



This paper is taken from

*Developing Identities in Europe:  
Citizenship education and higher education  
Proceedings of the second Conference of the  
Children's Identity and Citizenship in Europe  
Thematic Network*

London: CiCe 2000

**Edited by Alistair Ross, published in London by CiCe, ISBN 1 85377 3239**

Without explicit authorisation from CiCe (the copyright holder)

- Only a single copy may be made by any individual or institution for the purposes of private study only
- Multiple copies may be made only by
  - Members of the CiCe Thematic Network Project or CiCe Association, or
  - A official of the European Commission
  - A member of the European parliament

If this paper is quoted or referred to it must always be acknowledged as

Svendsen, K. Nielsen, K. Kjaerulff, H. and Froda, J. (2000), *Children's Friendship*, in Ross, A. (ed) *Developing Identities in Europe: Citizenship education and higher education. London: CiCe, pp 419*

© CiCe 2000

CiCe  
Institute for Policy Studies in Education  
London Metropolitan University  
166 – 220 Holloway Road  
London N7 8DB  
UK

This paper does not necessarily represent the views of the CiCe Network.



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained herein.

#### **Acknowledgements:**

This is taken from the book that is a collection of papers given at the annual CiCe Conference indicated. The CiCe Steering Group and the editor would like to thank

- All those who contributed to the Conference
- The CiCe Central Coordination Unit for both the organisation of the conference and this collection, and in particular Martin Sundram and Cass Mitchell-Riddle for seeing this book through revisions, layout and to press
- The University of North London, for financial and other support for the programme, conference and publication
- The SOCRATES programme and the personnel of DGXXII for their support and encouragement.

## **Children's friendship**

*Kim Svendsen, Kirsten Scheel Nielsen, Helle Kjaerulff and Jesper Froda  
Slagelse Seminariet (Denmark)*

### **Children's friendships seen in a social perspective**

There are many views on the phenomenon of how societies (and countries) develop and socialise their members. From our point of view as social educators of young children, we are talking about a community where certain standards, rules and laws are respected, and where the individual citizens have the best conditions of life on a day-to-day basis.

Socialisation is therefore a question of caring for the individual person and of learning to do this.

The first and the strongest form of society the child meets is friendship. Friendship is a kind of loving, and is built on respecting the standards - the rules and laws - of the friendship. When children are friends, they trust each other. They keep the obligations of the friendship. If the friend fails - just one or two times - the friendship is over! In the friendship is found justice, ethics and rules, psychologically speaking.

The reliance between pairs of friends, and later on larger groups of friends, makes the basis for the trust and expectation with which the child meets society, ... and of course, with this, the possibility of taking part in changing and developing that society.

In Denmark (and probably most Scandinavian countries) more and more children spend their day in different kinds of institution. In 1988, 55% of the children attended day nursery. In 1998 the number had decreased to about 50%. The percentage of children attending kindergarten was 58 % in 1988 and about the same in 1998. However the percentage of children attending after-school recreation centres had increased from 26 % in 1988 to almost 71 % in 1998.

Children have less and less adult contacts during the day due to the increasing number of children per adult in the institutions, and this forms part of the background for our project.

One of our major hypotheses is that due to the increasing number of children in the institutions, and to the fact that they spend most of the day in the institution with very little adult contact, the relations between children will have an increasing importance in how children socialise.

Children form different kinds of relations, and one of these could be called friendship. In friendship children learn from each other. The theory is that a child is more inclined to take up a social conduct or a skill from a person with whom he or she has a close relationship (i.e. a friend) than from another person, with whom he or she has no relationship.