's friendships in Italy were found to be more stable than those in English Canada. Accordingly, Italian children might behave in ways that will preserve their friendships if more durable relationships correspond to their schemata for friendship. The negotiation that is related to friendship continuation in our sample has some of the quality of the *discussione*, or lively debate, that Corsaro (1988) has found typical of the culture of young Italian children, as discussed above. This style may be less typical or less important in other cultures. In fact, we might speculate that this proclivity toward lively verbal exchange might enable childhood friends in Italy to resolve problems more efficiently than those in other countries, accounting for Schneider et al.'s (in press) finding that friendships are more stable in Italy than English Canada.

This study, conducted in Italy, adds a cross-cultural perspective to the previous literature, which has been predominantly North American. Nevertheless, there are many cultures that are markedly different from either Italy or North America, which are both highly Westernized countries. It has been found that the urbanization and material wealth of Western societies is associated with competitive behavior, whereas people from more rural and more economically disadvantaged cultures value cooperation (Bethlehem, 1975; Jayant, Karandikar, & Krishnan, 1985; Sommerlad & Bellingham, 1972). Thus, cross-cultural replication of our study is imperative.

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