Girls' Stories of Resolving Problems in their Friendships

by

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We accept this thesis as conforming
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Abstract

This study describes the stories of grade five girls' experiences resolving problems in their friendships. The themes of friendship, social competence and problem solving interventions formed the basis of the research question and the conceptual framework. Research methodology was based on qualitative, semi-structured interviews that incorporated a feminist perspective. Four pairs of girls were involved in the study. A series of interviews with each pair of girls lead to findings that within each of the friendships when fights or disagreements happened, the girls separated from each other, spent time apart and later reconnected in order to re-establish their friendship. This process of problem solving was based on the importance of friendship. The girls' shared history and knowledge of each other, caring that was both given and received and willingness to be an ongoing member in the friendship provided the structure within which problems were resolved.

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Dedication

This paper is dedicated to the eight girls who shared their stories with me. Their willingness and openness to share their experiences with me has allowed me to broaden my understanding and knowledge of relationships. I am indebted to the wisdom expressed by these girls, who have guided this project.

Chapter One: Introduction

How children think about and take action in their lives is a continual source of interest and fascination to me. As a Youth and Family Counsellor in an elementary school, I worked with children on a daily basis and observed how they interpret, synthesize and make decisions in their relationships with others. Through my position in the school, I came to the realization that understanding and aiding children's thinking and action in problem resolution is the essence of my work. The importance is not so much what the problem is, but how it is dealt with by the child. From this perspective, my interests focused towards exploring what constitutes children's experiences resolving problems in their friendships.

As a Youth and Family Counsellor, I advocated for children in both school and family settings. I work with a strong personal belief that children's voices, stories and experiences must be heard and incorporated into the world around them. By listening to children's stories I began to question the fit between children's experiences resolving problems in friendships, and the problem solving strategies they are taught in school.

In my professional training and personal exploration I have studied numerous explanations, strategies and frameworks which seek to assist children in initiating and developing friendships through the teaching of problem solving skills. I found that a generic problem solving formula, based on adult centred learning, is the primary means by which children are taught to resolve interpersonal problems (Spivack & Shure, 1974; La Greca, 1993; Hubbard & Coie, 1994). This problem solving method, which was pioneered through the work of Spivack, Shure and colleagues, involves problem identification, generation of multi-interventions, selection of an intervention and evaluation of the intervention (Spivack & Shure, 1974). In the past three decades, these four systematic steps to problem solving have formed the basis of further inquiry and program design.

In my experience this adult based approach is intrinsic to counselling strategies, classroom planning and school administration policies which aim to enhance children's social competence and coping abilities. In 1992, the Sooke School District, where I was employed as a Youth and Family Counsellor, began to implement the Second Step program. This program sought to enhance children's skill development in three areas;

empathy, impulse control and anger management. Skills taught within the impulse control component were based primarily on the systematic problem solving interventions developed by Spivack and Shure.

I feel that the process of thought developed through a systematic problem resolution process encourages children to approach interpersonal relationships in a logical and rational manner. Children learn to approach problems in relationships with the goal of attaining practical outcomes. This process is based on a top-down perspective in which adults hold the expert role of identifying, categorizing, teaching and interpreting children's ability to resolve problems. I am concerned that through this process, children's naturally creative and curious exploration of the world is constrained.

There are also a number of assumptions underlying the concept of teaching children how to resolve problems within friendships. As adults, we assume children want to learn systematic problem solving strategies and increase their social competence. We develop programs that teach children to define conflicts within relationships as problematic. This process introduces, develops and perpetuates the thinking that interpersonal problems need to be solved and can be solved through a step-by-step approach. As a result, we teach children there is a right way and a wrong way to resolve interpersonal problems and we believe this process will benefit their mental health.

This approach to problem solving contradicts my beliefs in facilitating children's growth to develop their own unique means of making sense of their relationships with others and resolving interpersonal problems. It is my goal in this project to step aside from the generic problem solving process taught in school settings and to explore with children their stories of resolving problems with friends.

Review of the Literature

I began my exploration of children's experiences in problem resolution by reviewing the related literature. I completed extensive searches in the University of Victoria CD ROM Education Indexes (ERIC) and Psychological Abstracts (PSYCINFO). I also accessed periodical indexes of the social sciences (WSSI) through VICTOR, the on-line library system. These inquiries lead me to universities in Canada, and other industrialized countries. I obtained articles and texts dating from the early nineteen-thirties through the nineteen-nineties and elementary school curriculum teaching packages. Three themes emerged from my review of the literature; children's friendships, children's social competence and children's problem solving abilities.

I chose children's friendships as the starting point of inquiry because of the importance and value children place on their friendships. In my school based position, children from kindergarten to grade five described to me their awareness of the importance friendships play in their lives. Social competence is an integral part of the study because it provides a bridge between friendships and problem resolution. Children's social competence takes into account how relationships are formed, negotiated and sustained. Problem solving abilities are one part of social competence within friendships. Problem solving forms an essential part of the study because of my curiosity about the paradox I believe exists between what children are taught about problem resolution, and their stories about experiences within friendships.

The Oxford Dictionary (1990) provided a brief definition of these themes. A friend was defined as a person with whom one enjoys mutual affection and regard. Social competence was defined as the act of being capable or effective in relation to society and its organization, and concerned with the mutual relations of human beings. A problem was defined as a doubtful or difficult matter requiring a solution, something hard to understand, accomplish or deal with. I will address each of the three themes separately and then blend them together to form the research question and conceptual framework.

Friendship

For the purposes of this study, children's friendships, as distinct from children's peer relationships, must be defined. Peers are commonly classified as the members of one's age group. They may be members of the same team, partners on a report or classmates. A peer relationship does not require the development of caring or friendship between the individuals. Friendship is based on reciprocity between individuals and affection or regard for the other is mutual. Friendship involves relationships that are not bound by similar age groups. In this study friendship is defined as relationships with similar aged persons, chosen, defined and developed by the participants.

The impact of friendships are felt in our mind, body and soul. Friends are a witness to our life experience. They provide us with an opportunity to learn about ourselves, others and the world around us. Through friendship we gain support, validation and enjoyment. Friendship is not limited to a specific age group, social class or community, rather it is a universal phenomenon which can be found in all ages and cultures.

Studies of children's friendships have been an ongoing, well established part of research, "... which were launched in the nineteen thirties, when psychologists, sociologists and educators undertook the scientific investigation of children's social relationships" (Asher & Hymel, 1981, p. xii). Asher and Hymel (1981) identified three dominant methods of inquiry; sociometry, observation and interviews, which have been used to investigate children's social relationships since the nineteen-thirties. Sociometry is a procedure used to measure the attraction between individual members of a specified group, such as children, and identifies how well individuals are liked or disliked by their peers. Children are asked to either nominate or rate classmates according to specified interpersonal criteria. Observation is done in children's natural environment and involves documentation of interactions within ones' cultural context. In interviews children are asked to describe the qualities of a friend or one's expectations of a friendship. Often interviews are carried out in multi-phases and researchers return to interview the children at the end of a school term, or follow the children for a number of years.

Piaget (1932) and Sullivan (1953) proposed that relation is an interactive process which constitutes the analytic unit of social science. "Their thesis is that different types of interpersonal relations which children experience and know, serve distinct developmental functions" (Youniss & Volpe, 1978, p. 6). This premise has provided a framework that defines the developmental nature of children's friendships as hierarchical, one phase providing the ground work for the next phase of growth. (Bigelow & La Gaipa, 1975; Bigelow, 1977; Selman, Jacquette, & Lavin, 1977; Youniss & Volpe, 1978; Furman & Bierman, 1984).

One of the most frequently cited studies, conducted by Bigelow and La Gaipa in 1975, explored children's expectations of their friends. In this study 480 children, in grades one through eight, were asked by their teacher to write an essay about their expectations of their best friends, in comparison to other acquaintances. They found younger children expected more sharing and play from their friends, while older children expected more loyalty, intimacy, acceptance and genuineness from their friends. It was found, with the same frequency in all age groups, that children expected reciprocity of liking, sharing and ego reinforcement from their friends.

In 1977, Bigelow applied the statistical procedure of cluster analysis on the data generated in 1975 and found that specific dimensions of friendship emerge together at certain ages. The findings indicated that while the basic expectations of friends are similar throughout grades one to eight, as children mature, their expectations of friends evolve to encompass a broader range of characteristics. During the fifth grade, dimensions of sharing, particularly of norms, values, rules and sanctions ensued as normative.

Two studies carried out by Youniss and Volpe (1978) and Furman and Bierman (1984) began their research interviews by asking; "What is a friend?" and "How do you show someone you are a friend?" Youniss and Volpe developed a series of studies involving 130 children aged six to fourteen, based on the relational thesis established by Piaget and Sullivan. They sought to access descriptive data that would add substance to earlier research based on the work of Piaget and Sullivan. They found children viewed friends not just as peers, but persons who shared ideas, feelings and interests. Children recognized that, in a relationship, persons have individual

personalities which may be alike and different in many ways. Children aged six to seven identified and understood rules by which peers interact as friends. The rules were grounded in equality and reciprocity and were enacted when sharing and playing together. Children aged nine to ten integrated the rules into a concept of relation based on principles of equality and reciprocity. Children aged twelve to thirteen added little else to the relation of friendship, except for further articulation of the principles of equality and reciprocity through the development of their personal experience and reflective thinking. Youniss and Volpe concluded that rather than viewing cognition as contained in a developmental process in which the child accumulates skills for coming to terms with social reality, "children's understanding develops from systems of interactive rules to procedures and eventually into systems of relations" (Youniss & Volpe, 1978, p. 21).

Furman and Bierman (1984) studied 84 second, fourth and sixth grade children using three methods; an interview, a story-recognition task and a written questionnaire. They found children's expectations based on friendly behaviour were well established by second grade and continued to be an important characteristic of friendship in fourth and sixth grade. Furman and Bierman concluded that as children grow older and acquire more developmentally advanced features, those acquired at an earlier age are not discarded, but instead continue to be facets of children's friendship expectations. The findings of these researchers concluded that expectations and understandings of friendships are built on systematically, rather than replaced, as children mature.

Lack of friendship in childhood has been linked to problems in mental health and adjustment in latter childhood and adult life. Hymel, Rubin, Rowden and LeMare (1990) completed a longitudinal study of the predictive relations between social difficulties in early childhood (grade two) and subsequent internalizing and externalizing of problems in middle childhood (grade five). Their research supported previously documented links between early peer acceptance, aggression and externalizing outcomes. They found children who were low in popularity in both grades two and five were viewed as aggressive by their peers, and judged to externalize problems through hostility and aggression by their teachers.

In a study of friendship and friendship quality in middle childhood, Parker and Asher (1993) found children without best friends were more lonely than children with best friends. This finding was true, regardless of how well accepted the children were by their peers. Kupersmidt (1983) followed fifth grade children for six years and found rejected children experienced on average significantly more problems in adolescence than popular, average and neglected children. La Greca (1993) referred to her 1992 study of peer relations, peer support and adjustment in which she found children with close, supportive friendships reported less social anxiety, less depression, had more positive self esteem and attained higher academic achievement than children who did not report having a close, supportive friend. La Greca (1993) concluded that children's friendships provide a buffer against life stressors. Research findings consistently indicate that friendship is a critical component in the development of mental health and plays an important role in meeting children's current and long term psychological needs.

This review of the literature has articulated the importance and systematic development of children's friendships. In this study I use children's friendships as a starting place from which to begin exploration of how children resolve interpersonal problems. Children's negotiations within their friendships leads into the next theme, social competence.

Social Competence

Literature pertaining to children's social competence is more limited and harder to locate than documentation related to friendships and problem solving abilities. Typically, inquiries into social competence have sought to understand and define the thinking and action involved in interpersonal relationships. Anderson and Messick (1974) stated that social competence represents an individual's everyday effectiveness in dealing with her or his environment. Hatch (1987) developed this view further by defining social competence as a child's ability to function effectively in social encounters which allows for full participation in life. Thus, children who lack social competence are confined to the sidelines of human experience and are relegated to be outsiders who do not enjoy the satisfaction of social interchange.

In 1982, Schultz, Florio and Erickson developed a conceptual framework that described social competence as the kind of communicative knowledge members of a cultural group needed to possess in order to interact with others in ways that were socially appropriate and strategically effective. Based on this definition, three aspects of communication were deemed important: 1) knowledge of proper ways for people to interact in various social situations, 2) possession of verbal and nonverbal performance skills necessary for producing communicative action, and 3) possession of interpretive skills necessary for making sense of the communicative intentions of others. This framework provided a series of concepts which were both inter-dependent and inter-related.

Hatch (1987) utilized this framework to illustrate that the development of self competence is self perpetuating. Hatch found children who were popular and had well developed interactional skills perpetuated and reinforced their competence and stimulated further growth. In contrast, children who lacked social competence and were without the necessary communicative skills, were denied access to situations in which they may have begun to learn and practice the skills needed to gain social competence.

A similar study undertaken by Merrell, Cedeno and Johnson (1993) involved behaviour rating scales and self perception profiles of 41 students in fifth and sixth grade. They concluded that as children demonstrated more proficiency in their own social skills, they tended to feel more accepted by their peers. This perspective is reiterated by Hubbard and Coie in a 1994 study. Hubbard and Coie noted it was difficult to enlist cooperation from those who disliked you, and conversely, engaging those who like you in working towards mutually desired goals engenders respect and admiration. These results support the correlation between acquisition of social competence and the development of meaningful relationships with others. Further, skills that define social competence develop personal characteristics which are mutually reinforcing.

A number of researchers and clinicians found that social competence could be increased through the learning and application of specific social skills (Ladd & Mize, 1983; Gersham & Reschly 1987; Hatch 1987; La Greca 1993; Merrill et al., 1993).

Findings indicated that children who had difficulty establishing or sustaining mutually rewarding relationships had not learned to behave in ways their peers judged appropriate. Further, these children can be taught how to behave differently and unaccepted individuals will elicit more positive reactions and evaluations from peers as they acquire and perform more socially approved behaviours (Ladd & Mize, 1983).

Other studies undertaken to increase children's social competence by teaching specific communication skills have met with mixed results. La Greca (1993) found that learning specific social skills had a positive impact in a child's life. However, there was less evidence that behaviour changes within peer relationships were maintained in natural settings over an extended period of time. Gresham and Reschly (1987) concluded that in order to generate information which accurately represented the complexity of social competence, methodology must incorporate the multi-settings and multi-contents of social behaviour. This perspective has lead to a shift in research during the last ten years to incorporate a broader approach aimed at assisting children's development of social competence. Rather than teaching individual children how to increase their social competence, researchers such as Hutch (1987) and La Greca (1993) encouraged clinicians and educators to include classroom peers, school personnel and family members in the development of a child's ability to create and sustain relationships.

Research findings published by Brown and Gilligan (1992) provided an example of a longitudinal, qualitative study which built on suggestions outlined by Hutch and La Greca. Brown and Gilligan's book, Meeting at the Crossroads, involved the stories of nearly one hundred girls. The girls, students of a private school in Ohio during the years 1986-1990, ranged in age from seven to eighteen. The study sought to illuminate girls' psychological development through the passages of childhood, adolescence and womanhood. While the study does not discuss social competence explicitly, it does address findings regarding the development of girls' relationships with others.

The study found a "relationship impasse" developed during the years of early adolescence in which girls, "... give up relationship for the sake of relationships" (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 216). This meant girls sacrificed their feelings and inner

knowledge in order to sustain relationships with others. The researchers found ten and eleven year old girls' knowledge of relationships came from their bodies, through senses, feelings and experiences of living in relationships (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). During early adolescence girls began to struggle between relationships with others and knowing themselves. As girls moved away from what they felt and knew, they become increasingly mistrusting of themselves. By age thirteen, girls found that stating what they were feeling and thinking often meant losing their relationships with others and finding themselves powerless and alone (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). The result was a "relationship impasse" in which girls' sense of self was lost or nonexistent in their relationships with others (Brown & Gilligan, 1992).

Children's ability to sustain meaningful relationships has been found to have a long term impact on their development and mental health . La Greca (1993) found that assessment of peer relationships in early grades were better predictors of emotional maladjustment ten years later than IQ, grades, academic achievement, or ratings by teachers and school personnel. Merrell et al. (1993) quoted a number of researchers who found the quality of social behaviour developed during childhood is strongly associated with a number of important outcomes later in life. These included personal, academic and occupational adjustment and success, whereas inadequate development of social competence increased the risk for negative outcomes such as peer rejection, school dropout, and mental health problems.

Throughout the literature, social competence is defined as a set of abilities that involves communication skills, developmental levels and situational contexts. In this study I focus on the thinking and action components of social competence children use to resolve problems in their friendships, an approach similar to Brown and Gilligan in their work exploring girls' psychological development. The development of social competence through problem solving abilities forms the final theme of the literature review.

Problem Solving Interventions

As noted on page one, understanding children's problem solving abilities was pioneered in the sixties and seventies by the work of Spivack, Shure and colleagues. Prior to the nineteen-seventies, Spivack and Shure (1974) noted that psychological testing of problem solving abilities relied on impersonal pen and paper testing. "Clinicians and educators assumed that if an individual [adult or child] could be relieved of interfering emotional discomfort he would be free to think clearly and see his way through everyday problem situations without further guidance" (Spivack & Shure, 1974, p. 2). This premise guided the focus of treatment and education programs developed at that time.

Spivack and Shure questioned whether impersonal intellectual tasks required different thinking abilities than those needed to resolve interpersonal problems. They maintained that being able to think through, and solve real life problems, would in turn reduce emotional discomfort and behavioural maladjustment. This premise challenged the historically impersonal means of testing problem solving abilities and lead to the development and study of problem solving interventions as they related to interpersonal situations.

The research findings of Spivack and Shure indicated that individual problem solving ability is not bound by general intelligence but instead is derived from a group of interrelated abilities. Their work focused on identifying cognitive skills that are lacking in the problem solving abilities of "poorly adjusted" individuals, such as impulsive adolescents and adults, often in residential housing, psychiatric hospital settings or low income housing circumstances. It was found that these groups of people were less able to generate numerous solutions to a problem than were "average" individuals. Consequently, their decision making caused them frustration and did not assist them in meeting their needs. Spivack and Shure (1974) concluded that when individuals could identify the problem, generate a number of interventions and think through the effect of an intervention, they were able to resolve interpersonal problems effectively. They defined a process of systematic thinking referred to as "means end" thinking.

Based on their findings with adolescents and adults, Spivack and Shure hypothesised that the personal adjustment of young children could be enhanced through teaching the following principal components:

1) enhance one's ability to see a human problem,

2) enhance one's appreciation of different ways of handling situations

3) enhance one's sensitivity to the potential consequence of their actions

Based on their hypothesis, they developed a training program aimed to assist preschool children in coping with every day problems. The underlying principle of the training program was not to teach children what to think, but how to think, in the resolution of interpersonal, everyday problem situations (Spivack & Shure, 1974).

The fundamental principles established by Spivack and Shure laid the ground work for continuing research into children's problem solving abilities. Researchers in the disciplines of social work, education and psychology continue to develop and evaluate programs based on the theoretical approach of means end thinking. Further studies attempting to replicate the findings of Spivack and Shure met with varied results.

In 1982, Richard and Dodge studied three groups of boys aged eight and ten: popular, aggressive and isolated. They found that in hypothetical problem situations, popular boys were able to generate more solutions to a problem than were aggressive or isolated boys. Further, popular boys generated "effective" solutions to problems, while the other two groups of boys generated aggressive and ineffective solutions. It was concluded that aggressive and isolated boys were deficient in the cognitive problem solving skills of generating alternative solutions. However, when presented with solutions, rather than asked to generate solutions, isolated boys were able to effectively evaluate the possible outcomes. This study built on the research of Spivack and Shure and suggested that specific groups of boys may be able to demonstrate competence in one component of means end thinking, while lacking the ability to carry out the entire process effectively.

In a similar study carried out in 1994, Mott and Krane compared the skills of clinically referred preadolescent boys and girls to a group of "normal" children. They found that socially "well adjusted" children were more effective and less aggressive

problem solvers than were children considered to have "behaviour difficulties." By isolating children's areas of weakness in the problem solving model, the findings of these two studies support the incorporation of means end thinking and perpetuated the continued study of intervention, teaching and evaluation of problem solving training.

Studies involving elementary school aged children have focused on teaching problem solving skills in small group settings. (Gesten, et al. 1982; Galvin, 1983; Selman, Zamansky, Stone, & Phelps, 1983; Rose, S. R., 1985; Rose, S.R., 1986; Gesten & Weissberg, 1986; Rose, S.R., 1987; Hepler & Rose, S.F., 1988; Hepler, 1990). These studies have been predominantly quantitative in design and measured children's abilities before and after problem solving training intervention. This research approach was based on three beliefs: 1) children regularly face problems which need to be overcome in personal relationships, 2) acquisition of problem solving skills enhances the social competence of children who are not inherently proficient in resolving problems in personal relationships, and 3) increasing children's social competence augments their mental health.

Teaching problem solving skills, have involved two types of intervention: social skills training and interpersonal cognitive problem solving training. Social skills training, also termed cognitive behavioural training, taught specific, observable behaviour patterns aimed to increase children's assertiveness and ability to make and sustain friendships through verbal and non verbal interactions. Behaviours are taught through active participation in role plays and coaching situations that provide modelling, feedback, and homework assignments.

Interpersonal cognitive problem solving training, also termed social cognitive training, focused on children's thinking in social situations. The intervention aimed to teach skills that would assist children in coping with day to day problems. Children were taught skills that included defining the problem, generating multiple or alternative solutions to the problem, and selecting and implementing the most effective alternative. Interpersonal cognitive problem solving training was based on the work of Spivack and Shure (1974) and was primarily carried out through discussions of hypothetical and real life situations in group settings and individual interviews.

Assessment of both problem solving interventions has typically involved pre and post testing of children's abilities. Testing has included evaluation of intelligence, discussing problem solving in hypothetical and simulated situations, role plays, behaviour check lists, observation, self esteem inventories, rating of classroom adjustment, sociometric ratings and health resource assessments. Children have also been assessed by parents, teachers and peers through questionnaires designed to rate the social competence and problem solving abilities of the participants before and after implementation of problem solving training intervention.

Studies involving social skills training, interpersonal cognitive problem solving training and a combination of the both interventions, have been found to increase children's problem solving abilities. Rose, S.R. (1985) tested both types of problem solving interventions with fourth and fifth grade students and found interpersonal cognitive problem solving training had a greater impact on children's relations than did behaviourally based social skills training. Rose, S.R. (1985) concluded that social competence consisted of problem solving and performance skills. He noted that, "...children use cognitive abilities to conceptualize solutions to difficulties that arise and behavioural skills to enact these solutions" (Rose, S.R., 1985, p. 55).

In further studies Rose, S.R. (1986) found children in social skills training groups became more accepted by peers, increased their popularity, and were more empathic. Children in interpersonal cognitive problem solving skills training groups increased their ability to cope with positive and negative statements and responses from peers. Both groups of children increased their assertiveness and ability to converse with adults. Consequently, both training interventions impacted children's abilities in different and equally important ways.

The incorporation of both interventions, aimed to develop both the thinking and action of children, is supported by a number of researchers (Gesten et al. 1982; Hepler & Rose, S.D., 1988; and Hepler, 1990). These studies found that a multi-component approach to teaching problem solving skills more closely matched the complex skills required in problem solving and lead to the greatest development in children's problem solving abilities. One year follow up studies supported this method of multi-

intervention and found that when training is comprehensive in approach, change in children's thinking and behaviour is maintained over time.

One example of school curriculum that incorporated a multi-component intervention strategy is Second Step , a violence prevention program. The Second Step program, developed in Seattle by the Committee for Children, involved three central components; empathy, impulse control and anger management (as noted on p. 2). Assisting children in the development of problem solving skills is one part of the program. The overall goal of the program is to reduce children's impulsive and aggressive behaviour while increasing social competence. In 1992, the Sooke School District began to incorporate Second Step into elementary curriculum.

The Committee for Children (1992) maintained that pro-social skills can be learned. In the impulse control component of Second Step two interventions are taught, interpersonal cognitive problem solving and behavioural social skills training. The findings of Spivack and Shure (1974) form the basis for the development of these two interventions.

Evaluations of the impact of Second Step on children's behaviour has met with varied results. In a 1989, the Committee for Children interviewed children involved in a pilot project of the program in the Seattle School District and found that, "Results showed the program had significantly enhanced children's empathy, problem solving and anger management skills" (p. 7). Teacher's observations of children's skill development during the pilot project indicated, "... that some transfer of training had occurred" in the classroom (p. 7). These findings differ from those of Cooper (1990), who evaluated teacher's satisfaction and dissatisfaction of Second Step in the Sooke School District. Cooper (1990) questioned teachers and students in the grade five-six program. She found, "teachers did not notice much skill transfer outside of the classroom setting" (Cooper, 1992, p. iii). Students also reported low rates of skill transfer outside of the classroom setting and infrequent use of the skills taught in the program.

There have been varied findings regarding the effectiveness of programs which have focused on interpersonal cognitive problem solving training, social skills training or a multi-level intervention program. However, as multi-intervention problem solving

training was further developed, there has been increased discussion in the literature regarding the merits of quantitative and qualitative studies. This discussion centres around the premise that problem solving is a phenomenon which involves complex thinking and action skills. In order to explore this phenomenon, researchers must utilize methodology that can capture the diverse and composite concepts underlying the problem solving process.

Fischler and Kendall (1988), as well as Mott and Krane (1994), state that quantitative methods may be inadequate in capturing the complexities of children's abilities. Alternatively, they suggest that qualitative analysis of problem solving abilities may offer a more comprehensive understanding of children's skills. Qualitative analysis leads away from measuring the quantity of solutions generated in decision making, towards a measurement of quality in problem solving. This shift in methodology is beginning to broaden the scope of research towards a more thorough understanding of children's thinking and action relating to problem resolution within friendships.

Summary of Literature Review

When I reviewed the prior research studies I found myself questioning; "Whose experience do we hear?" and "How are the experiences shared with the reader?" Two main themes emerged from these questions. Historically, there has been a focus in the studies to measure children's abilities through pre and post testing, assessments and external sources. This predominantly quantitative perspective, has sought to enhance children's mental health, abilities and competence through skill development. This quantitative focus has directed children's experiences into adult selected categories designed to represent children in the adult realm. As a result, children's experiences have become numbers and statistics.

Combined with the quantitative focus of prior research, I am concerned that girls have not been adequately represented within studies. Too often, the experiences of boys' and adults' portrays what we think we know about girls' lives, and how they resolve problems in friendships. This quantitative, male centred focus in the research

perpetuates a means of understanding children's resolution of problems in their relationships that is biased and misrepresentative of girls' experiences.

The research findings of Hutch (1987), Brown and Gilligan (1992), and La Greca (1993) encouraged a shift towards a holistic perspective of children's friendships. This shift involves placing children first and exploring their experiences from their perspective. It requires leaving behind an adult driven research paradigm, in which children's responses are represented by numbers and categories. A child centred perspective is most clearly articulated in the research of Brown and Gilligan, 1992. This perspective closely reflects my interests in developing a research project that seeks children's stories of their experiences resolving problems.

Research Question

The themes of quantitative, adult, male centred research which echoed through the literature review, shaped my interests into a qualitative study seeking to articulate girls' voices. My research question was, "How do girls resolve problems in their friendships?" This question allowed me to explore girls' stories resolving problems with friends within the context of their relationships. By framing the research question in this way, girls were able to lead the discussion and actively partake in the generation of learning based on their experiences within friendships.

This approach led to a presentation of girl's stories, told in their language, describing their experiences resolving problems within friendships. My premise was, that if I began by listening to and exploring girls' stories of their experiences within friendships, I would gain insight between what is currently studied and taught to children in school settings and what actually happens in girls' lives.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework joins together the central concepts in the literature and the research question. Examining the literature in each of the sections, children's friendships, social competence and problem solving abilities, provided a conceptual frame of reference that encompassed the research question. Children's friendships form the base from which social competence is developed and focused into actions and thoughts that resolve interpersonal problems. From the basis of friendship, each girl's thoughts, actions, feelings and understanding of problem resolution are explored. The inter-relationship of friendship, social competence and problem solving abilities frames the exploration of girls' experiences. Through this process of exploration, the research question builds on the central concepts emerging from the literature review.

Chapter Two: Research Methodology

I explored a number of different research methods when seeking to find a means of carrying out this study that merged with my beliefs and the objectives of the research question. This section will describe the research design I developed to implement the research question. The design is based on qualitative research methodology that includes semi-structured interviews and is founded on a feminist perspective. It is by no means the only method of exploring the research question, but one that fits closely with the intent of this study and my interests.

Qualitative Research Methodology

Goldstein (1991) defined research as not a means, or an end in itself, but, "...as a set of procedures, a device used to discover, reveal, define, explain or in other ways increase knowledge and comprehension" (p. 102). From this basis he stated the intent of qualitative research is, "... not to test or prove some preliminary assumptions about the question" (Goldstein, 1991, p. 104). Rather, he explained, "... its purpose is to discover, explain or interpret or to fashion a more systematic way of understanding what, at the onset, appears to be an obscure, perhaps ambiguous human event or situation" (Goldstein, 1991, p. 117). It is a process that, "... must be undertaken with a spirit of wonder and curiosity in an effort to question life events and create understanding" (Goldstein, 1991, p. 117).

A central idea underlying qualitative research is to unravel a part of the mystery of experience and bring it forward, for others to contemplate. In keeping with this idea, one aim of qualitative research is to bring forward individual stories so that a body of knowledge and awareness can be developed. Frequently, individuals' stories are a significant way in which they construct and express meaning in their lives (Mishler, 1986). Qualitative research seeks to allow others to speak for themselves, not to fit individuals' experiences into prior ways of knowing or thinking. These objectives of inquiry and exploration are echoed by Reinharz (1992) who described that the intent of qualitative research was to scrutinize a phenomenon and provide public clarification.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are one means of undertaking qualitative research. This method of interviewing offers researchers a way to access participants' stories of their experiences through qualitative, data-gathering techniques (Reinharz, 1992). Semi-structured interviews provide a way of developing shared dialogue between researcher and participant. The interviews provide a means in which the researcher asks questions about a given topic, but allows the conversation itself to determine how the information is obtained (Graham, 1984). The interviews create an opportunity for the researcher to explore with an individual their experiences of life events as related to the research question. Throughout the interview, "... respondents are invited to speak in their own voices, allowed to control the introduction and flow of topics, and encouraged to extend their responses" (Mishler, 1986, p. 69).

The use of semi-structured interviews, "... offers researchers access to people's ideas, thoughts and memories in their own words rather than in the words of the researcher" (Reinharz, 1992, p. 19). It is a process of interviewing which aims to, "... elicit rich, detailed material that can be used in qualitative analysis" (Lofland, 1971, p. 76). The interviews allow for and encourage joint meaning to be developed between researcher and participant (Mishler, 1986). The interview process enables the researcher to hear a person's story in their terms and produce nonstandardized information that incorporates differences among people (Reinharz, 1992).

Semi-structured interviews utilize open ended questions designed to discover and describe an individual's experiences (Reinharz, 1992). The interview develops a process of shared control between researcher and participant which seeks to form a sense of connectedness between those involved (Reinharz, 1992). Using questions as a guide within the interview allows for conversation that is flexible and fluid. The questions are often purposely broad and can be understood at many levels. Typically, the meaning behind the question has more importance than the wording used. This allows participants to develop their own understanding of the questions asked and to respond on their terms. Mishler (1986) described questions in a semi-structured interview as a, "... process through which meaning and answer are created in the discourse between interviewer and respondent as they try to make continuing sense of

what they are saying to each other" (p. 53 & 54). In essence, the questions used in semi-structured interviews are guides in a conversation to keep the dialogue circling the research question.

Feminist Perspective

A feminist perspective is a move away from mainstream methodology in an effort to encompass different ways of exploring and understanding life experiences. Moore (1996) stated, "We live in a culture dominated by logical and quantitative analysis, one that has forgotten the many alternative means of dealing with experiences" (p. 197). A feminist perspective endeavours to create and develop alternative means of understanding experiences. It is derived from a critical analysis of the frameworks, tools and scholarship, created overwhelmingly by and for men, to the exclusion of women (Moore, 1996). Spencer, as quoted by Reinharz (1992), defined a feminist perspective as, "... the crucial insight that there is no one truth, no one authority, no one objective method which leads to the production of pure knowledge... the experience of all human beings is valid and must not be excluded from our understandings" (p. 7). A feminist perspective seeks to recognize and explore the diversity between individual experiences in an effort to acknowledge the paradox that we are all similar and distinct in different ways.

Research encompassing a feminist perspective often builds on qualitative methodology and seeks to actively incorporate women's ways of knowing and experiencing the world. A feminist perspective is guided by an ethic of commitment and egalitarianism rather than the contrasting scientific ethic of detachment and role differentiation (Reinharz, 1992). Black and Sexton, as quoted by Reinharz (1992), illustrated this point by stating, "... feminist research insists on the value of subjectivity and personal experience... women have not one but many voices... both the themes and the variations need to be heard" (p. 3 & 4). Brown and Gilligan (1992) expand on the need to value the themes and variations of voice by describing a feminist perspective in their research as an effort to, "... create a new voice for psychology - a voice more resonant with people's lives" (p. 31). Through this focus a feminist perspective in research strives to develop connection with other people and allow the researcher to

listen to experiences in detail; to hear not one, but many voices, and to explore the gathering and telling of the stories told.

Brown and Gilligan (1992) developed a research methodology that related closely to the objectives of my research design and provided an example of qualitative, semi-structured interviews based on a feminist perspective. Through the course of their research, Brown and Gilligan (1992) developed a process of interviewing and analysis sensitive to, and based on, the relational practice of their training and work as psychologists. During the initial phase of the study, the researchers found, "... girls become more engaged when asked to speak and tell stories about their lives" (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 19). Based on this finding the researchers developed, "... a series of open-ended questions designed to encourage people to take us into their psychological world by exploring with us their feelings and thoughts about themselves, their relationships and their experiences of conflict" (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 8). Interviews were developed as, "... pathways into relationships with girls in which they would feel free and able to speak their thoughts and their feelings... and they became curious in nature, rather than directive" (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 19).

Through the development of this interview process, the researchers found that genuine conversation based on dialogue, rather than questions and answers, developed between participant and interviewer (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). A central component of the philosophy, and content of the interview style, was the recognition of voice; voice was considered the base from which dialogue developed and lead the way into relationship with another. The researchers defined voice as, "...our channel of connection, a pathway that brings the inner psychic world of feelings and thoughts out into the open air of relationship where it can be heard by oneself and by other people" (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 20). The research of Brown and Gilligan (1992) utilizes research methodology I am interested in and also provides an example of the methodology in relation to work with young girls.

In this study, I incorporated a feminist perspective to orientate and ground a qualitative research study carried out through semi-structured interviews. A feminist perspective provided a means of giving voice to a group often left out of prior research. As well, it encouraged a means of asking questions and developing outcomes that were

congruent with how I see the world and how I wanted to put the research question into action.

A feminist perspective represents a way of being in the world and seeks to influence, shift and challenge dominant paradigms. This is congruent with the goals of this study which sought to acknowledge prior ways of learning and teaching children about problem resolution and to explore in a new direction, to hear girls' stories of their experiences.

Throughout the project I used the work of feminist researchers to provide a perspective, not as a methodology separate unto itself. The methodology is congruent with my belief that telling one's story is a primary means of sharing individual experiences and making sense of the world. The next sections will illustrate how I implemented this methodology in relation to my research question.

Selection of Participants

I spent a great deal of time debating whether or not to interview children at the school I was employed at as a Youth and Family Counsellor. In the end, I made a decision to carry out the research where I worked. This decision was based on the importance I placed on exploring the experiences of girls I had come to know. These girls were part of a group of children I valued and cared about. It was their experiences I wanted to bring forward. As a result, it was an integral part of the study that I involved girls from the school I worked in.

I was aware that interviewing children from my work would have an impact on the research project. I am known by many students through my position and my involvement in school activities. Likely, the information shared by children who knew me would differ from that in which the participant and interviewer were strangers. For example, it was possible the girls involved in this study would feel obligated to participate or answer questions "properly" because they knew me, or that I had judged a girl's responses differently because I knew them and unconsciously expected a certain response from them. However, while I was aware of the challenges I faced due to my position in the school, I felt the potential benefits outweighed the risks. In essence my role as a Youth and Family Counsellor and also as a researcher was most closely

defined by Mishler (1986) who stated, "... the interviewers' presence as a coparticipant is an unavoidable and essential component of the discourse" (p. 105).

My position as a Youth and Family Counsellor, researcher, participant and observer allowed me to view the girls' experiences as, "...a process of interaction rather than as a series of static episodes" (Goldstein, 1991, p. 115). Through my counselling experience with children and families, I have come to understand more clearly that relationships are built on layers of trust and caring. In my research, I asked girls to share their personal experiences. To ask this of anyone, the asking must come from a place of trust. At Saseenos Elementary School I am known by most of the children. I am seen on the playground, in the halls and in classrooms. Children are comfortable telling me a story about something they care about, asking for help if they need assistance or requesting a time to come and talk to me about something personal. The feedback I have received from children, parents and school staff indicates a high level of satisfaction with my role at the school.

I felt that building on my role in the school benefited the interview process by providing a basis of relationship with the participants from which stories and experiences were told. Our shared involvement in the school helped myself and the participants recognize that each was significant to the other. Both the participants and I had a history in, and an understanding of, the environment in which the interviews were carried out. This knowledge of the school environment allowed us to begin the interviews from a place of common ground. As well, our history in the school encouraged myself and the participants to be, "... aware of and responsive to both the cultural and research contexts..." within which the interviews took place (Mishler, 1986, p. 105).

In conclusion, carrying out the research interviews at the school I worked in did not result in difficulties that remained invisible. Questions and concerns raised by the participants and their parents were discussed through the process of voluntary participation and informed consent. As well, ongoing discussions about the project with those involved ensured the benefits of working with, and bringing forward the experiences of children I knew was maintained, while the impact of concerns based on prior relationships was reduced.

Selection of Age Group

This study involved eight girls attending Saseenos Elementary School in grade five. The eight girls formed four pairs of friends. Each pair of girls were friends with each other. Meeting with four pairs of girls met the capabilities and resources of this project within the time frame available. Most importantly, it provided a starting place from which to begin exploration of my research question.

Girls in this age group are unique in the importance they place on their friendships, the influence of their peers, their cognitive abilities and placement in the school system (Fischer, 1980; Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Montminy, 1993). As girls move through the primary to intermediate grades, I frequently hear how friendships become increasingly important to them. Girls describe times of anguish and joy within their friendships, and situations in which they are often absorbed in trying to understand and react to their friends place in their lives. As well, society and culture begins to play an increasingly important and influential role in girls' friendships during late elementary years (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). At this age, girls begin to search for their identity between what they know about themselves and what is represented by family, friends and surrounding culture (Gilligan, Rogers & Brown, 1989; Brown and Gilligan, 1992).

Combined with the development and importance of friendships, children at the grade five level show a qualitative shift in intellect, enabling them to integrate information in a more complex fashion. Children at this age are increasingly able to think about relationships from a broad perspective that allows for the sharing of a wide range of their experiences. This shift enables children to construct and consider multidimensional representations of themselves and their relationships (Fischer, 1980; Montminy, 1993).

Grade five children in the Sooke School District are also unique in their placement within the school system. At grade five most children are completing their last year of elementary school before beginning grade six at a middle school. This change from elementary to middle school involves moving from smaller self contained primary classrooms into the larger fluid organization of middle and junior school settings (Brown and Gilligan, 1992). In middle school, greater demands are placed on

children's ability to work independently in both social and academic settings. As children are required, and able to cope more independently with social situations, it becomes increasingly important to understand what their experiences are and what they actually do to resolve problems in their friendships, in order to assist them in the development of healthy relationships.

Participants

Eight girls from Saseenos Elementary School participated in this study. Saseenos is one of 22 elementary schools in the Sooke School District. The Sooke School District encompasses the western communities of the city of Victoria. Saseenos is a community of approximately 11 000 residents that borders Sooke Village, approximately 40 kilometres west of Victoria. Saseenos Elementary School has a population of 310 students, ranging from kindergarten to grade five, in both English and French Immersion programs. At the time of this study grade five consisted of three separate classrooms encompassing fifty children, approximately half of whom were girls. The eight participants were selected from this group of about twenty-five girls.

Process of Participant Selection

To gain consent for undertaking the research project I applied to Leo Chaland, Superintendent of the Sooke School Board and the University of Victoria Committee for Research with Human Subjects (Appendix A & B). Consent was granted by both offices in April 1996. Originally consent was granted to allow for two girls' participation in the project. When it became apparent I needed to expand the project beyond two participants, verbal consent was granted by both the School District and the University to involve eight girls.

Once consent for the project was finalized I discussed the project with Saseenos School Principal, Bob Whittet and the grade five teachers. After introducing the project and my objectives to the teachers, I asked them to identify girls who have been friends with each other since September of the 95-96 school year. I asked the teachers to base their identification of the friends on their observation of the girls' friendship in

conversations, activities and writings. After a number of pairs had been identified I asked the girls' teachers to briefly introduce the project to them. If the girls stated an interest in participating in the project, I then contacted their parents by telephone.

The initial telephone conversation with parents included information about my background and purposes in undertaking the project, the process of voluntary participation, informed consent and issues of confidentiality. Based on parents' stated interest in supporting their child's involvement in the project I requested their verbal consent to introduce the project to their child. I then met with the girls, in pairs, to describe the project. After verbal introduction of the project, I sent home a letter of consent, to be signed by both parent and child and returned to me at the school (Appendix C). The letter of consent was written to provide information and address the questions of both parents and children. The letter was in keeping with Mishler (1986), who stated the need for Informed Consent to respect participant's privacy, ensure confidentiality, minimize personal and social consequences of participation in the study and allow both parent and child to assess the risks of participation in the study.

Interview Meetings

Meetings with the girls were scheduled between April and June 1996, during school hours in the resource room at Saseenos Elementary. Carrying out the interviews at the girls' school provided a familiar setting and one in which most children are comfortable. Meeting with the girls during school time ensured they had access to the location and that their transportation needs were met.

In the first meeting I reviewed my background, interest and purposes in undertaking the project and reinforced their voluntary participation. I ensured the girls were aware they could withdraw from the meeting and the project at any time by telling me verbally or leaving the room. I also reviewed issues of confidentiality and described potential situations in which I could not maintain confidentiality. (If for example, a situation is described in which a child may be, or is at risk of being harmed.) In the initial interview I advised the girls they did not have to answer any question they did not wish to. I explained that I was there to listen to their stories about their friendships and to learn from them.

I then began the process of exploring how the girls' resolved problems in their friendship. I developed questions to guide the conversation that incorporated a qualitative, semi-structured interview format, and a feminist perspective. The questions were based on the following two themes:

1) What is the essence of your friendship together?
   What is your friendship about and what does it mean to each of you?
2) How does each girl resolve problems in the friendship?
   What are the actions each girl takes towards problem resolution?
   What does each girl think and feel about the actions they have taken?

These questions formed an open ended dialogue that invited myself, as a listener, into the girl's stories of their experiences. I met with each pair of girls twice to discuss the two topic areas. Each meeting lasted between forty to eighty minutes. All of the interviews were audio taped and transcribed.

Ethical Considerations

There are numerous ethical dilemmas when working with people, especially children. Fontana and Frey (1994) described three basic ethical considerations; informed consent, a participant's right to privacy and protection from harm. In conjunction with these basic considerations, a researcher must exercise common sense and moral responsibility (Punch, 1986). Throughout this project I worked to put these basic considerations and common sense suggestions into practice.

It was also necessary to realize and accommodate the needs participants may have had as a result of discussing problem resolution in their friendships. If the interview process had lead to distress or anxiety for the participants, or they wanted to explore a situation further, I would have made sure assistance and support were provided. This would have involved discussing the situation with the participant and her parents, or providing a referral to a resource such as the School District Counsellor, Mental Health Office or Social Services. Establishing contact with the girls' parents from the beginning helped ensure the girls needs were met, before and after their participation in the project. A number of parents kept in touch with me, to discuss the project while I was interviewing the girls and during the analysis process.

Asking grade five girls to share their stories raised issues of adult control over and in children's lives. As an interviewer, adult and counsellor, my position is both privileged and powerful. Creating a project in which there is a participant and an interviewer set up a scenario in which there is a power imbalance. The interviewer had insider knowledge about the process whereas the participant was acting out of good will. The interviewer had the power to direct and shape the course of the dialogue. The resulting conversation is one that has two different meanings for the people involved. One person is focused towards listening and the other towards recalling and sharing their experiences. The result is a conversation that is, "... both private and public, informal and formal, lived in the present and preserved for the future" (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 25). Consequently, I worked with and for, the participants throughout the selection, interview and analysis processes, by maintaining high ethical standards.

Analysis of the Stories

The intent in analysing the girls' stories was to learn from their experiences. My goal was not to draw a map of children's experiences resolving problems in friendships, but rather to illustrate and bring forward the words and language, the themes and variations, of eight girls' stories. In order to base the analysis on the girls' knowledge and understanding, I reviewed the tapes and transcripts numerous times to develop accurate and representative notes. I also encouraged the girls to become involved in the analysis of their stories. I met with each pair of girls a minimum of three times after our interviews to discuss the transcriptions, my notes and our joint findings. In these meetings all of the data were reviewed. We discussed how the data would be used in the final document and who would have access to it. By sharing the analysis of the stories between myself and participants we all learned from the interview process. As well, we were able to collaborate on the development of meaning derived from the stories shared in the interview process. Collaboration between researcher and participants is a critical component in the analysis of qualitative, semi-structured interview data (Laslett & Rapoport, 1975; Mishler, 1986; Reinharz, 1992).

In my own listening to the tapes and reading of the transcripts, I relied in part on the method of analysis developed by Brown, Gilligan and colleagues (1992). These researchers created a "Listener's Guide" which was, "... a pathway into relationship rather than a fixed framework for interpretation" (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 22). It was a feminist, relational method of analysis, based on relationships and responsive to different voices (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). It provided a nonlinear method and way of working, responsive to the harmonics of what was said (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). Through the avenue of voice, the Listener's Guide allowed space for the individual and unique voices of each girl. It encouraged analysis based on the understanding that, "... each voice is different and every relationship, is by definition, a fluid, ever-changing, and unique experience" (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 22). The voice centred method of analysis emphasized, "... the importance of listening to each girl's voice carefully by following the speaking self, the I who thinks and feels, through the interviews" (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 229).

As I listened to the tapes of the meetings and read through the transcripts I highlighted the recurring stories in the girls' conversation. In all of my meetings with the girls there was a story introduced at the beginning of the interview that was woven throughout our conversation. The primary story was often surrounded by other stories during the mid section of the interview. Towards the end of the interview, the girls would return to their primary story. In telling the primary story, the girls described their friendship and ways they resolved problems together. The other stories, introduced during the mid section of the interviews, embellished and provided examples of situations described in the primary story. The experiences described in the girls' primary story formed the basis of the notes I developed and discussed with the girls.

In our first meeting after the taped interviews, each pair of girls read the transcripts and corrected any errors they felt I had made in the process of transcribing the audio tapes. Next we reviewed the notes I had developed through my analysis of the tapes and transcripts. The girls edited the notes and clarified, corrected and challenged my representation of their experiences. Once I had the girls' agreement that the notes represented their experiences, I formulated the notes into text. The girls read

the text and confirmed whether or not they felt it represented their stories, again clarifying, correcting and challenging my representation of their experiences. After I had edited the text to the point where the girls felt it represented them accurately, I returned the audio tapes to the girls.

I then used the text of the girls' stories to bring together the main themes and variations across the four pairs of friends. I did this by first summarizing each girls' friendship and problem solving process. After reviewing this summary with each of the girls, I combined their individual stories into a section which brought together all eight girls' experiences. The joining together of the eight girls' stories drew the main themes of their individual experiences into two sections; friendship and problem resolution. The joining together of the girls' stories into one section was reviewed by each pair of friends and each girl added her comments and suggestions.

By using the Listener's Guide as a basis for analysis, I felt learning was gained and presented in a manner that allowed the girls to recognize their voices and their stories as their own. As a result , "... the sense of self and relationship developed in the interview was honoured and articulated through the analysis" (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 20). Learning was not constructed to meet the needs of the researcher or the project, and findings were not reduced to facts and figures. Instead, the process of learning was shared through the development of relationship between the speaker and the listener in the analysis of the interviews (Mishler, 1986). Meaning was created together, rather than imposed on the participants (Reinharz, 1992). Through joint analysis of the girls' stories, meaning was developed that we all understood and agreed on. This method allowed the girls to structure and define the content of the final document. As a result, the following stories represent the girls and their experiences.

Chapter Three: Presentation of the Girls' Stories

All of the girls involved in the research project had attended Saseenos Elementary School since the start of kindergarten or grade one, in either the English or the French Immersion Program. Each pair of friends had known each other since starting school at Saseenos. The girls were all ten years of age at the time of their involvement in the research project. One pair of girls had been in each other's classroom throughout grades one to five, while the others had been in the same classroom for some grades and not others. Each pair of friends was in the same classroom for grade five. To present the girls' stories I will describe each pair separately, beginning with the first girls I met with, Jill and Elaine.

First Pair of Friends - Jill and Elaine

Jill and Elaine set a number of precedents that became guidelines in subsequent meetings. They became participants at an early stage of the research when I intended to interview only one pair of girls, both together and separately, three or four times. When I discussed my ideas with Jill and Elaine they stated they were not willing to talk about their friendship separately and requested meeting with me only as a pair. Both girls said being interviewed together would ensure they were not asked to talk about each other without the other friend present. The girls felt meeting as a pair would allow them to discuss together and with me, their friendship and how they resolved problems together. I agreed with their request and felt that meeting with them together would not change my focus of exploring their friendship and steps in resolving problems, and it could potentially enhance our conversation in each of these areas.

Jill and Elaine requested ownership of the tapes and had a number of questions regarding why I was taping the meetings, who would listen to the tapes and who had access to the tapes. After discussing these questions, the girls stated they were interested in listening to the tapes when our meetings were finished and requested the tapes be returned to them when I finished writing the transcriptions. I agreed that rather than erasing the tapes, they should be returned to the girls whose stories were recorded on them. Jill and Elaine also stated they wanted to decide on the alternative names I would use to replace their names in documentation of the project. Their request seemed

a logical way for them to have involvement in the finalization of the research project. The girls went on to choose alternative names for themselves and each other based on favorite names and television characters.

The requests made by Jill and Elaine, to be interviewed together, to have the tapes returned to them and to decide on the alternative names used in replace of their own names, set a precedent I followed in subsequent meetings with all of the girls involved in the research project. I interviewed girls only in pairs, returned the tapes to the girls involved and asked each of the girls to decide on the alternative name I would use in documentation of the project. In some pairs the girls dubbed the tapes so each would have a copy, another pair listened to the tapes together and two other girls shared the tapes between themselves and their parents. In the choice of alternative names, some girls named themselves and other girls asked their friend to name them. The result was a process of shared control between myself and the participants which allowed the girls to influence the shape and development of our meetings and the research project.

Friendship

Throughout our meetings Jill and Elaine were spirited and playful girls. They described at length their friendship together and adventures they have had. The girls wanted our meetings to be kept "top secret" from other children in their class and used their "code language" when faced with questions they did not want to answer. The use of secrets and codes created an atmosphere of adventure around our meetings which the girls found engaging and exciting.

The girls described being in the same classroom for grades one, three and five. During grades one and three, Jill stated, "We weren't really friends then... we were in the same class, not friends." Elaine explained that, "We weren't best friends, but we sometimes hung out... we might play with each other about once every two months." She went on to say, "In grade one I was hanging out with lots of other people and in grade three I was hanging out with mostly Robby and Laura." However, during grade five, their friendship changed. In September the girls were asked to move their desks into groups of four and they chose to sit beside each other. Sitting beside each other

lead to the girls spending more time together and becoming closer friends. Jill recalled that, "... she [Elaine] said do you want to sit with me, so I pulled my desk over there and then we were friends."

Most of the time Jill and Elaine spend together is at school. Both girls described after school activities which keep them busy on opposite days. For example, Elaine is involved in karate and art lessons, while Jill plays baseball and soccer. Their activities and sports commitments mean the girls do not have much time during the week, or weekend, to get together. However, there have been times they have gone to Sooke together on their bikes or gone to one another's home. The girls stated they do not phone each other, as phone calls are limited and boring. Instead, they see each other at school and spend as much time as possible together during the school day.

On school days, the girls described meeting before class in the morning and then going into the computer room or outside to play. At lunch hour they described playing a new game every month, such as football, chase and tag. These are games the girls start and other children join. In class, Jill and Elaine discussed their work together as partners and in group projects. The girls described their friendship as one where they play and work together and as members of a larger group, both in the classroom and on the playground. The girls also shared that they prefer to play with boys, rather than girls, stating they have found boys to be funnier and more likely to goof off more, while girls tend to be bossier and want to be in control.

Elaine described their friendship, in comparison to others in their class as, "... probably [we are] like the best friends out of the group." Jill stated it was, "... a good friendship..." and that "trust" made the friendship "good." She stated, "...we can both trust each other..." and explained they show each other caring and trust by, "... playing with them [each other] a lot." Both Jill and Elaine described the trust and caring in their friendship by saying it means, "... we can count on each other."

Problem Solving Process

When I brought up the topic of resolving problems or differences, the girls stated they had never, and would never disagree, have a difference of opinion or a problem in their friendship that needed to be resolved. Elaine said there, "Haven't had

any, like, things that I wanted to do that Jill didn't want to do ... we usually would like to do the same thing," and Jill agreed. When I asked what they would do if they thought differently about something or someone Jill stated, "I'd probably tell Elaine when she's not around that person." Elaine agreed she would do the same as Jill. Elaine went onto say. "... if you liked, or wanted to do something different than the other person ... we'd just compromise ... you'd just do something in the middle." Jill stated if Elaine wanted to do something she did not want to do, "I'd just tell her I don't want to do it." Elaine agreed she would do the same, and then, "... we'd probably agree on something." She gave an example of using their plan to resolve problems by stating, "Like if Jill wanted to go canoeing and I wanted to um like, walking, we'd probably go swimming or something."

Elaine went on to explain their potential plan for resolving problems by stating, "... well you don't really talk about it, you just like think of something and then..." Jill finished her though by adding, "We'd find something in the middle that we both want to do." Elaine described putting the new idea into place by, "... you don't say it, you just do a suggestion." She stated that, "... talking is so boring ... it wastes so much time. Jill continued by saying, "Cause you don't have enough time to go out and do what you're going to do." Elaine felt their plan to resolve potential problems would, "... go good because we'd both want to do it." The girls' plan for resolving possible problems by compromising, coming up with an idea in the middle between what they disagreed about, would allow them to move on and do things together, which is what they value in their friendship.

Second Pair of Friends - Emily and Jessica

Emily and Jessica are students in the French Immersion Program. The girls met when their separate kindergarten classes joined together for group activities. Since kindergarten the girls have been in the same classroom. However, as both girls prepared to move from elementary to middle school, they were faced with separating from each other because Jessica and her family are planning to move during the summer.

Both Emily and Jessica presented as quiet, thoughtful and caring girls during our meetings together. They thought about the questions I asked and answered in a straight forward, to the point manner. Emily described herself as more outspoken than Jessica, while Jessica described herself as quieter than Emily. Jessica spoke less than Emily during our meetings, however, she followed the conversation closely and added her thoughts, agreeing and disagreeing with the story as the conversation progressed.

Friendship

Emily described her friendship with Jessica by saying, "It's nice to have friends that you can really talk to and tell them stuff because you know that you can trust them because you've know them for so long." Jessica described her friendship with Emily as good, "... and you know that they'll listen, they won't make jokes." Both girls talked about doing fun things together, during school and outside of school. At school, the girls described playing together at recess and lunch and pairing up for class projects. They also discussed regularly spending time together outside of school, usually on weekends. During weekends, the girls often visit at each others home, go swimming or go to a movie together.

Problem Solving Process

Emily referred to problems in their friendship as "little fights." Jessica explained, "... they don't happen very often, about three or four times a year." Emily described their process of resolving problems by saying, "... we kind of have a little fight at school but then we think about it and we phone each other when we get home and we say sorry and the next day..." Jessica finished off the sentence by saying, "We're friends." The girls stated fights typically happen when they have not spent much time together during the day and they separate from each other to play with other children. However, on days when they have spent a lot of time together they stated it can feel OK to play with other friends.

Jessica explained doing something different from Emily when they've been together for awhile by saying, "... it feels OK cause if we just wanted to play with the other person we'd just go." Emily said, "We'd just go play with other friends, what

they were playing if we wanted to play that." She added, "Cause the other person's friends with Jessica too." Emily described a time when she and Jessica wanted to do separate things, "We just go play with other friends who are doing soccer and she goes and plays with other friends who are walking around." She said being apart from Jessica that time as, "It's OK if we haven't been apart the whole day but [if] we are always doing that [something apart] the whole day we just go back together. Jessica explained "going back together" by stating, "We'd agree on something and then we'd say how about we do that tomorrow and then the other person would say OK."

At other times, being with other friends can cause fights between Emily and Jessica. Emily described a fight they had, "When someone else goes to play with Jessica then I go to play with someone else then we don't really talk." She explained, "... sometimes when we go and play with other people, they say stuff about the other person and then you think it's true and like they might say that this person, that Jessica said something about you." Jessica continued explaining by stating, "... they'll say like, oh, she's so bossy, don't play with her, or you shouldn't play with her, she's kind of mean, don't you think, and they'll try and like, take you apart." Emily explained, "... it's hard to walk away from them when they're telling you all this bad stuff about the other person." She said when she hears another friend say something about Jessica she asks how that person knows about her. Jessica stated she would respond to comments about Emily by saying, "Well, like how do you know that, that's probably not even true." Emily described what has happened when she questioned the friend talking about Jessica by saying, "Sometimes when you say that they get mad at you and they go, well, why don't you trust me, and you trust her and..." Jessica finished this thought by saying, "And then you get in a fight with that person."

Emily stated, "... and after you've got back together you ask them, if that was true, they really did that, and it's not really true." Jessica added, "Yep, they're just like saying that." Emily described her feelings in situations where she and Jessica do different things as, "... sad, sometimes you're happy that you can play with other people. Sometimes we don't get in a fight, we just..." Jessica finished off her sentence by saying, "... play with other people."

Both Jessica and Emily stated when they have a fight they often do not talk to each other. Emily described "feeling bad" when she is not talking to Jessica. Jessica explained that when they are not talking to each other, "You don't want to be mean, but you are, kind of." Emily added, "It's kind of like you are so grumpy cause the whole day has been so long." She went onto state, "... when we get in a fight we just phone each other when we get home." Jessica agreed and said, "After we've thought about it ... then we just phone each other and get back together."

Emily said if they have a fight at school it's easier to get back together when they get home, rather than at school, because, "... there's not very many people around and you don't have everybody talking and it's so quiet and you're thinking." Jessica agreed that time apart to think about what happened between them was important to her as well. Jessica explained it is important to talk about the fight with Emily and for each of them listen to each other. Emily stated that talking with Jessica about what happened helps her to feel better and end the fight. She said, "... and after you've got back together you ask them, if that was true, they really did that, and it's not really true." Jessica agreed and said usually, "... they're just like saying that."

After a fight, Emily stated she usually says sorry to Jessica. She went on to explain that if she says sorry, Jessica will say sorry as well. Jessica added that "saying sorry" is their way of forgiving each other for what has happened. She explained they show forgiveness by talking to each other and making plans for the next day, "You talk to them, about what we can do tomorrow, like do you want to play tomorrow at recess, or do you want to come over." Emily felt that she and Jessica were able to handle problems in this way, "Maybe cause we've been friends for a long time."

Resolving problems with children outside their friendship differs from the process previously described. Emily stated when they have fights with other friends, "Then we kind of forget about it, we don't have to phone each other, we just forget about it at school and we just play with each other the next day." Jessica said this is different than solving problems with Emily because, "... well we don't phone each other after school, instead we'd just forget about it and then the next day we'd be friends." Emily said, "... sometimes we'd say sorry at school, like the next day, but sometimes you just forget about it."

Third Pair of Friends - Elizabeth and Julia

Julia and Elizabeth were very interested in being participants in the research project and felt they had lots to share with me about their friendship. Before our first meeting the girls met me in the halls a number of times to ask when we would get together. After the first meeting the girls kept in contact with me to ask if I had finished transcribing the tape and when I would be ready to share the information with them. During all of our meetings the girls were talkative, energetic and enthusiastic about sharing their stories with me.

Friendship

Julia and Elizabeth have been friends since they met at school in kindergarten. Elizabeth recalls that she and Julia have been "really, really close" throughout their friendship. She described their friendship as, "... really good, we've always liked each other a lot ... except for a few disagreements." Elizabeth went on to explain the friendship is, "... a bit exciting cause we'll never know what kind of mood we're in and with Julia it's always a happy mood. " She described Julia as very dramatic and herself as less dramatic in comparison. Julia described their friendship as weird, exciting and fun. She stated that being friends with Elizabeth makes her feel happy and over joyed. Julia added, "Sometimes I feel like she's the only friend I have." Elizabeth confirmed she feels that way as well. Both girls stated this was the most important friendship they have ever had.

The girls described spending most of their time together at school. They are in the same classroom, they sit beside each other and pick each other as partners in group activities. They talked about reading and playing games together, such as Careers, Pictionary and Charades or games they have made up. They also like to braid and make jewellery. The girls stated they only see each other outside school at each other's birthday parties.

Problem Solving Process

The girls referred to problems in their friendship as disagreements. Julia described a process in which the girls disagree, don't speak to each other for a while and then come back together. She stated grade five is, "... the first year we have strange ways of getting back together." She explained they have strange ways of, "... going back into the friendship again when we disagree on something." Elizabeth added that their friendship is, "... like sped up, like um, we're not friends one minute, we're friends the next, like in another couple of minutes ... it's a lot of experiences at once."

Disagreements occur in the friendship when one girl wants to do something different from what the other wants to do. Elizabeth described a time when, "... we want to be partners, well, Julia wants to do one thing and I want to do the other... we just want to do different things and we can't decide which one... so then we end up in a disagreement... we don't really get along that time because we want to do our own things." Julia explained, "We just argue and argue and argue ... we get really mad at each other... I think I never want to talk to her again, never speak to her, never see her, never look at her, never come across her or her family." Elizabeth added that she does not get as dramatic as Julia when they have disagreements. She stated, "I just wouldn't talk... I'd probably think, well, I don't want, like, I don't want to go over to her house or she'd come over to my house any more or I don't really want to be her friend anymore... and the next thing we're friends." Julia agreed and said, "... I guess over night we somehow go along with one thing." Julia stated the process of talking, not talking and talking again happens, "... once every two days or once every one day about, one of those two." Elizabeth wasn't sure it happened quite that often and stated they had not had disagreements quite as often at the beginning of grade five.

Elizabeth described her feelings about why the disagreements are happening by stating, "... I think it's cause we're sort of getting older so we're sort of getting our own ways to do stuff and like we all have our own ways to do stuff so we just start to argue." She added, "... we're just sort of different because we're getting older now so we're getting differenter or whatever, so we're just having different ways and we sort of fight a bit cause we want out own ways to do that." Julia described similar thoughts regarding disagreements in their friendship. She said, "I think we're just getting older

and I reckon or suppose that the reason why friendships usually end is because we're losing interest in each other and I think that's starting to happen just slowly drifting, that's what I think but I hope we don't one day stop being friends." She added, "I think our interests are starting to not be the same any more and we are starting not being interested in being friends in each other very much." While Elizabeth voiced similar thoughts to Julia, she did not see the friendship drifting apart. She said, "... our friendship's getting a bit stronger because we've known each other for longer." However, Julia reiterated her concerns by stating, "We break up a lot and we, yet we're usually getting back together, it's weird, it feels like someday we're going to just one day have an argument and all of a sudden, poof we're gone."

The girl's stated their process of talking, not talking and spending time apart helped bring them back together. They said not talking to each other can last from five to fifteen minutes, half an hour or for a day. Julia explained, "... we're just somehow by not talking to each other we kind of forget about what we were mad at each other for and we just come back together. We may still remember the argument but we're just boom, we're together again." Julia said she usually does not think about Elizabeth when they spend time apart. Elizabeth stated quiet times at home let her think about what happened. She described being, "... at home that's really all we think about cause we don't have much to do." Elizabeth went onto explain spending quiet time at home by saying, "I know this sounds weird but I sort of have reading as my hero, like I can always read and all the times are better, so I normally go home and I normally sit with a book and I can read for hours and I'm a lot happier, but I'm not when I run out of books." Julia spent time apart differently and stated , "I barely think during that time about it, I just, I forget about it during that time until we meet each other again." However, she added time apart can, "Help us grow back to each other, sometimes we think about what we have done the day before or we wish we hadn't done that."

The girls went on to describe their feelings when they are not talking to each other. Julia explained her feelings during the times they don't speak as, "I feel like, she should just, sometimes this isn't really nice but sometimes when I'm really really really angry I feel like her just butting out of the world and going 'eep' and dies. She said if they do speak to each other during these times they are, "Usually upset to each other, at

each other, mad." Elizabeth described her feelings as, "In the very very beginning right after I'm sort of I don't know, I guess a bit angry at Julia and then slowly I sort of forget about my anger..." Julia stated she felt the same. She described her anger as, "Just rips, just as if a rain cloud was just raining hard and it slowly stops cause it's running out of rain."

When the girls get together after spending time apart, Elizabeth described feeling, "... just as happy as can be." Julia said, "I'm just all of a sudden like, Hi Elizabeth, good morning... I'm in my regular good morning mood." She continued by saying, "... when we come back in the morning like, I want to do this and I'm like OK I'll do that or we can do your idea." After saying hello to each other in the morning, the girls described remembering the disagreement from the day before. Julia explained, "... we start talking about something and then all of a sudden we're like, you know what, we had a fight yesterday, or an hour ago, or fifteen minutes ago and here we are again." Elizabeth stated she might say, "... well Julia I'm really sorry that I did this and that and I don't know I just wasn't thinking right." Julia responded by saying, "I think of getting back together again as my way of apologizing. It makes me happy and I feel like she's understanding without having me say it in words."

Distractions that happen when the girls are not talking can help them get together again. Elizabeth described a disagreement when they were lunch monitors, "... a teenager [was] in there reading to the class so we're just sitting there listening and I guess we get I don't know... we get distracted by that." Julia added, "We get distracted from the problem when we go back." The distraction allowed the girls to spend time apart and after lunch they were together again.

Fourth Pair of Friends - Vanessa and Claudia

Claudia began our meeting by explaining she has known Vanessa since kindergarten, although Vanessa thought maybe they had known each other longer as they had gone to the same preschool group. Both Claudia and Vanessa are active in many school activities ranging from sports events to public speaking. They are also part of a large circle of friends. The girls spend time together during class and outside school time. In class they work as partners on projects and at recess and lunch they

play square ball outside together. The girls spend time together after school while Vanessa waits for her Mom and Claudia waits for her older sister. The girls also get together at Vanessa's house about once a month.

Friendship

Claudia described their friendship together as "weird" and Vanessa agreed. Claudia explained, "Some of our friends have fights, sometimes we go on sides." Vanessa added, "And sometimes we have different friends and sort of different personalities... we have like different friends and we've got mostly a different personality, like we like other people for different reasons." Vanessa described an example of these differences when, "... sometimes like Monica and Sabrina get in fights but Monica and Claudia are more friends and me and Sabrina are more friends so, me and Claudia are on different sides." Being on different sides of fights between friends can cause problems for Claudia and Vanessa. Claudia described how when they are on "different sides" in a fight, "... we are still friends, but it's just like we can't talk to them when we're with the other person." Vanessa added, "... the two people who are fighting always tell us like well don't speak to that person or they're so like mean and like they just uh, do bad stuff to you and stuff..." Claudia stated these are times when her friendship with Vanessa feels weird.

Problem Solving Process

Vanessa explained she and Claudia usually have "little fights" in which they "joke and bug each other." For example, the girls said they have bugged each other about who is bigger, which boy they liked and how come they liked him. There was some discrepancy between the girls regarding how often they have had fights. Claudia felt, "Maybe like two fights a year." While Vanessa thought, "... like once in about one or two months of something." The girls debated how long the fights have lasted. Claudia said if she gets into a fight with another girl, "... we are just like friends two seconds later so that's kind of [similar] with me and Vanessa." Vanessa went on to say, "Well it's sort of like me and Claudia if we get in a fight it depends on how big the

fight is." Claudia explained how big the fight is means, "Like how long it will last." Vanessa said, "It doesn't take over a day." Claudia added, "To solve it."

Both girls agreed they resolve fights within a day. Fights usually occurred over friendships with other girls that either Claudia and Vanessa were not friends with. Vanessa said usually when they have a fight, they just forget about it. Claudia explained, "Like if you feel bad, then you have fun with your friends." She added, "When I'm with my other friends I'm kind of like mad and grumpy or something." Vanessa went onto say sometimes she feels so mad about the fight, she keeps on thinking mean thoughts. She explained, "It's a weird feeling cause we're in a fight one day and best friends the next day." Claudia added, "Yah, we have no idea what happened the day before. Like the next day we come back and we're totally friends because we just forget about it." Claudia described her feelings during a fight by saying, "Like I'm so mad at her I just don't want to be her friend ever again ... because they did that." Vanessa said, "Yah, like you think, oh they're just so mean I'm never going to be their friend again and we are the next day." Claudia said this part of their friendship, getting mad and then being friends the next day is, "... kind of funny and weird."

When the girls "forget about the fight" they explained spending time apart. Each of the girls described thinking about the fight during the time they spend apart. Vanessa described her thoughts as, "... maybe I should be her friend still, what's she done for me and like we have been friends for a while so like [I] might as well keep that friendship ... or like why lose a friendship over some little thing." Claudia described her thoughts by, "Saying Vanessa always does things for me, I would still want to be her friend cause she might help me out in the future." She explained that thinking about the fight, "... makes you give in because you think that person is so important." Vanessa added, "Sort of like why fight over something stupid, just be a friend, she may do stuff like that sometimes but still she's nicer than she is mean."

After spending time apart and thinking about the fight the girls described coming back together. Resolving a fight involved a combination of thought and feeling. Claudia explained her thoughts by saying, "... oh well she's being really nice to me, I guess I could be her friend again or something ... I feel like well, I did say that

I never want to be her friend again but she's been really good to me so who really cares I can be her friend if I want to." Vanessa said, "... if I started thinking bad thoughts about her, I usually don't get that far because like there is nothing really that bad about her."

The girls also talked about their feelings when resolving a fight. Claudia explained, "It's weird, it's like, oh well, I'll just take these feelings out and put these ones in, and you're a friend." Vanessa described the change in her feelings as, "I don't know, I can turn bad thoughts into good thoughts if you think about it, like, she stole something out of my desk and it could have been an eraser and she returned it like right away I could say 'Oh she stole my eraser I'm mad at her' then I could think like I can turn to a better thought like 'Well, it was just an eraser I didn't really need it' what's the big deal." The girls were not sure if there was a link between their thoughts and changes in their feelings, they stated, change just happened. Vanessa said, "... I always think I've got to find some, if I can't find any ways, to think that she should still be my friend then I guess I can't be her friend if there's uh, if I can't think anything good about her, but I always do find something good about her."

Claudia explained that apologizing with words helped bring the girls together and was part of how they resolved fights. Vanessa gave an example of an apology by saying, "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to call you that, can we still be friends." She also described a process in which, "Usually the other person apologizes back and says I was, I didn't mean to do that either or something, but if the other person didn't do something they wouldn't do that [apologize]." Claudia said, "... then if the other person didn't do anything that person would say like um, I really want to be your friend again so can we be friends or something." Vanessa added that "memory loss" also helped the girls resolve a fight.

The girls described spending time together after they have resolved a fight as important. Claudia stated when they have decided to be friends again, "We would probably spend the rest of the day with each other." Vanessa said this was a time to, "... try and like, just want to make sure we are friends still." Remembering something good about the other friend and knowing each other for a long time were also important parts of how the girls resolved fights. Claudia stated, "Like she knows some things

about me and I know some things about her and like it's just she knows like my inner thoughts sometimes. She went on to describe, "It's just really good for a person to know that like if I'm mad and then they probably know why then they would probably like help me or something." Claudia summed up the importance of her friendship with Vanessa by stating, "Well sometimes I think I feel like, I'm so thankful for Vanessa to be my friend cause when I go to her party it's so much fun and she always helps me if I have a problem or if I'm hurt."

Reflections of the Interview Process

In follow up discussions with Jill and Elaine, our conversations focused on organizing their stories into written text. The girls read through the transcripts of our meetings and my analysis notes. They were careful to point out discrepancies between what they remembered saying and the written text. Together we developed the section describing how they had set precedence and direction in the research project. Both Jill and Elaine stated they had enjoyed our meetings, although neither offered reflection on the impact of our meetings on their friendship. They stated that because they had not had any problems or disagreements in their friendship, our meetings had not influenced their relationship positively or negatively.

Jessica and Emily read through the transcript and my notes a number of times after our interview meetings. The girls felt the transcript and analysis was accurate and reflected their experiences. They described the process of meeting together to talk about their friendship as fun and felt it had not changed their relationship. The girls stated that meeting together had helped reinforce what works for them in their friendship. In particular, they said our meetings showed them how talking to each other about problems helps them "get back together again."

Elizabeth and Julia read through the transcript and analysis with care and attention. They corrected some of the wording and then described the impact of our meetings in their friendship. Elizabeth stated that, "I think it [the interview meetings] made us better friends because we talked about some of our problems." Julia said, "I think we're not having as [many] arguments anymore." Elizabeth added, "I would say because we talked over our problems, so we got them out of us, so we're like not

hiding them or keeping them anymore..."Julia agreed and said, "I think it's just making us understand each other a little more and we're not as much arguing cause we know more about each other's feelings..." She felt she had, "... more understanding of Elizabeth what she feels like when we go through a fight and stuff like that." While Elizabeth felt, "... because after I heard Julia's side of the story... or the arguments and stuff, I learned that she really, well she, how she felt ... [it] helped me understand her a lot." She went onto say, "Really I felt more relieved because now I feel like I understand what she feels like when we go through a fight and now I feel bad more and the more we argue about and when she's unhappy it makes me more unhappy." Julia summed up by saying, "Cause she's my best friend and I understand her so much now." Elizabeth agreed the changes in their friendship were, "... really important for me, for our friendship, because sometimes she's the only friend I have."

Claudia, Vanessa and I also met a number of times to discuss the transcripts and analysis. The girls read through the text and made adjustments they felt were necessary. Both girls stated they felt comfortable with my representation of their experiences. The girls described our meetings as fun. They looked forward to our times together and talked about them afterwards. The girls felt the meetings had provided them with a place to talk about their friendship and listen to each others feelings. They stated the experience of talking and listening helped their friendship and showed them how important they are to each other.

Chapter Four: The Girls' Process of Resolving Problems

While reviewing the transcripts and analysis with the girls, a number of themes and variations emerged between their stories. All of the girls described a specific process of resolving problems. They began by describing the importance of their friendship together. Then an incident would occur which caused the girls to separate from each other for a period of time. Time spent apart varied in length between pairs of friends and each girl spent the time apart differently. After spending time apart each girl decided in her own way to seek out her friend and re-establish the friendship. The girls then become involved in "moving on" and "doing things" in their friendship. In this section I will describe each part of the problem solving process identified by the girls in more detail.

Friendship

When we began to talk about the girls' relationship together, all of the girls began by defining the importance of their friendship, the length of time they have known each other and the trust they feel between each other. Jill defined her friendship with Elaine as "good" and "... that it is good to have a good friend." She explained that trust between the two friends made their relationship "good." Trusting meant they could count on the other not to disclose information they did not want to share outside of their friendship. Based on a sense of trust, the girls described caring for each other. They showed each other caring by "doing things" together.

Emily and Jessica defined their friendship as "good" and "nice." Jessica said it was, "... good to have good friends, to do things with." While Emily said, "... it's nice to have friends that you can really talk to and tell them stuff because you know that you can trust them because you've known them for so long." Jessica added, "... you know they'll listen, they won't make jokes."

Elizabeth and Julia also defined their friendship as "good." They also described feeling, "exciting, happy, fun, weird, over joyed and jumpy" about their friendship. Julia said it is, "... strange having all these experiences at once ... but sometimes like [she is] the only friend I have. While Elizabeth stated Julia, "... is the most important [friend] I've ever had. She added that, "... we've always liked each other ... I just sort

of think our friendship's getting a bit stronger because we've known each other for longer."

Claudia and Vanessa defined their friendship as weird. Claudia felt the length of time she has known Vanessa was important. She stated, "Like she knows some things about me and I know some things about her and like, it's just, she knows like, my inner thoughts sometimes." Claudia also said, "Well sometimes, I think I feel like, I'm so thankful for Vanessa to be my friend." Vanessa described feeling included by Claudia as important. She said Claudia, "... usually doesn't leave me out on anything."

In all of the girls' stories there were a range of feelings expressed to define their friendships together. Almost all of the relationships were described as "good" and the girls stated they enjoyed being part of their friendships. Some of the girls also described strange, weird and exciting times in their friendships. Overall the girls expressed finding happiness and enjoyment in their relationships together. They were able to trust each other and this in turn developed caring. Caring was shown by the length of time they had known each other and the time spent doing things together that each enjoyed.

Problems, Fights and Disagreements

Except for Jill and Elaine, problems developed in all of the girls' friendships. Each girl had a different way of defining problems and the number of problems occurring in the relationship differed between pairs of girls. Emily referred to problems in her friendship with Jessica as "little fights." While Jessica referred to them as "disagreements." Jessica stated, "... disagreements didn't happen a lot, only three or four in the whole friendship." Elizabeth and Julia referred to problems as "disagreements." They stated grade five was the first year they have had disagreements in their friendship. Julia said disagreements usually happen "once every day." While Elizabeth said they occur, "... once every two days or once every day." Claudia and Vanessa referred to problems as "fights." Claudia stated they had, "... maybe two fights a year." Vanessa recalled fighting, "... maybe once in about one or two

months." Both girls stated this was different from their other friends who, "... get into fights every day."

Experiencing problems was a commonality between Emily and Jessica, Elizabeth and Julia and Claudia and Vanessa. Differences lay in how problems were identified, either as a disagreement or a fight, and in how often they occurred. What caused problems for the girls also differed across the pairs of friends.

Causes of Problems, Fights and Disagreements

In their friendships the girls are used to being similar to each other. They wanted to do the same things or like the same person, as their friend. In grade five, Jessica and Emily, Elizabeth and Julia, and Claudia and Vanessa described experiencing differences between what they want to do and who they want to be with, for the first time in their friendship. The differences arising between the girls have lead to problems within their relationships. The girls described a variety of situations which have caused fights or disagreements within their friendship.

Emily talked about a time when, "... someone else goes to play with, like Jessica, then I go to play with someone else then we don't really talk." She and Jessica stated when they separate from each other to play with other children during days they have not spent much time together, it can cause a fight. They went onto explain that fights happen when they play with someone else and that person says "stuff" about the other friend. Jessica said during these times, the other person tries to take the friends apart.

Jessica and Emily also talked about the importance of being similar to each other and how being different can cause fights. The girls described a time they went out for dinner and wanted to order something different from each other. Jessica explained what happened, "Sometimes we go out for dinner and so we go do you what this, I'll get the same thing as you and they'd go oh no it's OK I want to get this, but that's fine." Emily stated, "Cause we've been friends for so long we're just used to liking the same things the other person likes." Jessica said it was a problem, "... cause we want to be the same." Emily described being different as, "Sometimes its OK, but sometimes you don't like it."

Elizabeth and Julia also talked about the importance of being similar to each other in their friendship. Elizabeth stated how when, "... we just want to do different things and we can't decide which one ... then we end up in a disagreement." She explained, "Well I think it's cause we're sort of getting older so we're sort of getting our own ways to do stuff and like we all have our own ways to do stuff so we just start to argue." Julia added, "Like we're just sort of different because we're getting older now so we're getting differenter or whatever, so we're just having different ways and we sort of fight a bit cause we want our own ways to do that."

Problems resulting from being different were also described by Claudia and Vanessa. Vanessa stated, "... sometimes we have different friends and sort of different personalities and we like different people for different reasons." Claudia added that as a result of their differences, "... if one of our friends has a fight, sometimes we go on different sides."

It is a recurring theme stated by the girls that they are used to knowing each other's feelings and what the other likes to do. In many situations it was common for the girls to have "been the same" as the other. During grade five they described a fine balance between knowing their similarities and coping with new differences in their friendships. However, problems were referred to as disagreements or fights, and if they occurred every day or a couple of times a year, each pair of friends described a process of problem resolution.

Separating

When there was a problem in the friendship all the girls stated they separated and spent time apart from each other. The time spent apart varied in length between the pairs of friends. Jessica and Emily described spending the "whole day" apart when they were fighting. Elizabeth and Julia described spending fifteen to thirty minutes apart, or sometimes, the whole day. Claudia and Vanessa stated they did not spend more than a day apart, and usually less time than that. While all of the girls spent time apart from each other when they had a fight or a disagreement, what each girl did during that time differed.

Time Spent Apart

The girls described a variety of ways they spent time apart in their friendship during a fight or disagreement. When Jill and Elaine discussed the potential of disagreeing together, Elaine stated the importance of "doing" rather than "talking, cause talking is so boring ... it wastes so much time." Jill added, "Cause [then] you don't have enough time to go out and do what you're going to do."

When Jessica and Emily talked about spending time apart, they described how time at home helped resolve their fights. Emily explained she was able to, "... think about what [had] happened on her long walk home." She said at home, "... there's not many people around and you don't have everybody talking and it's so quiet and you're thinking." Jessica stated she felt the same way as Emily and found the quiet of being home, "...helped her think." After spending time at home Jessica said, "We just phone each other and get back together."

Elizabeth and Julia also spend time apart after a fight or disagreement, without talking to each other. Both girls felt the time apart helped them get back together again. Right after a fight, both girls said they did not want to talk to each other, look at each other or have anything to do with each other. However, Julia stated, "By not talking to each other we kind of forget about what we were mad at each other for and we just come back together." Elizabeth said, "Quiet times [are] sort of just like, when we think about what happened." She said she uses the quiet times as a distraction from the argument, to feel angry and to think. During these times she described reading and listening to others. Elizabeth added, "In the very beginning, right after I'm sort of I don't know, I guess a bit angry at Julia and then slowly I sort of forget about my anger."

Julia used the time apart after a fight differently than Elizabeth. She said, "I barely think during that time about it, I just forget about it during that time, until we meet again ... I don't think about nothing except for what I'm going to do the next." She explained, "... we at least have to spend fifteen minutes without talking ... and then sometimes just after fifteen minutes, then we finally start talking to each other." She added, "I guess over night we somehow go along with one thing ... I don't know exactly what it does I just, I don't think about her and it helps ... when we come back

in the morning like, I want to do this and I'm like OK, I'll do that or we can do your idea."

Claudia and Vanessa also spend time apart after a disagreement or fight. Both girls said when they first separate, they are mad at each other and think they'll never be friends again. Vanessa said, by spending time apart, "We sort of like, just forget about it, the fight." She said it is, "... a weird feeling cause we're in a fight one day and best friends the next." Both girls think about the fight while they spent time apart. Vanessa described her thoughts by saying, "Like should I be her friend still, what's she done for me and like, we have been friends for a while, so like, might as well keep that friendship." Claudia said she would think, "Vanessa always does things for me, I would still want to be her friend." Vanessa added, "Like why lose a friendship over some little thing ... why fight over something stupid, just be a friend, she may do stuff like that, but she's still nicer than she is mean." Claudia said thinking about the fight, "... makes you give in because you think that person is so important."

Claudia described what she did when she spent time apart from Vanessa, "Like if you feel bad about them you have fun with your friends ... the next day we come back and we're totally friends because we just forget about it." When they get back together Vanessa said, "... we have no idea what happened the day before." The girls felt their angry feelings changed during the time they spent apart. Claudia said, "I feel like well I did say I never want to be her friend again but she's been really good to me so who really cares, I can be her friend if I want to." Vanessa added, "... like if I started thinking bad thoughts about her I usually don't get that far because like there is nothing really bad about her. Claudia said, "It's weird, it's like oh well, I'll just take these feelings out and put these ones in and you're a friend." Vanessa agreed and said, "I can turn bad thoughts into good thoughts if I think about it."

Coming Together

Spending time apart after a fight or disagreement enabled the girls to come together again in their friendship. Reconnecting as friends was the girls way of talking together again, making plans and being active in their friendship. When Jill and Elaine talked about resolving potential problems and coming together, Jill said if there was a

time Elaine wanted to do something she did not, "I'd just tell her I don't want to do it." Elaine agreed she would do the same and tell Jill she disagreed with her. Then Elaine said, "We'd probably agree on something." She stated that talking was not important, but "thinking of something" and then doing it was. She explained, "You would just like ... think of something in the middle cause you wouldn't really tell the person ... you don't say it, you do a suggestion." Jill said, "... doing a suggestion" would be "... finding something in the middle that we both want to do." Both Jill and Elaine felt confident their plan of finding middle ground would help them resolve a disagreement. Elaine stated, "It would go good because we'd both want to do it ... cause we usually like to do the same thing." She explained that, "... doing something in the middle" was a way of "compromising."

After a fight at school, Jessica and Emily described talking to each other on the telephone from home. Emily said one person would apologize, "... then the other one would say sorry." Jessica said, "... then we would forgive each other ... you talk to them." At this point the girls said they would talk about what had caused the fight. Jessica explained she would find out if Emily had said or done what another friend had told her. Jessica said she usually finds the other person is "just like saying that" about Emily. Emily explained, "... we ask them if that was true, [if] they really did that ... after you've got back together." While talking on the telephone Jessica said they would talk about, "... what we can do tomorrow ... we'd agree on something and then we'd say how about we do that tomorrow."

When Elizabeth and Julia get "back together" Julia explained, "We may still remember the argument but we're just, boom, we're together again." Elizabeth described feeling, "... just as happy as can be ... really happy inside" when she started talking with Julia again. Elizabeth said sometimes she would apologize to Julia and say, "I'm really sorry I did this and that and I don't know, I just wasn't thinking right." Julia stated she rarely apologizes. Instead, she said, "I think of getting back together as my way of apologizing." She explained, "It makes me happy and I feel like she's understanding without having me say it in words." Elizabeth and Julia said they are able to compromise when they come together again, to talk, feel happy together and take turns doing something the other wants to do.

When Claudia and Vanessa discussed coming together after a fight, Claudia said they might "apologize or something," while Vanessa added "or [have a] memory loss." Vanessa explained, "If the other person didn't do something they wouldn't do that [apologize]." Instead Claudia said, "Maybe if the other person didn't do anything that person would say like I really want to be your friend again, so can we be friends or something." The she said, "We would probably spend the rest of the day with each other." Vanessa stated to, "Try and like, just want to make sure we are friends still."

All of the girls felt that doing something together and being active was important in resolving a disagreement or fight. This showed the girls they could be friends again and their friendship was "OK." Doing something together provided a foundation and allowed their friendship to continue to unfold.

Summary

The process of problem resolution described by the eight girls involved in this study began with a fight or disagreement. Fights or disagreements usually happened at school when the girls had a difference of opinion in what they were thinking, or what they wanted to do. When they disagreed, each pair of friends separated. During the time spent apart some girls thought about what had happened and others did not. Either way, after a period of time that usually lasted over night, the girls would reconnect with each other. Often, one of the friends would remember a good time in their relationship, or a time their friend had cared for them, and decide the friendship was worth re-establishing. When the friends reconnected, it was important to the girls that they "do something together" as a way of "trying out" the friendship again.

The girls described a process of problem resolution that was fluid and dynamic in nature. Each part of their problem solving process, friendship, separating, spending time apart and coming back together, flowed one from the other. It was a process based on a shared history and knowledge of each friend. This formed a basis of caring, which each girl both received and gave to her friend. A deep sense of willingness enabled the girls to continue their active involvement in their friendship.

Each pair of girls had known each other over a period of four or five years. The girls were aware of their similarities and differences. They knew what their friend

liked to do, when and with whom. The girls stated their desire to "stand by their friend" and felt their friendship "would last." When the friends spent time apart it was past knowledge and remembered caring of the other that initiated their reconnection. Willingness to reach out to the other brought the remembered caring and positive characteristics of their friendship from the past, into the present. It is a process of problem solving that began with friendship, and it was friendship the girls returned to after resolving a problem. The process which evolved between the girls' initial friendship and their continuing friendship worked to support and solidify the relationship each girl had with the other.

The importance of friendship as a basis for knowledge of the other, history of caring and willingness to re-establish relationship adds another component to the problem solving method developed by Spivack and Shure (see p. 11). Spivack and Shure described the need to acknowledge problems, to appreciate different ways of problem solving and to increase one's sensitivity to possible outcomes in order to achieve "means end thinking." The steps involved in means end thinking are taught through interpersonal cognitive problem solving training, behavioural social skills training, or a combination of the two (see page 1). Programs such as Second Step, which is part of the Sooke School District curriculum, are a principal means of assisting children to develop means end thinking (see page 25). While means end thinking may increase children's sensitivity and understanding of others it does not address the importance of friendship and values expressed by the participants of this study when resolving problems in friendships.

The girls' process of resolving problems in their friendships was based on recognizing that relationship is more important than fights or disagreements. When the girls were involved in thinking and action aimed to resolve a fight or disagreement they often relied on creating or finding "middle ground." Developing middle ground involved suggesting and doing an activity both enjoyed, or was between what each girl wanted to do. The development of middle ground was dependent on the girls' knowledge of the other, caring and willingness to participate in their friendship, rather than problem identification, generating solutions, implementing one and evaluating it.

The development of middle ground was the closest the girls came to using the concept of means end thinking when resolving problems in their friendships. While establishing middle ground does not follow the precise steps of means end thinking, it is a process of generating ideas to resolve a problem and putting one idea into action. However, in these girls' friendships, middle ground is developed within the context of knowing, caring and willingness. The girls' stories show us that while they may engage in some similar steps to means end thinking, it is the context in which their friendship lives that provides the framework from which they resolved problems.

The girls described a process of problem resolution in their friendships that acknowledged problems, accepted differences and increased sensitivity. Developing middle ground within this process allowed for different ways of handling problems, encouraged caring, willingness to connect with others and the need to take personal responsibility for problem resolution. While this in part, may be similar to what is taught by the methods developed by Spivack & Shure and included in the Second Step program, it is the context within which the relationship evolves that must be considered. The girls' process of resolving problems began with friendship, and it was friendship the girls returned to after a problem was resolved. The thinking and actions which took place between the girls' initial friendship and their continuing friendship worked to support and solidify the relationship each girl had with the other.

The experiences described by the girls provide a way of making the components outlined by Spivack and Shure tangible in everyday life. The process of problem resolution described by the girls is not a static entity, separate from relationship. Instead, it is part of ongoing friendships. The girls' stories illustrate that means end thinking must be incorporated within an existing relationship. The stories provide examples of problem resolution in action. They show fluid examples of how values and beliefs about relationships impact the resolution of problems. This outlook, based on the girls' stories of their experiences, encourages a process of problem resolution that is active and encompasses the shared history, knowledge and caring within a friendship.

Implications for Practice

What stands out as I read through the girls' stories, are the details of knowing each friend over a period of time. During the friendship each of the girls have come to trust and value the other. Their friendship was a source of comfort and could be relied on. A sense of caring developed within the friendships from which a willingness to connect with others was formed. During the girls' years as friends they have had problems, disagreements or fights. Some pairs of friends have experienced problems more often than others. However, all of the problems have been resolved by the girls and their friendships have been sustained.

By listening to these girls' stories the value of relationship is brought to the forefront. It is the work of caring that matters to each of the girls. The girls' stories state it is not a plan, developed and executed through the application of skills, which sustains their friendships. Rather it is the thinking, talking, remembering and acting out of caring that shows their friend they are important and valued. It is their knowledge of the other and willingness to care that frames the girls' stories of their experiences resolving problems in friendships and sustaining their relationships.

The importance and value of relationship allows for problems to be resolved within the girls' friendships. The girls' stories state that within friendships, problem solving is not limited to a rational, logical step-by-step process. Rather, it is a process based on knowledge, caring and willingness. These components of relationship must be incorporated into the literature of problem resolution as it relates to friendships if problem solving interventions are to accurately reflect girls' lived experiences.

When seeking to assist girls in resolving problems in their friendships it is the values expressed in the stories of their experiences that we must incorporate. Rather than developing a hierarchical or systematic model of problem resolution, the girls' stories encourage us to focus on relationship. Their experiences state we must include the values we have developed over time; the history of a friendship, knowledge of another, caring and willingness. This means beginning from a basis of caring and valuing relationship; understanding with children how we care for each other in friendships, how we talk, what we do, what we value and how we express our values. By focusing on relationship we will create a wider view of problem resolution and

develop holistic interventions that honour individuality, rather than limit ourselves to a step-by-step process of intervention.

This in turn encourages us to begin from a child's perspective and to learn from each other. The girls' descriptions, explanations, words and stories, tell of their experiences as children growing towards teenage and adult years. I believe we must go back to this cusp of childhood, in order to develop ideas and programs which children can use in their everyday life. Focusing practice towards the caring work of relationship will change the structure of how we have typically gone about helping children in their friendships and enable us to meet and work with them within the context of their individual lives.

My work in this study, of listening to and discussing with the girls their experiences, has enabled me to develop a broader understanding of children's lives. I have been encouraged to approach how girls resolve problems in friendships from a wider outlook. I am now able to build on the work of previous researchers and clinicians and incorporate what has been developed over time into the present moment. The broadening of my perspective allows me to use the skills taught in Second Step and the pioneering work of Spivack and Shure in a more concrete manner. It brings these skills and concepts into a girls' everyday life and puts them into practice within an existing context of relationship. I feel the development of my own perspective will benefit my practice by ensuring real life experience is combined with skills and theory.

The findings of this study encourage the development of a broader perspective towards problem resolution within the helping profession, especially those adults working in school settings with children. Programs taught and support offered can benefit from listening to these stories and the stories of other children's experiences. By taking into consideration relationship, the value of knowing another and the history of caring, work with children can move beyond the application of skills to encompass the current relationships in their lives.

This direction requires that programs aimed to assist children in problem resolution include and explore caring. By exploring caring programs would identify children's values and strengths in their relationships. Assisting children within the experiences of their relationships will foster genuine support, for themselves and

others, that they can use when resolving problems. Developing and implementing programs with this focus will shift the objectives away from problems and problem resolution towards the enhancement of self. I believe that promoting a sense of caring within educational programs by focusing on the values and history inherent in children's relationships with others will create healthier schools and stronger communities.

Final Reflections

This study sought to describe and explore girls' stories of problem solving within friendships from a bottom up, rather than a top down perspective, by initiating conversation with pairs of girls who were friends together. The study represents a group of eight girls sharing their experiences resolving problems in their friendships with an adult audience. The study accentuated the voices and stories of girls' so that as adults, we can become more thoughtful and knowledgeable about their experiences. I believe there is a genuine need to hear from girls about their experiences, if as adults, we are to assist them in resolving problems in ways that promote caring and relationship. If we do not begin conversations in a sensitive manner that honours girls' knowledge, we are left with only our childhood memories to guide us in understanding their friendships.

The experiences described in this study are not representative of all girls. However, these girls tell of their experiences in voices worth listening to and taking seriously. The girls asked each other to listen to their experiences and they asked me to listen. By listening to their stories our understanding and knowledge of girl's development and the contexts of their lives, especially as it relates to resolving problems in their friendships, can become broader and deeper. Perhaps what is most important in learning from these stories, is that they can help us as adults, build genuine and meaningful relationships with young girls.

Directions for Future Research

The stories of these eight girls' experiences are a beginning. They represent a step towards placing children's stories at the forefront of exploration and development of problem resolution programs. From this beginning, learning can move forward and outward to gather other stories of children's experiences, both girls and boys. When a wider base of children's experiences are brought together, further comparisons between what has been taught to children regarding problem resolution and children's thoughts, feelings and actions in their lives can be carried out. Such a comparison must aim to show the differences and similarities between what is taught to children and what they experience. Once this has been established, practice can be developed which is based more clearly on children's experiences and children's needs. Work in this direction will continue to move away from a historically adult driven, top town, quantitative approach, to reflect a holistic, child focused perspective.

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Appendix A

Request for Consent

Sooke School District

4197 Thornhill Crescent
Victoria, B. C. V8N 5B1
February 19, 1996

Mr. Leo Chaland
Superintendent of Schools
Sooke Board Office
3143 Jacklin Road
Victoria, B.C. V9B 5B1

Dear Mr. Chaland:

I am writing to request your consent to undertake a research project with two grade five girls at Saseenos Elementary School between April and June, 1996.

I am a graduate student in the Masters of Social Work Program at the University of Victoria. As part of the requirements of the program, I am developing a thesis project under the direction of Dr. Brian Wharf, which seeks to explore girls' stories of resolving problems in their friendships. Assisting children's development of meaningful and useful problem solving skills is an important part of classroom, social and family life. Frequently, I have found that children's stories about their experiences, particularly girls' stories, are absent in the research and literature in this area. I believe that exploring girls' stories of problem resolution in friendships is crucial to understanding their experiences. As well, it may assist in the development of resources and educational programs which accurately reflect their perspectives.

The project will involve two girls in grade five that have been identified by teachers as having been friends for at least the school year. Participating in the project will involve three or four interviews with each child, at the school between April and June, 1996. Involvement in the project is completely voluntary and children can withdraw from participating at any time. Participation will in no way affect children's grades or standing in their class. Information shared in the interviews will be audio taped, transcribed and the tapes erased. The written transcripts will be stored in a locked filing cabinet and destroyed when the final paper is completed. Children participating will remain anonymous in all documentation of the project through the use of pseudo-names. The information children share will be used only by myself, for the purposes of this study.

I have discussed the project with Lorie Robinson and Bob Whittet, both of whom have indicated their support. The project is now pending approval from the Committee on Research at the University of Victoria. **Written consent from the School Board is required in order to finalize the University's approval of the project.** I plan to begin the project as soon as approval is granted.

.../2

I have attached a copy of the consent form that will be given to the parents of participants. Please feel free to contact me or Dr. Brian Wharf, should you have any further questions. Brian can be contacted at 721-6279 and I am available at Saseenos Elementary School on Tuesdays and Fridays, 642-5261. I can also be reached at home, 477-3516.

Thank you for your anticipated support of this project.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Gook, Youth and Family Counsellor

cc: Mr. Bob Whittet, Principal, Saseenos Elementary School

Attachment

Attachment

Draft Consent Form

Girls' Stories of Resolving Problems in their Friendships

Dear Parents: April 2, 1996

Your child has stated an interest in being involved a research project with grade five girls at Saseenos Elementary School.

I am a graduate student in the Masters of Social Work Program at the University of Victoria. As part of the requirements of the program I am carrying out a thesis project under the direction of Dr. Brian Wharf, which seeks to explore girls' stories resolving problems in their friendships. Consent for the project has been granted by both the Sooke School District and the University. Participating in the project will involve three or four interviews with your child, at the school between April and June, 1996.

Involvement in the project is completely voluntary and children can withdraw from participating at any time. Participation will in no way affect children's grades or standing in their class. Information shared in the interviews will be audio taped, transcribed and the tapes erased. The written transcripts will be stored in a locked filing cabinet and destroyed when the final paper is completed. Children participating will remain anonymous in all documentation of the project through the use of pseudo-names. The information children share will be used only by myself, for the purposes of this study.

Please return the following consent form to my box in the school office by Tuesday, April 9th. If you would like more information about the project feel free to contact me at the school on Tuesday's or Friday's, 642-5261. I look forward to discussing the project further and sharing my findings with both parents and children.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Gook, Youth and Family Counsellor

I have read the consent form regarding the research project, Girls' Stories of Resolving Problems in their Friendships, being carried out by Carolyn Gook at Saseenos Elementary School from April to June 1996, and agree that my child _____ has my permission to participate in the project.

_____ Parent or Guardian's Signature

_____ Child's Signature

_____ Date

Appendix B

Request for Ethical Review

KEYWORDS

1) Girls
2) Stories
3) Friendship
4) Problem
4) Resolution

SUMMARY OF PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF PROJECT

The purpose of this study is to explore the voices, stories and experiences of grade five girls. Exploration of the girls' stories will develop awareness and understanding of their actual experiences. As well, it will illustrate the match between girls' experiences and what is studied and taught to children in this area.

The objectives of this study are to explore two grade five girls stories of their experiences resolving problems within their friendship. The exploration will focus on two main areas; the girls' friendship and the girls' thoughts and actions resolving problems within the friendship.

SUMMARY OF METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

This study will involve three or four interviews with two grade five girls. The interviews will follow an open structure based on the development of relationship between interviewer and participant. There is no structured question format. Dialogue in the interviews will focus on the two main areas identified in the previous section; friendship and problem resolution.

There is no deception involved in this study.

DESCRIPTION OF POPULATION

Two participants will be involved in this study.

There is no control group.

RECRUITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS

Selection of the two participants will be dependent upon input from the grade five teachers at Saseenos Elementary School. After receiving consent to undertake the project, I will meet with the grade five teachers to introduce my purposes, objectives in the study and the process of participant selection. At that time I will ask the teachers to identify two girls who have been friends since at least September of this school year. Teachers will be asked to base their identification of the friends through their observation of each girls' friendship with the other in conversations, activities and writings. After a pair of friends has been identified, I will ask the girls' teacher to briefly introduce the project to them and the process of participant selection. If the girls state an interest in participating, I will then contact their parents by telephone.

The initial telephone conversation with parents will include identification of myself, the purpose and intent of the project, the two areas to be explored in the interviews, the process of voluntary participation and informed consent, issues of confidentiality and anonymity, children's right to refuse to answer any question, an opportunity to ask me questions and an inquiry about their willingness to have their child participate. Based on parents stated interest in supporting their child's involvement in the project I will request their verbal consent to introduce the project to their child. I will then meet with the girls to describe the project . After verbal introduction of the project to both the parents and girls, I will send home the attached letter of consent, to be signed by both and returned to me at the school.

PROJECT DETAILS

The project will be conducted at Saseenos Elementary School, 6061, Sooke Road, Sooke, BC.

Written consent required for participation will be requested by both the child and the child's parent or legal guardian.

The project does not attempt to make changes in the participants behaviour or attitudes. The participants are not likely to experience any discomfort, inconvenience or incapacity.

The project seeks to explore girls' stories of their experiences through dialogue with the researcher. Interviews carried out in this manner have been found to validate and support the participant's lived experience.

There is no monetary or other compensation offered to participants.

Each participant will have to dedicate approximately 4 to 6 hours to the project over a period of three months.

DATA

Only the principal investigator will have access to the data.

Confidentiality will be maintained by erasing the audio tapes after they have been transcribed, the use of pseudo names in the transcribed data and the storage of all tapes, documents and computer disks related to the study in a locked and secure filing cabinet to which only the principal investigator has access. The principal investigator will dispose of all data upon completion of the final document.

The data will not be available to any persons, inside or outside of the University, other than the principal investigator.

There will be a final meeting with both participants and the principal investigator to review and discuss the findings.

Appendix C

Consent Form

Girls' Stories of Resolving Problems in their Friendships

Dear Parents: May 15, 1996

Your child has stated an interest in being involved a research project with grade five girls at Saseenos Elementary School.

I am a graduate student in the Masters of Social Work Program at the University of Victoria. As part of the requirements of the program I am carrying out a thesis project under the direction of Dr. Brian Wharf, which seeks to explore girls' stories resolving problems in their friendships. Consent for the project has been granted by both the Sooke School District and the University. Participating in the project will involve two or three interviews with your child, at the school during May and June, 1996.

Involvement in the project is completely voluntary and children can withdraw from participating at any time. Participation or non-participation in the project will in no way affect children's grades or standing in their class. Information shared in the interviews will be audio taped, transcribed and the tapes erased. The written transcripts will be stored in a locked filing cabinet and destroyed when the final paper is completed. Participants will be requested at the beginning of the interviews to refer to other people only by the use of pseudo names, in order to ensure the privacy. As well, children participating in the interviews will remain anonymous in all documentation of the project through the use of pseudo names. The information children share will be used only by myself, for the purposes of this study.

Please return the following consent form to my box in the school office by Thursday, May 16. If you would like more information about the project feel free to contact me at the school on Tuesday's or Friday's, 642-5261. I look forward to discussing the project further and sharing my findings with both parents and children.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Gook, Youth and Family Counsellor

I have read the consent form regarding the research project, Girls' Stories of Resolving Problems in their Friendships, being carried out by Carolyn Gook at Saseenos Elementary School during May and June 1996, and agree that my child

_____ has my permission to participate in the project.

_____ Parent or Guardian's Signature

_____ Child's Signature

_____ Date

VITA

Surname: Gook Given Names: Carolyn Joy Victoria

Place of Birth: Victoria, British Columbia

Educational Institutions Attended:

University of Victoria	1984 - 1987
University Canadienne en France	1987 - 1988
University of Victoria	1988 - 1990
University of Victoria	1992 - 1996

Degrees Awarded:

B.S.W.	University of Victoria	1990

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Title of Thesis:

Girls' Stories of Resolving Problems in their Friendships

Author: [redacted]
Carolyn Joy Victoria Gook

February 28, 1997