MEANING AND PROCESS IN EARLY ADOLESCENT FRIENDSHIP

CONVERSATIONS

by

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study utilized the action-project theory and method to investigate the close, long-term friendships (two to ten years in duration) of female, early adolescent dyads. Ten early adolescent girls between the ages of 11 and 13 were studied. The purpose of this study was twofold; first, to determine the characteristics of best friendship projects and how they manifested within early adolescent friendship conversations and; second, to investigate the nature of self-representations (descriptions of the self) made by the participants. The processes (cognitive, affective, and behavioural) and meaning (goals) of friendship jointly expressed within the conversations were identified. As well, self-representations were analyzed from the perspective of whether they functioned to advance friendship projects. In addition to the friendship conversations, collages explicating the girls' meanings and processes around their close friendships were also explored through an individual interview with each participant.

The participants engaged in five friendship projects within their friendship conversations. First, an overriding project to preserve and maintain the friendship was demonstrated. Other sub-projects demonstrated within the conversations were the desire to have fun, to provide support to each other, and to connect with each other. Simultaneously, while jointly enacting other friendship projects, the participants also demonstrated through action, the project of exploring and discovering aspects of their identities. Multiple functional steps (the means) to achieve these projects were utilized. Gossip, fictional and factual storytelling, teasing, joking, problem solving, asking for advice, and displaying physical affection are examples of these means. Self-representations from the conversations were not always consistent with those revealed during self-confrontation interviews, at times in the service of achieving friendship goals. Self-representations between the collage interviews and the friendship conversations were

very consistent, suggesting the complementary nature of the data sources. Meanings and

processes gleaned from the friendship conversations were also very consistent with those found

within the friendship collages. Implications of these findings for parents, educators, and

counsellors are discussed.

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DEDICATION

For my daughter Leslie,

who has been my constant muse

throughout this project

1. INTRODUCTION

The impact of friendship on adolescent development has been researched extensively (Bukowski & Sippola, 2005; Hartup, 1996; Kindermann, 2003; Youniss & Smollar, 1985). Sullivan (1953), one of the earliest researchers of children's friendship relationships, maintained that peer friendships are distinct from other types of relationships due to their voluntary nature and, as such, afford adolescents unique growth opportunities. A close friendship relationship has been conceptualized in the literature as an affective bond between peers, affording the participants emotional support, reciprocity, loyalty, trust, intimacy and fun (Hartup & Stevens, 1997; Sullivan, 1953). Bukowski and Sipolla (2005) reporting on the research of Youniss and Smollar, stated that "a related theme in theory and research on friendship is the idea that it lies at the interface between self and other" (p. 92). Adolescent friendships have the potential to provide a vehicle for self-discovery as it is often with close friends that one may feel most comfortable to express new attitudes, explore new activities, and experiment with behaviours (Youniss & Smollar, 1985). Sullivan saw friendships, particularly those with a strong affective bond, as powerful agents for identity development and change.

Although there is an abundance of literature available outlining the theoretical stages and statuses of identity formation during adolescence (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1966), there is a paucity of literature that explores how close, early adolescent friendships contribute to and possibly facilitate early identity formation. Specifically, there appear to be limited studies exploring how self-descriptions, indicative of self-awareness and a burgeoning self-concept, are expressed and jointly negotiated within early adolescent friendship conversations. The proposed study seeks to qualitatively explore and describe the processes (cognitive, affective, and behavioural) and meaning (purpose) of best friendship projects manifested within early

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adolescent female friendship conversations. By doing so, it is hoped light will be shed on how these processes contribute to the larger project (developmental goal) of exploring a sense of self.

The process of identity formation through the development of a self-concept in adolescence can be viewed with a symbolic-interactionist lens (Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934). Symbolic interactionists include social processes in their understanding of a relational "self". From this perspective, the self is socially constructed and "crafted through linguistic exchanges (i.e. symbolic interactions) with others" (Harter, 2003, p. 627). Harter (1988) suggested that individuals come to know themselves by looking into the "social mirrors" of intimate others (p. 51). After viewing this reflective mirror, opinions of oneself held by others are incorporated into an individual's self-description (Tice & Wallace, 2003). Symbolic interactionists hold that, through their interactions with significant others, adolescents come to adopt and internalize reflected appraisals in their own sense of self (Harter, 2003).

Throughout this paper, self and identity will be used interchangeably using the definition of Baumeister and Muraven (1996). These authors suggested identity is "a set of meaningful definitions that are ascribed or attached to the self, including social roles, reputation, a structure of values and priorities, and a conception of one's potentiality" (p. 406). This definition represents a person-in-context approach to identity formation, acknowledging both the internal agency of the individual, as well as the influences and adaptations that are made by the individual within their particular environments and relationships (Adams & Marshall, 1996). The bidirectional nature of influence is well documented, both within adolescent peer (Collins, Gleason, Sesma, 1997; Dishion & Owen, 2002) and parent-adolescent relationships (Delsing, Oud, & De Bruyn, 2005; Kuczynski, Marshall, & Schell, 1997). Identity exploration and

formation, viewed within this framework, is conceptualized as a dynamic, fluid internalization process occurring between individuals, inescapably influenced by and with significant others.

Close friendships in adolescence can be seen as one of the most important forums for connection between the self and others. Youniss and Smollar (1985) suggested that the self in adolescence is affected, if not substantially jointly constructed, by the presence and experiences one has with a friend. Others, particularly peers, hold significant power as a source of evaluation and recognition of the self during early adolescence. Reporting on Harter's (1998) research, Brinthaupt and Lipka (2002) stated that how others appraise the self is reflected in their behaviour and it is through this behavioural feedback that adolescents "not only construct an image of their self and identity, they also create an image of what they should be like, of who and what (they think) others expect them to be" (p. 40). Youniss and Smollar asserted that this phenomenon is more acute during early adolescence as, developmentally, adolescents are thought to be more aware of and responsive to others' needs, increasingly capable of abstract thought than they were previously, and able to conceptualize future aspirations.

The developmental significance of quality friendships during childhood and adolescence as increasing social competence, scholastic achievement, job success, and the long-term individual sense of psychological well-being and adjustment into adulthood is well researched (see Hartup & Stevens, 1997 for review). Female adolescents, the focus of this study, have been found to be more relationally oriented and more self-disclosing than their male counterparts within friendships (Rose & Rudolph, 2006). Early adolescence is a time when youth begin to spend increasingly more time with peers than with family members and first begin to develop intimate, self-selected, egalitarian relationships with individuals outside of their immediate family (Larson & Richards, 1991). Despite past conceptualizations of adolescence being termed

a time of "storm and strife" resulting in unavoidable negative consequences, it is now accepted that most adolescents navigate this developmental period without any major problems or detriment to family relationships (Crain, 1996; Petersen, 1993). Brinthaupt and Lipka characterized early adolescence as a time of emotional, social, and physiological change. Within this changing internal landscape, the early adolescent becomes ripe for the developmental task of identity exploration.

Within friendships, adolescents pursue individual and joint goal-directed activities that allow them to explore and ultimately commit to an integrative sense of self. Mitchell (1992) refers to identity development during adolescence as a project, one that requires focus, work, and action. Symbolic interactionism, while providing an important perspective on how one comes to know oneself through relational others, does little to explain action mechanisms between dyadic partners, nor does it account for goal-directed, intentional action. Action theory, however, provides an integrated framework for viewing the dynamic processes and expression of identity within adolescent friendship conversations (Valach, Young, & Lynam, 2002; Young, Antal, Bassett, Post, DeVries, & Valach, 1999). From an action-theoretical point of view, the adolescent dyad engages in intentional behaviour in order to achieve joint and individual goals related to their overall project of friendship maintenance. Action can be viewed on three levels: the joint goals, the functional steps taken to achieve the goals, and elements (specific verbal and nonverbal behaviour comprising the steps). The hierarchical organization of goals across time can be called mid-length projects, or if they are more long-term they can be called "careers", in the non-occupational sense. Through an action-theory lens, not only is action conceptualized through observable manifest behaviour (what can be seen), but also through internal processes (what is going on cognitively and emotionally for the adolescent) and the ascribed social

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meanings contained within it (what it means to the adolescent to engage in the action to pursue joint and individual goals) (Young, Lynam, Valach, et al 1999; Young, Valach, & Domene, 2005). In this study the action-theory lens was used to understand the goal-directed, intentional action between female, early adolescent friendship dyads. By studying early adolescent friendship conversations using this lens, a holistic view of the processes of identity exploration and friendship qualities can be illuminated by identifying joint action and projects.

This study was undertaken with the goal of answering the following research questions: What are the processes (cognitive, affective, and behavioural) and meaning (goals) of friendship expressed within early adolescent friendship conversations? How do the adolescents utilize self-representations to advance their friendship projects?   Are data derived from participant-created friendship collages consistent or inconsistent with the projects, functional steps, and elements evidenced within their friendship conversations?

Self-representations, for the purposes of this study, are conceptualized as being synonymous with self-description. Accordingly, the definition of self-representation is combined from the definitions offered by Bangerter (2000), and Derlega and Grzelak (1979) as any provision of information about oneself (e.g. one's personal traits, states, attributes, character, membership in a social category, context or role, or talk about typical actions and activities of the self in the past, present or future) that is verbally communicated to another, either directly or indirectly. This is in keeping with the self-representations according to Harter (1999), as "attributes or characteristics of the self that are consciously acknowledged by the individual through language – that is, how one describes oneself" (p. 3).

The findings of the proposed research provide useful information to both the adolescent development and counselling psychology literature because of the impact of quality close

friendships on mental health outcomes in adolescence and adaptation in early adulthood. Given the influential nature of early adolescent friendship on behaviour, and the forum for self-discovery and exploration that close friendships afford, information elicited from this study may be useful to counsellors, clinical developmental psychologists, health care professionals, educators, and parents. With most mental health issues prevalent in adolescence and early adulthood revolving around an incomplete development of a sense of self, the proposed study, although not focused on the outcome of an incomplete or incoherent identity formation, may shed some light on how adolescents advance or do not advance friendship projects through the use of self-representations during their close friendship conversations. This study may increase understanding of the relational dynamics of close, female adolescent friendships and their role in facilitating development of the self.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section I discuss the literature that informs the present research. Four areas of interest within the literature are outlined. First, the research on the importance and purpose of peer friendship during adolescence is reported. Second, providing a foundational and conceptual view of the adolescent's developmental trajectory of identity formation, the literature on identity formation is briefly explored. Third, the sociological interactive nature of conversation as a representation of the self also informs the current research, as conversation between best friends is used as the most significant data point. Finally, the literature review will focus on exactly how self-representations can be manifest during adolescence.

2.1   Friendship in Adolescence

The literature is replete with research demonstrating the characteristics and importance of adolescent friendships. Throughout adolescence, teens spend increasingly greater periods of time with their friends and less time with parents (Larson, Moneta, Richards, Holmbeck, & Duckett, 1996). In addition, Enomoto (1997) found that most adolescents disclose more readily to their close friends than they do to either parents or teachers. Youniss and Smollar (1985) reported that friends are more accepting of the adolescent than are parents; a factor that likely precipitates comfort with self-disclosure and mutual trust. As an explanation for this finding, these authors suggested parents are more evaluative and future-oriented than are friends, and are necessarily more focused on the possible negative consequences of adolescent behaviour. Friendships during adolescence provide a safe context or comfort zone of self-exploration, whereby the adolescent is able to pursue and assume new roles and goals (Call & Mortimer, 2001; Giordano, 2003).

Additional evidence for the importance of early adolescent friendships comes from the work of Furman and Buhrmester (1992). These authors found that in grade seven students, same-sex peer friendships were perceived to be as supportive as relationships with parents, whereas parents were perceived to be more supportive for those in the fourth grade. This tendency towards the increased salience of friends as a support system, they found, increases with age, with grade ten students perceiving friends as being more supportive than parents. In addition, other authors found that early adolescent friendships provided a "safe haven", (a source of comfort, support and reassurance) to a greater extent than did either mothers or fathers (Markiewicz, Lawford, Doyle & Haggart, 2006).

Adolescents' apparent comfort in the company of friends likely stems from the voluntary nature of friend choice (Call & Mortimer, 2001). During adolescence, more so than during earlier childhood periods, teens are able to exercise control over the selection of their companions. When faced with this choice, adolescents tend to gravitate toward friends who are likely to support their concept of self (Rosenberg, 1979; Simmons, 2001). It has been shown that not only do adolescents choose friends who are similar to them in terms of attitude, interest and behaviour (Berndt, 1982; Giordano, 2003), but friends also have a tendency to become more similar to each other over time (Kandel, 1978). However, Cassidy, Aikins, and Chernoff (2003) found that early adolescents (grade seven) were more likely to choose a friend who perceived them the way they wanted to be seen (in a positive light), than in congruence to how they perceived themselves to be. This finding suggests that during early adolescence friend choice may also be influenced by self-enhancing tendencies. Rosenberg (1979) suggested that, through friendships, adolescents receive and evaluate feedback about who they are, as well as develop a better empathic understanding of others. This view is in keeping with Cooley's (1902) looking-

glass-self perspective, in which individuals imagine how they are perceived, experience evaluation by others, and in turn reflexively incorporate this view into how they view themselves. Friends, therefore, provide a mirror, in which an adolescent's sense of self is reflected, evaluated, and incorporated. Friend choice, then, is an essential and influential factor in the determination of how an adolescent's self-understanding develops.

Sullivan (1953) maintained that peer friendships are essential to the developmental welfare of early adolescents. Although this has not been disputed in the literature, some authors have found that views of the self can moderate the benefits of friendship on development. Azmitia, Ittel, and Radmacher (2005), in one of the few qualitative studies on adolescent narratives of friendship and self, found that self-esteem moderated the likelihood that friendship expectations of loyalty, trust and emotional support would be met, particularly in females. Utilizing open-ended, semi-structured interview questions, these authors found that low self-esteem youth used their friendships to talk about problems in general but tended to avoid talking about problems in the relationship. In turn, the friendships of low self-esteem youth were felt to be unsatisfying yet difficult to end, demonstrating the possible negative effects and vicious cycle of unhealthy relationships. High self-esteem youth, on the other hand, reported little difficulty approaching friends in an attempt to resolve conflict.

The features of intimacy, trust, self-disclosure, and mutual support have been found to be the most salient properties of adolescent friendships (Bukowski, Newcomb, & Hoza, 1987; Savin-William & Berndt, 1990). In a later study using a quantitative measure, Bukowski, Hoza and Boivin (1994), conceptualized five dimensions of friendship deemed to be the most meaningful for adolescents (companionship, conflict, help/aid, security, and closeness). These authors found that friendships served many functions, such as informing adolescents of their

value through reflected appraisals, the provision of material or instrumental assistance, the promotion of exploration and development of new skills, as well as help and protection from negative influences. More recently, from a developmental point of view, Kinderman (2003), in his review of three relationship person-contexts of children and adolescents (with parents, teachers, and peers), identified five common features (shared affection, shared time, similarity, developmental adjustment, and reciprocity).

Specific gender differences have also been identified with regard to adolescent friendship characteristics (Rose & Rudolph, 2006; Savin-Williams & Berndt, 1990). Savin-Williams and Berndt found that girls tend to place greater emphasis on intimacy and self-disclosure in their friendships whereas boys' friendships are more likely to be characterized by activity-centered behaviours. Buhrmester and Furman (1987) found that girls sought intimate disclosure in friendships at earlier ages than did boys. As well, self-report studies (Camarena, Sarigiani, & Peterson, 1990; Lempers, & Clark-Lempers 1993), as well as an observational study (McNelles & Connolly, 1999) have consistently shown that girls self-disclose to each other more frequently than do males within the context of adolescent friendships. Rose and Rudolph (2006), in their meta-analysis of the peer relationship literature, summarized that, within their friendships, adolescent females to a greater extent than males, self-disclose, spend time engaged in social conversation, and endorse intimacy and nurturance goals. With this relational focus, girls have a tendency to rate their friendships as closer and more supportive than boys (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984; Savin-Williams & Berndt, 1990). Bukowski, Newcomb, and Hoza (1987) also found that girls place a greater emphasis on the dimensions of intimacy and helpful support than do boys. In addition, McNelles and Connolly found that within their friendships, girls were more likely than boys to establish intimacy through the use of conversation and self-disclosure.

These studies, having largely utilized quantitative methodologies, demonstrated the importance of friendships in the overall well being of adolescents, as well as the fundamental gender differences between female and male same-sex friendships. As the current study focuses on female, same-sex, close, early adolescent friendship dyads, it is hoped that this sample elicits self-representations and expresses joint friendship goals during their conversations.

2.2   Identity Exploration as a Developmental Task

Developmentally, adolescence has long been seen as a time of identity exploration and internal examination of the self. According to Erikson (1968), adolescence is characterized by the crisis of identity formation versus identity confusion. As a method of navigating this crisis, Erikson was an advocate of a psychosocial moratorium, a period during which the adolescent would be free to try on different roles, sort through their beliefs, value systems, and goals for the future, and experiment with novel activities, all with the goal of self-exploration. Without this moratorium, according to Erikson, adolescents would not have enough information to commit to a solid and holistic integration of the various aspects of personal identity that would then be stable over context and time (Siegler, Deloache, & Eisenberg, 2003).

Marcia (1980), in an effort to measure the identity status of adolescents following Erikson's (1968) framework, outlined four levels of achievement or commitment to a sense of identity. Marcia (1994) defined identity as a "coherent sense of one's meaning to oneself and to others within that social context" (p. 70). He also suggested that a sense of identity includes an adolescent's continuity with their past, a personally meaningful present, and a sense of direction for the future. Early adolescents, the subjects of the current study, according to Marcia (1980), would normatively be in a state of moratorium, characterized by exploration without any firm commitment. The literature is replete with quantitative studies measuring and comparing the

identity status of adolescents at varying stages of development (Meeus, Iedema, Helsen, & Vollebergh, 1999). There is little research, however, focusing on the actual process of how identity exploration occurs during early adolescence.

From the early cognitive developmental perspective of Piaget (1960), early adolescents (those over the age of twelve) enter the formal operations stage, becoming capable of abstract thinking and developing the ability to reason hypothetically. According to Piaget, with the onset of the formal operations stage, an early adolescent's conceptual world enlarges and they are then able to envision possible identities. With these cognitive abilities they are more likely to understand complex beliefs and value systems, as well as be increasingly capable of scientific reasoning. This cognitive ability increases the sophistication of an adolescent's introspection and self-reflection, and expands an adolescent's ability to form self-conceptions or self-descriptions. Although this developmental view of the early adolescent is likely true, Piaget's work is no longer, however, seen as an adequate perspective from which to completely view self development during adolescence. More recent cognitive developmental perspectives that integrate context, cognitive abilities, and information processing such as those put forth by Harter (1999) and Grotevant (1987) are now more accepted.

Grotevant (1987) offered a more process-oriented model of identity formation, one that considers both context and cognition. His proposed model combined internal or individual characteristics (personality, cognitive ability and current identity level) with external contexts of development (culture, family, peers, and school/work) for a more complex view of identity formation. Both the individual and external context domains of identity formation are considered to be influential. Individual characteristics, such as orientation to engage in

exploration, outcomes of exploration, and the individual's evaluation of their experiences play key roles in the process of identity.

Although early and middle adolescents are likely to describe themselves discrepantly within different contexts or with different people (e.g. quiet with friends but talkative with family), these discrepancies typically decline over time, with older adolescents describing themselves more consistently across environments (Harter & Monsour, 1992). Harter (2006) also reported that, over time, adolescents get better at both recognizing the contradictions within themselves and accepting them into an integrated conceptualization of self. Over the course of adolescence, as they develop a more integrative cognitive capacity, they also become less likely to be concerned about any apparent contradictions in the self across context or time, viewing them as both normative and adaptive (Higgins, 1991). Harter also found that late adolescents or those making the transition to early adulthood were much less likely than early adolescents to have their conception of their selves be determined by what others think. The cognitive development of the individual adolescent plays a key role in how they interpret and describe themselves.

Chen, Boucher, and Parker Tapias (2006) provided an integrative conceptualization of how the self develops in relation to significant others. They described the relational self as serving meaning functions, providing a foundation for the expression of personality, as well as providing opportunities for the development of psychological well being. Significant others provide an environment whereby individuals can evaluate and maintain their selves. Markus and Cross (1990) also supported this view, suggesting that others take a key role in shaping the individual. The evaluation of significant others and the interpretations that ensue, these authors

maintained, are constantly informing and organizing the working self-concept. It is the process of how this might occur in close, early adolescent friendships that is of interest in this study.

The current study is informed by external and internal influences of the process of identity exploration and the testing of theories put forth by and between close friends. Of more interest within this study than stage achievement or identity status, is the way self-representations are used and their purpose within female, early adolescent conversations. Although the term "self-representation" does not imply identity formation per se, it does, nevertheless point to the ways that adolescents come to conceptualize who they are as evidenced in how they refer to themselves (their beliefs, thoughts and feelings pertaining to them personally). The developmental literature provides a rationale for the participant age range (twelve to thirteen years of age) in the present research and situates this group within their potential cognitive and relational abilities. Both the influence of peer relationships and the adolescent's own agentic internal landscape will be considered in this exploration.

2.3 Content, Function, and Process in Conversation

Goffman's (1959) seminal work on the sociological interactive nature of conversation has provided a theoretical basis for understanding individual's social selves. Interactional talk, according to Goffman, always presents information about the self and as such, talk is a symbolic representation of who we are. Because talk is always engaged in with another person, it is collaborative and meaning is mutually constructed. Goffman proposed that self-presentation takes place within an "interaction order", a set of rules providing structure for how the social self is governed in face-to-face encounters (Goffman, 1983). Malone (1997) encapsulates Goffman's theory succinctly when he states "selves live in the worlds that talk creates" (p. 1).

How adolescents communicate with each other in conversation is of particular relevance in the current study. Young et al. (1999) explored ten career conversations between adolescent peers in order to explore joint actions occurring within the dyad. Using action theory as a theoretical approach, the authors proposed individuals jointly engage in actions to achieve common goals. They also utilized the qualitative research method of self-confrontation, whereby the videotaped conversations were reviewed with the participants individually to elicit recollection of feelings and thoughts experienced during the course of the conversation. Through classification, goal-oriented functions were identified as exploring, formulating, validating, and challenging. Although Young et al. focused on the area of career, this study provided useful information as to how adolescents may structure their conversation around shared goals and action-oriented behaviour. Conversation between friends can be framed as a vehicle for the expression of self-representation, an indication of the exploration and early stages of identity formation.

Baxter (2004), grounded in relational dialectics theory, reported that selves are not only revealed within the conversations between confidantes, but are also substantially authored within the interaction. She maintained that becoming our selves is facilitated within close relationships (Baxter & West, 2003). Referring to her research with adult friendship and romantic pairs, she stated this is not only because of the identification with similarities, but also because close relationship dyads expose each other to "different perspectives, interests, and approaches, thereby helping one another's selves to become" (Baxter, 2004, p. 5). She proposed that the self becomes as a result of relating to significant others. Although not exclusively, individuals, in large part, put forth these perspectives, interests, and approaches through their verbal conversations. Holtgraves and Kashima (2007) also stressed that language is a conversational

tool and the mechanism by which personal meanings are conveyed to others. These authors saw conversation as a reciprocal and collaborative process whereby representations are exchanged and jointly created with others. It is this shared meaning and joint construction that is of interest in the current study.

Conversations between adolescents have been quantitatively studied in terms of content and behavioural manifestations. Conversations with friends during adolescence tend to focus on leisure activities, relationships, gossip, and themselves (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984). Johnson and Aries (1983), in their study of late adolescent close friendship dyads, found that conversations typically revolved around concerns about self, relationships, and daily activities. These authors also found that females were found to converse in greater depth about themselves and their close relationships, while males demonstrated this pattern in their conversations on activity-related topics. Baxter and Goldsmith (1990) identified four clusters of talking topics within American high school adolescent conversations (task-oriented talk, conflict talk, personalized and supportive talk, socially-oriented talk). Other researchers have focused on the interactive behavioural patterns demonstrated within adolescent conversations, such as turn taking, requests for clarification, giving contingent responses, and interrupting (Turkstra, 2001; Turkstra, Ciccia, & Seaton, 2003).

Beaumont (1996), in her study of adolescent perceptions of conversations with mothers or friends, found that adolescent girls subjectively rated their conversations with friends as being more involved and friendly than those with their mothers. As well, Raffaelli and Duckett (1989) sought to investigate changes in the patterns of adolescent communication with their family and friends. The authors had children and adolescents (from grade five to grade nine) respond to a self-report questionnaire immediately after intermittent paging. The self-report questionnaire

focused on activity (what they were doing at the time of the page), companionship (who they were with), topic of conversation, and the participant's subjective experience (the emotional quality of the situation) of the conversation. The authors found that talk with friends increased dramatically across the studied age groups, but talk with family remained stable. Older participants, particularly females, however, did turn to friends significantly more frequently to discuss age-related concerns (peer relations and personal concerns), while they also continued to discuss daily issues with family members.

Buhrmester (1996), in his meta-analysis of need fulfillment within early adolescent friendship relationships, found that the largest discrepancy between friend and parent disclosures occurred during tenth grade. At this time friends became the most important and likely confidantes while parents were the least likely confidantes. Buhrmester found this pattern to begin in earnest after grade five, before which parents and friends were somewhat equal in their level of confidante status. With a life course view, this pattern changed again somewhat when individuals engaged in romantic and marital relationships, with the prime confidante then becoming a romantic partner, rather than either friend or parent.

Buhrmester and Prager (1995) in their meta-analysis of targeted self-disclosure, found that beginning in early adolescence girls disclosed more than boys to all targets except fathers, and that self-disclosure to friends surpassed disclosure to parents beginning in early adolescence for girls but boys did not demonstrate the pattern until middle adolescence.   They also found that both boys and girls disclosed more to same-sex than to opposite-sex peers through late adolescence and both disclosed more to mothers than to fathers.   As previously discussed in Section 2.1 of this chapter, several sex differences have been found in relation to the perceived relationship interactive qualities of adolescent friendships.

Few studies have focused specifically on the processes occurring within the context of adolescent friendship conversations. Gottman and Mettetal (1986) suggested the main goal of conversation in adolescence is to increase understanding of the self in relation to others, thereby facilitating self-exploration. Social conversational processes that accomplish this broad goal, according to Gottman and Mettetal, are self-disclosure, gossip, exploration of similarities and differences, and problem solving. Other micro-processes, serving the four main processes above were found to be escalation or de-escalation, message clarification, finding common ground, conflict, friendly relations, information exchange, and relationship exploration.

The literature illustrates that conversation provides a powerful medium for the exchange of ideas, feelings, and the maintenance of relationships. The proposed study will illuminate how communication through language within friendship dyads is used as a self-exploration tool, thereby contributing to the identity exploration project of the participants.

2.4 Self-representation During Adolescence

O'Mahony (1986) using a free-descriptive methodology, analyzed how adolescents described themselves and significant others (an adult they knew best, a girl they knew best, and a boy they new best) over time. Descriptions were coded into four categories (undifferentiating – descriptions in terms of possessions or social settings; simple differentiating – descriptions focused on appearance, role membership or global personality descriptions; differentiating – descriptions referring to personal characteristics such as interests or abilities; disposition – descriptions referring to traits or implied traits). He found that self-descriptions became longer, more psychological, and more organized as adolescents aged, particularly for girls. Over all ages, self-descriptions were more heavily represented in the differentiating category. Interestingly, descriptions of others, however, contained proportionately more dispositional

terms and simple differentiating terms. This study demonstrated how self-representations develop over time and suggested that adolescents are able to describe themselves fully in a variety of domains, even in early adolescence.

How, to what extent, and to what end, one describes oneself within conversation can also be a useful tool to begin to understand the process of identity exploration and formation in the context of early adolescent friendships. How one describes oneself with a close friend provides a window into how the self is questioned, navigated, and explored. Self-disclosure, a term that has been used interchangeably with self-representation and self-description in the literature, is defined by Derlega and Grzelak (1979) as "any information exchange that refers to the self, including personal states, dispositions, events in the past, and plans for the future" (p.152). In a study of Japanese undergraduates, Wada (1995) found that the amount of self-disclosure between same-sex friends had a curvilinear relationship with a state of psychological wellbeing. Too much willingness to reveal personal information to friends was found to be related to decreased perceptions of personal happiness and positive mood, suggesting that excessively personal self-disclosures may be indicative of negative rumination. Matsushima and Shioma (2002) also reported on Japanese students (junior high students, in this case) and found results inconsistent with North American literature. They found, that contrary to the prevalent finding of a positive linear relationship between self-disclosure and wellbeing, students in their study reported that a more shallow relationship was indicative of increased self-disclosure. These studies indicated the need for cross-cultural studies and suggested differences in how teens from a collectivist culture may explore and develop their identities.

Derlega and Grzelak (1979) proposed that conversational self-representations serve several broad functions within relationships. Although not specifically reporting on adolescent

conversations, these functions are likely to be highly applicable in the proposed study

population. The aims of self-expression and satisfaction, self-clarification, relationship

development, as well as social control may be salient motivations within adolescent friendships.

Holtgraves (1990), in his chapter on the language of self-disclosure, focused his attention on the

processes of self-disclosure within conversation. He distinguished between direct and indirect

disclosures, pre-context of the disclosure, timing of disclosures, degree of intimacy involved,

level of speaker identification with the disclosure, outcomes of disclosure, and the notion of face-

management. This study provided a partial framework for recognizing self-representation in the

conversations generated in the current research.

Like Holtgraves (1990), Bangerter (2000) was interested in what forms self-representa-

tions take, how talk about oneself gets inserted into conversation (what precipitates or what

prevents), what effects such an insertion has on future direction of the conversation, as well as

the possible functions of self-representations. Bangerter operationalized self-representation as an

explicit disclosure of personal attributes, actions, or qualities of the self, and investigated the

processes that influence how self-representations are navigated in research interview

conversations. Borrowing from the concepts of Holtgraves (1990) and Coupland, Coupland, and

Giles (1991), Bangerter identified several types of explicit and implicit self-representations.

Explicit self-representations are those where the participant refers to oneself with a type,

character, or personal trait; mentioning membership in a social category, context, or role; or talks

about typical actions and activities of the self. Indirect forms of self-representations are

distinguished from direct self-representations, in that the expressed self-view is inferred by the

hearer of the utterance. Examples of indirect self-representations included exemplification by

illustrating a contrast or similarity between the self and some other entity. For example, a

speaker could indicate that coming from a family of competitive achievers had definitely made them work harder in school, which indicates, in an indirect way, that they are also competitive and interested in achieving in school. A more explicit self-representation would be demonstrated by the statement "I am competitive and do well in school". Another form of indirect self-representation is a subordinate expression of self whereby a trait, value, or belief is hinted at or suggested. An example of a subordinate expression is "Being a social person, I went to the party", whereas a direct self-representation would be indicated within the statement "I am a social person".

Bangerter (2000) reported that direct self-representations were identified by "I" statements, whereas indirect self-representations did not include a direct self-reference. Indirect self-representations, according to Bangerter, were less disruptive, less likely to interrupt the flow of the conversation, and were considered to be more polite. He also classified self-representations as being elicited (through the use of a direct question), emergent (introduced in order to provide further explanation or in response to a potentially face-threatening problem), or strategic (those without a predictive antecedent or reason for the disclosure so that they are interpreted as being intentional and goal-directed on the part of the speaker). Others have referred to self-disclosures in terms of their content (Derlega, Metts, Petronio, & Margulis, 1993). These authors report that self-disclosures can also be discriminated based on what they are about. Disclosures can be descriptive (based on information and facts about oneself, that may or may not be personal in nature), or evaluative (including personal expressions of feelings, opinions, and judgments). These frameworks provide a useful lens from which to view self-representational talk within conversations.

Self-representations can also be extrapolated from how adolescents from different cultures use language. Gee, Allen, and Clinton (2001), in their discourse analysis of interviews with American teens of differing classes, found that upper middle class teens used abstract language to infer future professional achievement and success, deferring reference to their personal interests and fears by using "abstract" or "elaborated" language (p. 192). Working class teens, on the other hand, used language to personally and socially narrate their values and interests. These teens seemed to more directly orient themselves in dialogue and interact in a more involved way with their physical world. This study is indicative of how adolescents of differing classes come to fashion themselves through language.

O'Connor (2006) reported on the writings of Irish youth within a school setting from a feminist, late modern perspective. Texts written by 224 middle adolescents (aged 14-17 years) focused on self-construction within a social context ("the Ireland they inhabit"). The narratives were classified into five different themes (relationship focused, fateful moments, search for authenticity, life plans, and life styles). This study demonstrated a significant gender difference in that female adolescents were more likely to focus on relational aspects of self (importance of friendships and family) than were males. There were no gender differences in life style descriptions or future plan themes, but fateful moments were more pronounced for female participants, suggesting a greater importance placed on transformative events by females. With respect to authenticity themes, the girls' texts were more introspective and reflective than were those of the boys. O'Connor's study of Irish youth provides a cultural picture of self-representation of adolescents.

2.5   Conclusion

The above literature review demonstrates a need and sets the stage for the proposed research. Literature published about the nature and importance of friendship on adolescent development suggests that a more in-depth exploration into the processes occurring within early adolescent friendships would be worthwhile. Friendship literature of the past has not focused on the facilitative or exploratory nature of friends in the development of how adolescents come to see themselves. Likewise, the identity formation stage literature, although interesting from an outcome point of view for older adolescents, does little to explain how the process of identity exploration occurs within the context of close peer friendship relationships during early adolescence. Literature regarding the interactive nature of conversation, suggests that conversation can serve as a vehicle of self-expression in early adolescence, an age group infrequently studied at the conversational level. Literature focused on the nature and purpose of self-disclosure provides important insights into what may be happening within early adolescent friendship conversations. However, neither conversation analysis literature nor self-disclosure literature has focused on the goal-directed action of conversational participants, particularly during early adolescence.   As well, the majority of study in the area of adolescent identity formation has utilized quantitative, rather than qualitative research methods, and has focused on older age groups. Overall, the preceding literature review cumulatively illustrates a gap in knowledge regarding the dynamic process of self-exploration in female, early adolescent friendships, which the current study seeks to fill.

3.   METHOD

This research was undertaken using the research method embedded within action theory (von Cranach & Valach, 1983; Young, Valach, & Domene, 2005) in order to answer the following research questions:

1.   What are the identified "best friendship" projects, and how are they manifested within female, early adolescent friendship conversations?

   i.   What are the processes (cognitive, affective, and behavioural) and meaning (goals) of friendship expressed within early adolescent friendship conversations?

   ii.   How do the adolescents utilize self-representations to advance their friendship projects?

2.   How are the meanings and processes evidenced in a participant-created "All about friendship collage" and within the ensuing participant-researcher interview about the collage, different or similar to those evidenced in the friendship conversation?

3.1   Rationale for Research Method

Action theory assumes that human behaviour is the result of motivation towards the realization of goals and intentional action. Action theory provides a holistic perspective on goal directed behaviour by including three different, yet related, concepts. Taken together, social meaning (the socially derived significance of the action), internal processes (thoughts and feelings), as well as the manifest behaviour (observable verbal and non-verbal (body) language chosen) provide a holistic perspective on behaviour.   This qualitative method addressed the intentional, goal-directed joint and individual actions of study participants and allowed analysis

from three different vantage points (the manifest behaviour, internal processes and social meaning).

As this method of data analysis focuses on the internal processes and manifestations of behaviour it is an appropriate method to answer the research questions. One of the benefits of using qualitative methods when analyzing adolescent friendship processes is that it is more able than quantitative methods to capture the richness, meaning, and subjective reality of the participants (Bukowski & Lisboa, 2005). Way and Hamm (2005) suggested that, not only are qualitative methods able to provide the groundwork necessary for future quantitative research, "they reveal critical processes that are not detectable through more quantitative approaches" (p. 3). Using the action-project qualitative method allows the participants to portray friendship and converse in a way that they choose, thus empowering them and giving voice to their contextualized experience. Embodied in the participant's own language and particular ways of expressing it, is a richness and depth that would not otherwise have been possible using quantitative methods.

In summary, the qualitative action-project method provides a holistic conceptualization of human experience, in that it takes into account manifest behaviour (that which is overtly visible to the researcher), internal processes (thoughts and feelings of the participants), and social meaning (socially shared understanding and perspectives) (Young, Valach, & Domene, 2005). These authors also reported that this method provides systematic guidelines for gathering and analyzing data and is useful in describing processes that are of particular interest to counsellors (meaning making, behaviour, thoughts, and feelings). With its focus on interpersonal relationships, the qualitative action-project method provides a unique vantage point from which

to view dynamic influence between individuals, another key area of interest for counselling psychologists.

3.2   Personal Assumptions (Role of the Researcher)

As a parent of three adolescents, I have a keen interest in the dynamics of adolescent friendships. The experiences of witnessing the development of my own children, seeing the progression, importance, and dynamic within their close friendships, and having been involved with the children of others in several volunteer capacities, have instilled a curiosity within me about the importance of peer relationships, particularly at the beginning of adolescence. At the time of my proposal I anticipated that early adolescents would utilize their conversations with close friends as a forum for self-exploration and discovery and as a result, the conversations themselves would be rich with examples of self-representation. I also believed that, because of my familiarity and comfort with all age levels of adolescents and the culture of adolescent friendship, I would be able to communicate to, establish rapport with, and create a safe study environment for the participants.

As a beginning counsellor, I have had some experience counselling youth. Although comfortable with adolescents, I have often wondered about their internal world and the impact of their close friendships as protective support systems. As well, I am a both a woman and a friend to others. In all of these roles I value the closeness and intimacy of friendship. It is through this lens that I approached my research.

3.3   Participants

The participants in this study were five female early adolescent best friendship pairs. These ten girls were between the ages of 11 and 13 at the time of initial contact. One girl was two weeks shy of her 12th birthday at the time of her friendship conversation. Initially I had

hoped to include girls who were 12 or 13, but decided that the 11 year-old's age difference was negligible from both her partner and the other participants. Seven girls were 12 years old and two girls (from the same friendship dyad) were 13 years old at the time of study. Four pairs were in Grade seven and one pair was in Grade eight. As a rationale for choosing this age group for study, early adolescents are particularly under-represented in the literature with regard to identity formation, particularly as far as process is concerned. Younger children self-conceptualize on physical or activity properties, whereas those who are older tend to be better able to conceptualize themselves in more abstract terms, such as through descriptions of traits, beliefs, or ideologies (Montemayor & Eisen, 1977). As well, early adolescents are at the threshold of cognitive development in that they are more able than younger children to conceptualize themselves in terms of the different roles that they inhabit (daughter, friend, or student) (Harter & Monsour, 1992). I wished to capture them just as they made this transition into adolescence. Because of the cognitive requirements of the study (the ability to communicate their abstract beliefs and conceptualizations of close friendship both visually and verbally), as well as the demands of the self-confrontation interview (the ability to identify internal processes of thought and feeling), I anticipated early adolescents to be the earliest age group to cognitively handle the rigour of the study. It has also been shown that friendships during early adolescence are more stable than those of younger children (Degirmencioglu, Urberg, & Tolson, 1998), increasing the probability that the participants within the dyads would still be friends when it came time to confirm the study findings. There is also evidence that middle adolescents may be more likely to withhold information and be more guarded in the presence of a researcher than would be younger adolescents (Brinthaupt & Lipka, 2002).

Inclusion criteria for the study included:

- Those friends who reciprocally nominated each other as either a "best friend" or a "very good friend".

- Those friendship dyads that had been "best friends" or "very good friends" for at least six months.

- Those friends who assented to participate in the study and whose parents consented for their children to participate.

- Those friendship dyads fluent in English.

Participants were excluded from the study if they had a pre-existing mental illness or any significant developmental delay as identified by a parent. They were also excluded if they were personally acquainted with the researcher(s) or their families.

Five friendship pairs were entered into the study. Although five pairs, ten participants, is admittedly an arbitrary number, it provided considerable between-dyad variation, and allowed for a thorough exploration of the processes of friendship meaning and process within conversations as well as in expression in collage creation. Due to the scope, purpose, and qualitative nature of this project, more than ten participants was not deemed necessary.

3.4   Procedures

Volunteer participants were solicited for participation with a posted notice displayed in several locations, inviting parents of the potential participants to contact the researcher for further information (Appendix A). A letter providing additional information (purpose of the study, contact information of the researcher, etc) for a parent accompanied these posted notices (Appendix B). Notices and parent letters were posted at several locations (local community centers, dance school and gymnastic class locations, theatre and art class centers, Girl Guide

locations, and teenage drop in centers). Over a two-month period these recruitment endeavors failed to result in any enrollees in the study, and only a limited number of enquiries, mostly from interested parents. I then sent an email to friends, family, and colleagues outlining the same information as on the recruitment poster and attached the information letter to parents. One friend distributed the email to all members of her daughter's soccer team, which lead to two pairs of friends enrolling in the study. One pair enrolled as a result of a family member passing on the information to another friend. The parent of one member of an enrolled dyad referred a work colleague who subsequently consulted with his daughter. The parent of one girl heard about the study from the researcher while attending a psycho-educational group. Each participant was given a small stipend ($25.00) upon enrollment in the study to compensate for time and travel costs.

Brief telephone interviews with the parents of the participants, as well as with each member of the friendship dyad were undertaken to explain the nature of the study and discuss inclusion and exclusion criteria in more detail than communicated in the posted "invitation" to the study and the information letter to parents. Once agreement to participate in principal was obtained an in-person meeting was arranged. Four of the five in-person meetings were held with both participants and their parents present. With one dyad, two separate meetings with the parents were required because the parents were not friends. Once written, informed consent (Appendix C) of their parents was obtained, and both members of the friendship dyad agreed to participate through written, informed assent (Appendix D) (see Ethical Issues, Section 3.7), they were entered into the study.

It was not expected that any aspect of the study would cause discomfort or incapacity to the participants. However, in the unlikely event that the participants experienced emotional

distress as a result of the research questions or interview process they were offered the opportunity to speak to a counsellor.   A list of appropriate, available, and affordable counselling services was offered to the parents at the time of enrollment in the study and again at the time of the data check interview.   Once a signed, informed consent was obtained from the parent(s) of each of the participants in a dyad, and assent had been obtained from each of the participants themselves, they progressed through four stages of study participation.   The first three contacts were completed for all five dyads between October 14, 2007 and December 1, 2007.   The fourth contacts (the data check, follow-up meetings) for the five dyads were conducted between February 7, 2008 and February 25, 2008.

3.5   Stages of Data Collection

<u>**Contact 1 - Participant Completion of "All About Friendship" Collage**</u>

Approximately one week prior to the participant/researcher interview (usually at the same time as obtaining written consent and assent), the researcher delivered art materials to the participants for the purpose of creating a friendship collage on a white, standard poster board (28 by 22 inches).   The same art supplies were provided for each participant and included felt pens, pencil crayons, pencils, erasers, colored pipe cleaners, teen magazines, fashion magazines, construction paper, colored paper, foam numbers, glue sticks, colored pipe-cleaners, scissors, and tape).   Consistent instructions for completion of the collage were given to all dyads, both verbally and in written format for later reference (Appendix E).   It was left up to the dyad's own judgment as to whether they completed their collages together or individually.   They were, however, asked to complete the task without assistance from others and to each create a collage that would encompass their own individual view of friendship, as they would only have their collage available to them during the collage interview.   They were told that the collage could be

a way for them to tell the researcher how they thought and felt about their close friendships in the most complete way possible. The following guiding questions were offered as ways to approach the creation of the collage.

- What do you like to do with your friends (leisure or sports, favourite activities, hobbies)?

- What are some of the memories you have with your good friends?

- What do you value or think is important to have in a "good" or "close" friend?

- How do you feel when you are with a good friend?

The girls were instructed that they could use any materials, in addition to what was provided, to create their collages (drawings, words, images from other magazines, photographs, etc). As I was unable to conduct both collage interviews simultaneously, and a second interviewer was required for the self-confrontation interviewing, the participants were also informed that a second interviewer would be present and interview one of them for both the collage interview and the post-friendship conversation interview. Two assistant interviewers were employed for this purpose. Both assistants were also Master of Arts students in Counselling Psychology and each had experience with the action-theory method of self-confrontation interviewing due to being employed as research assistants on an action project research team. Both assistants were trained individually on how to interview the participants prior to the interviews and, in addition, were given a printed copy of interview guidelines for both the collage interview (Appendix F) and the self-confrontation interview (Appendix G). One assistant participated in collage and self-confrontation interviewing for three dyads and one assistant participated with two dyads. The assistant who participated with two dyads was not

available to assist with the collage interview for one dyad due to a time conflict. Therefore, I conducted both collage interviews (consecutively) for one dyad.

All dyads had at least one week to complete the collage, but it was made clear that there was no minimum time requirement for them to spend on it. Digital images of all collages were taken and kept as data (see Appendix H, Figures 1–10). Any identifying information (names, identifiable faces on photographs, phone numbers) was blacked out. The original poster-board collages were returned to the participants at the time of the follow-up, data check appointment (Contact 4).

Contact 2 – Participant/Researcher Interview – Exploration of the Collage

All friendship dyads arrived at the Counselling Psychology study laboratory at the University of British Columbia for their scheduled appointment. After brief introductions, and a tour of the facilities, each member of the friendship dyad accompanied one interview assistant (either the author or another Master of Arts, Counselling Psychology student) in a private meeting room. Each interviewer had, as a reference, a list of interview guidelines (Appendix F). After a brief warm up discussion about the process of creating the collage, the collage was displayed. The researcher or assistant invited the participant to describe the story of the collage in detail. Images were identified and asked how they represented and/or had meaning for the participant. Open ended questions, such as "What can you tell me about this image?" or "What does this mean to you?" or "How does _____ (some description) represent your idea of friendship?" "What do these words mean?" "I notice you used a lot of (color, images, etc) in your collage. What does this mean to you?" and "Is there anything else you would like to add that is not included on the collage that you either thought about and didn't have an image of or have just thought of now through our discussion?" Overall, the intent of the interview was to

allow the construction of the story of the collage as told by the participants in their own language. The interview was video and audio taped to allow for future transcription and analysis.

The rationale for having the adolescent describe their collage is that it has been suggested that it is through the telling of a personal story that individuals are able to synthesize, or make sense of their relationships, and provide a vehicle for interpretations of their past, present, and plans for the future (Diaute & Lightfoot, 2004). The interview following the creation of the collage also gave the participants the opportunity to bring their images to life in their own words and to ensure that the researcher would not erroneously interpret the symbolism represented. Each image on the collage was explicitly asked about in order to avoid interpretation and researcher bias. It also allowed the participant the opportunity to add ideas, thoughts, feelings, and meanings to the collage that they had not been able to find images for, thus giving a more holistic picture of how the participant viewed their close friendship relationships. Habermas and Bluck (2000) suggested that adolescence, as opposed to earlier developmental periods, is a time when individuals become able to conceptualize a narrative life story, reflecting a newfound ability to communicate a coherent account of one's past. Prior to adolescence, according to these authors, autobiographical reasoning is not yet sufficiently cognitively developed to allow the portrayal of a coherent life story.

After discussion of the collage was complete, as a warm up and lead in to the friendship conversation, the participant was then asked to describe, in their own words, the meaning of a "very good friend" or "best friend" to them. It was hoped that the question would elicit information as to the qualities of their friendship that make it "very good" or "best" in the mind of the adolescent. This information would provide the researcher with a qualitative indication of

what the individual adolescents valued in their close friendships, and in particular, the one with which they were about to have a conversation with. It also had the potential to provide some insight into what the explicit goals of a close friendship are for the adolescent as well as how they represent themselves within the relationship. These interviews ranged from eight to 20 minutes in length, depending on the complexity of the collage and the talkativeness of the participant.   .

Contact 3 – Friendship Dyad Conversation and Self-Confrontation Interview

Friendship Conversation

After the collage had been discussed the dyad and the researchers reconvened in a room equipped with video and audiotape capability. The first few minutes functioned as rapport building and provided a warm-up for the upcoming activity. All pairs were encouraged to have a friendship conversation that they would be likely to have because they were such good friends. The dyad was invited to have a friendship conversation on the topic of their choosing without the researchers present in the room. None of the pairs appeared to be at a loss to come up with a topic, as all clearly indicated to the researcher that they would not have any difficulty engaging in this activity. All dyads expressed either excitement or nervousness about the presence of the cameras. It was suggested to the dyad that they should aim to converse for at least ten minutes, but they were also told that if it felt like there was a natural break in the conversation and they did not wish to continue they could feel free to end their conversation at any time. Participants were video and audio recorded while they had their friendship conversations. The friendship conversations were 16, 11, 16, 16, and 16 minutes long respectively, for dyads one through five.

Self-confrontation Interview

After a brief refreshment break, participants were split up (one interviewer with one member of the participant dyad) and taken into different rooms where they watched the video recording of their friendship conversation. The same interviewer was paired with the same participant that they interviewed about the collage in order to provide continuity of previously built rapport and comfort. Using the self-confrontation method of reflection the researchers played the video recording and stopped it at approximately one-minute intervals. Each interviewer was provided with a list of possible questions to ask during the interview as a reference (Appendix G). At each interval the following question(s) were asked: "What were you thinking or feeling at this point in the conversation?" or "What was happening for you during that minute?" If the participant did not offer any reflections, the researcher invited the participants to offer, at any time, any thoughts or feelings they recalled having during the particular segment of video recording. At times it was necessary to remind the participants of the content of the recorded interval in order to provide contextual cues. For example, a sample question could have been, "What was going on for you when Heather leaned over and gave you a hug?" This procedure was undertaken and also audio and video-recorded for the entire length of the recorded friendship conversation. Self-confrontation interviews ranged from 26 minutes to 47 minutes. After the self-confrontation interviews were completed the participants were thanked and reminded of the next steps of the study.

Contact 4 – Meeting to Confirm Findings

At an agreed upon time, all within February 2008, follow-up meetings between the researcher and the individual dyads were undertaken to go over the findings of the study for the purposes of data integrity and validation. As well, any ambiguities in the transcription or missed

topics of discussion from the collage were addressed and/or corrected. A summarized narrative for each participant formed the basis for the meeting (Appendices I-R). These narrative summaries had three components. The first part of the narrative included a summary derived from the analysis of the transcription of the collage interview, as well as the collage itself. The second portion of the narrative, which was identical for each person within a dyad, included the summary of the researcher's analysis of both the friendship conversation and the ensuing self-confrontation interviews, which identified the joint goals and processes within the friendship conversation. The third portion of the narrative contained the individual participant's contribution to the joint goals of the conversation. This section addressed how each participant uniquely contributed to the friendship conversation.

The meeting to confirm the findings was undertaken with the following procedure. First, each girl was met with individually to go over missing data from the collage as well as to hear and provide feedback, correction, and/or elaboration to any portion of the first and third sections of the summarized narrative. After each girl had been met with individually, the dyad was reunited and the middle portion, the part outlining their joint goals of the conversation, was discussed. If corrections or expansions were offered these were recorded and integrated into the final analysis. Corrections were made as necessary to the summarized narratives and subsequently sent back to the girls via email for their final approval. Two dyads requested minor changes or additions to their summarized narratives. Follow-up meetings were approximately one hour long, depending on the number of clarifications required and the type and number of revisions requested.

3.6   Data Analysis

Data analysis was undertaken in several stages. Data from three sources was analyzed (friendship conversation data, self-confrontation interview data, collage and collage interview data). All transcripts were meticulously proofread and corrected as described in Section 3.8 of this chapter, as the original audiofiles were transcribed by a third party. Data analysis resulted in three sets of findings (joint projects, self-representations, friendship collage meanings). This chapter will be organized in terms of how these three sets of findings were derived, as well as a description of how the final summary narratives were created.

Joint Project Findings

The data sources for the joint project findings, along with the functional steps, and the elements used to enact them, were the friendship conversation and self-confrontation interview transcripts for each dyad. This data was analyzed according to the action-project method described in Young, Valach, and Domene (2005). Data was analyzed utilizing this method in order to identify joint and individual participant goals, the functional steps engaged within the conversation in order to achieve the goals, and specific behaviours employed to move through the functional steps (language chosen). The behaviours, steps, and goals, in the case of this study, were evidenced in the participant's choice of language (verbal and non-verbal).

In order to prepare the data sources for analysis all transcripts were proofread and corrected. As well, all behavioural and body language was added to the transcripts by the author at the time of proofreading. Corrected friendship conversation transcripts were read by the researcher while watching the video recording, in order to get a broad understanding of the content and general essence of the conversation. If evident or clear, the largest goal or overall intention of the friendship conversation was noted. Questions asked of the data were "What are

the girls trying to do together in this conversation?" or "What is this conversation about for the girls?" This provided a "top down" approach to the data analysis, by first looking at the big picture, and then asking the question "How do they go about that or what actions do they use to achieve their joint goals?" Rarely did functional steps reveal themselves with such a cursory view of the data. Once a tentative larger goal was hypothesized, the data was then analyzed from the "bottom up".

The qualitative analysis software, HyperResearch (version 2.8, 2007), was utilized to analyze the five friendship conversations. Each conversation was divided into one-minute intervals, corresponding roughly with the self-confrontation interview segments. Sometimes these segments were slightly longer or shorter than one minute, depending on the subject matter of the conversation. For example, segments might have been longer than one minute if a speaker had been in the middle of a speaking turn or if breaking the segment at a particular point would have disrupted the natural flow of the conversation. Each phrase or utterance of each speaker was then coded according to a list of microelements (Appendix S). This code list was derived from a pre-existing code list from another action-theory research project and was adapted to better fit the conversational patterns of early adolescents. Once a one-minute segment was coded, the segment was reviewed, and if identifiable, a determination was made as to what the dyad was doing together and individually within the segment. This was usually established by asking the question "Why did the girls do _____ (i.e. describe others, describe a past situation, give evaluative statements)?" In this example the most likely answer would be the functional step of "gossiping". In order to access the internal processes of the participants and get a better understanding of functional steps and goals, self-confrontation interview transcripts were read for each conversational participant for the particular part of the conversation being analyzed.

Once the functional steps were determined for a portion of the transcript a larger intention or goal emerged. Goals tended to be broader and more encompassing. The goals reflected the bigger "why" of the conversation. For instance, "Why are the girls gossiping?" could be answered in several ways depending on the context of the conversation (i.e. they could be providing support, increasing solidarity, having fun, etc.). Video of the conversation was played during the analysis in order to capture subtle body language nuances that may have been missed on transcription and correction. Pervasive goals were identified as projects if they were also implemented and realized through joint action by the friendship pairs.

The researcher alone completed this phase of the data analysis for the five dyads. Once all coding had been completed and functional steps and goals, and projects had been identified, a partial narrative was written for each participant and each dyad. This part of the narrative contributed to the second and third paragraphs of the summary narrative as previously described (Appendices I-R).

Collage Meanings

The corrected transcripts of the "All About Friendship" collage interviews were analyzed using an action theory lens in order to identify the meanings and personal friendship goals (of the participant), the interviewer's task goals, and the joint goals (those the participant has with the researcher) evident within the conversation. The functional steps (how the girls chose to go about their goals) and behavioural elements (the language chosen) were identified, although these were not coded using the Hyperresearch qualititative software tool. This was not deemed to be necessary, as the joint projects between the researcher and the participant were not relevant to this study. The transcripts were reviewed while studying the collage itself. Main themes were identified as they pertained to the participant's conceptions (thoughts, feelings, value statements,

behaviours, and goals) about close friendships. The participants' expression of their close friendship meanings, as well as how they described their values and the desired qualitities of a close friend formed the basis of the collage narrative. This part of the analysis formed the first paragraph of the summary narrative.

Although review of the collage itself and the collage interview generated narrative descriptions of the meaning of close friendship relationships, a narrative analysis was not undertaken. Using an action-theory lens allowed the researcher to view the conversation about the collage as a form of action, complete with goals, cognitive processes, and behavioural elements. As well, not only did the action-project method allow an in depth analysis of the elements of past elements of friendship meanings, it allowed for present and future friendship process, as well as meaning analysis.

Self-representations

Friendship conversation and collage interview transcripts were read and self-representation statements were identified (descriptions of the self) according to the framework proposed by Holtgraves (1990). Although Holtgraves uses the term "self-disclosure" in his article, I have chosen to use this same classification system to apply to any description of the self. Holtgraves categorized self-disclosures along two axes (directness and type). Direct self-disclosures were those that were direct statements about the self (i.e. "I am happy", "I want to go out for lunch", "I get really annoyed when she wears the same thing as me"), whereas those that were indirect were those that could be inferred by the reader (i.e. "We all had a good time", or "It would be nice to go out for lunch" or "It was so annoying"). As well, Holtgraves classified self-disclosures as being either descriptive (facts or information about oneself) or evaluative (disclosure of an internal state such as an emotion or an opinion) in nature. Once these self-

representations were identified they were examined to determine what their purpose (the goal of using the self-representation during that particular portion of the conversation) was within the context of the friendship conversation. Within the collage interviews it was assumed that self-representations were used in order to convey the participant's understanding of themselves within their close friendships to the interviewer. In keeping with the action theory perspective, self-representations were seen as goal directed behaviour within the conversations. By reviewing the self-representations that each participant made during her friendship conversation and during the collage interview, the researcher incorporated these findings into the summary narrative. This contributed, in part, to the first and third paragraphs of the summary narratives.

Creation of Final Narrative Summaries

The research assistant who helped with the interviewing for the particular dyad reviewed these narrative summaries before they were checked with the participant dyads. Other documentation was made available upon request to facilitate review by the assistant (original transcripts, video of conversations, digital image of collage, and/or summaries of coding annotations). Differences of opinion were resolved through discussion until a consensus was reached. Narrative summaries were revised as necessary. Once the narrative summaries for each participant were revised they were taken to each dyad for final data check and approval as previously described.

Once all narrative summaries were corrected and approved by the dyads, a cross dyad analysis was undertaken. This was done by laying out all identified projects for each dyad on a six foot long piece of paper. Once all projects were listed for each dyad, I asked myself "Why did the participants within each dyad do these actions?" This led to the collapse of several functional steps, which had previously been identified as goals on the summarized narratives,

into larger more encompassing projects.

3.7   Ethical Issues

Care was taken to ensure that the participants were participating in the study on their own free will and were not coerced or manipulated into participating by their parents, their friend, or by the researcher. At the time of verbal consent by way of initial telephone interview, verbal assent by the minor was also obtained in order to ensure willingness and interest to participate. After obtaining written, signed consent from the parents during the in-person meeting, written, signed assent was also obtained from the participant without parents present.   All participants indicated an independent willingness and interest to participate in the study. During the telephone screening interviews with some parents whose children did not participate, it became evident that the parents were more interested in their daughters participating than the girls themselves were. These participants were not invited to participate in the study. As a lack of desire to participate would have undermined the purpose of the study and integrity of the data, this step was employed to ensure the validity of the data and the welfare of the participants.

3.8   Methods to Ensure Trustworthiness of the Data

A third party transcribed audio transcripts of interviews and the friendship conversations. In order to protect the identity of the participants the transcriptionist did not have access to the video recordings of the girls' conversations. Therefore, correction of the transcripts was necessary as the transcriptionist was not always able to determine, due to voice similarity, which girl was speaking. Transcripts were meticulously proofread and carefully corrected by the author by watching all videos and listening to all audio recordings.   Any remaining areas of question as to the content of the transcripts were corrected in consultation with the participants themselves at the time of the follow-up data check meeting. Prior to the follow-up meeting with the

participants, two researchers (the author and the assistant involved in the dyad interviewing) reviewed the written summary narratives (See Appendices I-R) as well as any transcripts or data analysis documents, as necessary to ensure inter-rater reliability. Disagreements in analysis were worked through by discussion.

The conducting of a follow-up data check meeting with the participants themselves was a further method to ensure the trustworthiness of the data. Any omissions or corrections suggested by the participants after this communication were incorporated into a final narrative for each participant. As well, oversights regarding content or interpretation of the collage were also clarified at this time (i.e. if the interviewer had not asked about a particular image on the collage at the time of the original interview). Active involvement of the participants to check the accuracy of interpretations made by the researcher increased the quality of the narrative summaries.

Triangulation, with the use of data points from four different research perspectives (the descriptive narrative of the collage, the friendship conversation itself, the self-confrontation interview data, and the follow-up data confirmation interview), provided validity to the qualitative data by taking into account different aspects of the research problem. The written narrative tapped into the adolescent's conscious awareness of how they viewed themselves and represented close friendships, the conversation was analyzed for the joint goals between close friends, and the self-confrontation elicited the thoughts and feelings (the unspoken dimension) occurring during the conversation. This analysis provided a holistic view of the participants and their processes.

4. FINDINGS

Following an action theory framework as previously described, the findings are presented at a cross-dyadic level and focus on the joint projects that were identified across the majority of the friendship conversations. A brief summary of the research findings is included as an introduction to this chapter in order to frame the in depth descriptions that follow. As well, in Appendix T, Tables 1.0 and 2.0 provide a concise summary of the findings. Table 1.0 outlines a summary of the projects, functional steps, and the elements used by the dyads during their friendship conversation. Table 2.0 addresses the use of self-representations as advancing or not advancing the projects, as well as the consistency or inconsistency of processes found through the collage interview.

Two large action projects, as well as three sub-projects were identified from the data. All projects were evidenced through the goal-directed implementation of a series of joint actions. The first project that was enacted across all dyads was the broad, overriding project of having, preserving, and maintaining the friendship itself. Within this larger project were three smaller, sub-projects, each enacted with specific behaviours, language (verbal and nonverbal) and driven by internal processes (thoughts and feelings) and personal meaning (goals). These smaller sub-projects were identified as follows:

- Having fun together.
- Supporting each other.
- Connecting with each other.

The other large joint action project identified through the participant data was the girls' identity exploration. The open exploration of possible selves and the testing of different identities were seen to occur within all dyad interactions, as well as through collage interviews.

Self-representations, evident throughout all data sources, directly and indirectly demonstrated identity exploration. As well, self-representations were seen to further the achievement of the other identified friendship sub-projects. Sometimes self-representations were inconsistent between the conversation and the self-confrontation interview. However, these self-misrepresentations or inconsistencies were expressed in the service of one or more other joint projects. At times several joint projects could be seen as being implemented concurrently. Joint projects were consistently demonstrated and confirmed between different data sources (collage interviews, friendship conversations, and self-confrontation interviews).

This chapter is organized into four sections according to the research questions as follows:

4.1   Identified joint best friendship projects across dyads

4.2   Self-representations as advancing best friendship projects

4.3   Consistency or inconsistency of collage data to friendship conversation data.

4.4   Friendship goals demonstrated within the collage and collage interviews

For orientation purposes Appendix U outlines a brief description of the five friendship dyads. All names used in this and in following chapters are pseudonyms, and when quoted from transcripts, are presented in bold typeface. Quotations from transcripts will be provided as illustration. When a speaking turn belongs to an interviewer (either the author or an assistant), "Interviewer", in bold typeface is used. Numbers following identification of the speaker refer to the sequential numbering of speaking turns on original transcripts. If it was conceivable that a reader could discern the identity of any of the participants or individuals talked about, potentially identifiable information was altered (i.e., a father's profession, school names, locations, etc).

Section 4.1 answers the first research question and describes the common joint action projects identified from the friendship conversations, as well as the particular functional steps and elements employed by various dyads. The processes (cognitive, affective, and behavioural) and meaning (goals) of friendship expressed within the friendship conversations are reported. Examples are highlighted for illustration.

Section 4.2 answers the research question of how these adolescent dyads utilize self-representations to advance their friendship projects. Although I have related these self-representations to the previously identified friendship projects, I have presented this topic under a separate heading following the presentation and illustrations of the projects themselves.

In Section 4.3, I have answered the final research question of whether or not the meanings and processes of the friendship projects identified within the friendship conversation are consistent or inconsistent with the collage data.

Finally, in Section 4.4, as a final sub-section of this chapter, I have reported on the data collected through the collage interview. Collage data, while explicating the personal meanings of friendship for each girl, provided increased depth into the internal processes (thoughts and feelings) and meaning about friendship that each girl brought into the conversation. As such, collage data provided additional insight into the specific actions and representations that the girls demonstrated during their friendship conversations.

In summary, the research questions are answered by presenting the common joint friendship projects and the processes that are demonstrated within them, and by describing the functional steps and elements used by particular dyads. Self-representations within the conversations and collage interviews are reported as they pertain to the advancement (or not) of identified dyadic friendship projects. In this way, particular self-representations can be seen as

consistent or inconsistent with friendship projects. As well, the meanings and processes evidenced within the collage will be described as being similar or different to those evidenced in the friendship conversation.

4.1   Identified Joint Best Friendship Projects Across Dyads

First, the main underlying joint project evident between the dyads was their friendship project itself and included the maintenance, nurturance, and preservation of the friendship relationship. This larger friendship project will be included as a separate joint project.

Second, in addition to the friendship project is a large, action project of exploring and developing the self. Coming out of this larger friendship project, but in a reflexive, bi-directional way, are three common joint sub-projects, which were identified (within the collages and the friendship conversations) across all five dyads:

1. To have fun together.

2. To elicit and provide support to each other.

3. To connect with each other.

Taken together, these three joint friendship projects are seen to be subordinate to and ultimately support the larger, overarching action project of nurturing and maintaining the close friendship each of these pairs enjoy together.   These data provided evidence that each dyad held the sustaining of the friendship as a higher order goal, or their main overriding friendship project. The identity discovery and exploration project was seen as occurring within the context of the close friendship relationship and was influenced and made possible by the achievement of the other friendship goals. In this way, the friendship project supported and provided a forum for the identity project.

The underlying premise of this research project was that identity exploration and early formation (discovery of the self) would be a significant aspect of each dyad's friendship activity. This was clearly demonstrated through some collage interviews, whereby participants overtly explained how they had come to know and define themselves more clearly as a result of, and while experiencing, their close friendships.

Joint Project – To Have, Preserve, and Maintain the Friendship

This joint project came out of asking the question "Why would the dyad want to have fun, support each other, and connect with each other?" None of the participants, however, overtly identified maintaining the friendship as being an overriding goal. They have demonstrated this goal, however, by virtue of the length of the friendship and at times within the interviews, subtly indicating that they have put this goal first, above others that are more subordinate. All of the friendships studied were of a long-term nature, with the shortest friendship being two years in length but with others being between seven and ten years in length. Stable, enduring friendships of such lengths imply a desire and commitment to keep the friendship going. Even by virtue of the girls wishing to participate in a "friendship" study, suggested an interest in the notion of friendship. Although this project was behaviourally demonstrated by other dyads, the desire to preserve and maintain the friendship was most clearly demonstrated within the friendship of Beth and Amber. Through the self-confrontation interview for both girls it was often found that there were discrepancies between what was happening in the conversation versus what was revealed during the self-confrontation interview. Although this phenomenon did occur occasionally within other dyads, Beth and Amber most clearly demonstrated their desire to maintain and preserve their friendship through their navigation of these discrepancies.

Frequently throughout their friendship conversation, both Beth and Amber withheld their true feelings about each partner's disclosures or behaviour, particularly if they anticipated that such a revelation would cause hurt feelings, create unnecessary conflict, or otherwise damage the friendship. Evidence of this behaviour was found in the self-confrontation interview, when each girl reported feelings contrary to that disclosed directly during the friendship conversation. In these situations, both Beth and Amber demonstrated an inconsistency of their self-representations, but each allowed this inconsistency, so as to preserve their connection and friendship with each other. Interestingly, on their collages, both girls referred to "acceptance without judgment" as being an important friendship value. Ultimately this value was upheld as they kept potentially controversial or conflict-inducing perceptions to themselves in order to preserve and maintain their friendship. Several examples of this withholding or inconsistency of self-representations are provided for illustration. In this example Beth referred to a statement that Amber made during the conversation. She did not reveal these thoughts to Amber during the conversation, however, preferring instead to respond to her friend's admission with "Wow" and say nothing further.

Beth72: At this point she's like "Every time I go to UBC I'm not hungry". And I was thinking like "Amber, … like that's like", I don't know I felt like that was a stupid comment like I was just sort of like ah I'm like it's like not an interesting coincidence at all. (laughing) So I was like "Yeah, OK, whatever". Like, "No one's really interested in that now." (laughing) "Oh my gosh whenever I go to UBC I'm not hungry" (laughing).
Interviewer76: It seemed kind of random to you?
Beth73: Yeah, like random, stupid (laughing)

In the following passage, Beth stated she was disgusted and shocked when Amber put her foot up to Beth's face in order to demonstrate how badly it smelled. Although she laughed about it during the friendship conversation and indicated during self-confrontation that she might just

as easily do this same behaviour to her friend, Beth also revealed that she is more upset than she

had revealed to her friend during their conversation.

Beth128,130,132: *I was disgusted* when she put her foot in my face. I was like "Hey…..
yuk….Don't do that like (laughing) Put it back down". Yeah. Ah yeah actually like if she does
stuff like that I'm just like "okay stop it – stop it". (laughing) I will do that to her too, though.
Yeah. I was I was I was like whoa and *I was really shocked* and I'm just like – I'm sorta like "Sit
down"and I'm, ugghhh, I went "Eew" like you know, when I like – I don't know I'm just trying
to like blow it over and get her to put her foot down.

Later, Beth felt strongly that Amber exaggerated about one science test being worth 70%

of her final grade. During the friendship conversation, however, Beth did not assert her opinion

as strongly as she did during the self-confrontation, again in favour of remaining in connection

with her friend and avoiding conflict.

Beth136: Here*, I didn't believe her*. When she said that the test would count for 70% of
her mark in science, I was like yeah – "yeah right, Amber". That's what I was thinking. Like "uh
hm". (laughing) Like "Not really, I don't think I believe you".
Interviewer140: Oh, so what I heard you say is that when she said that she has a science
test that counts for 70% of her mark…...
Beth137: Yeah.
Interviewer141: Okay, which you think is unusual.
Beth138: Yeah like *I - I - I think she's exaggerating*.

Later, Beth again let a topic go when she did not wish to challenge Amber's assertion that

she had an ear infection. Instead, she chose to respond with "Oh. That's good to know

actually.." indicating possible sarcasm or empathy.   This cannot be determined as the

conversation ended with Beth's statement.

Beth158: Um, I was also thinking, like Amber was talking about like her ear infection
and she might have an ear infection, and I was like "oh yeah". *I didn't really believe her* cause
sometimes Amber exaggerates. So I just like "Oh yeah she's exaggerating".
Interviewer162: So you think that exaggeration is kind of something that you think
comes up with her a lot?
Beth159: Yeah like she definitely exaggerates a lot. She's like "ah I think I broke my
leg". I'm - I'm like "okay, Amber, you probably only sprained your ankle". She's like "no I
broke my leg". And I say "Amber, I don't think so".

Even though, during the collage interview and during self-confrontation, Amber actively represented herself as being someone who always speaks what is on her mind, she repeatedly demonstrated that this is not always the case, again in favour of preserving the friendship.

Amber48: I have to say that with her, I think like maybe the odd time like when one of us might tune out, but generally I think that we don't really have many like subconscious thoughts. We're just really into what we're talking about.
Interviewer50: Okay. So whatever you're thinking is generally what you're saying.
Amber49: Right yeah.
Interviewer51: Okay.
Amber50: Always actually. That's why I talk about trust and being open, that kind of thing.

Amber demonstrated this self-representation incongruity by revealing, during self-confrontation, that she is thinking and feeling differently from what she reveals to Beth during their friendship conversation. She too, did not unnecessarily challenge what her friend asserted, in order to preserve and maintain the friendship. Three examples are illustrated below. During the friendship conversation itself, Amber did not indicate what she was truly thinking to her friend.

During the friendship conversation Beth indicated that she would spend her study participation money on "puffy eye cream" which will cost over $20.00. Amber did not contradict her, despite revealing something different on self-confrontation.

Amber6: I was just thinking – well actually right then *I was kind of mad at her*. Well, I wasn't mad, *I was kind of disagreeing with her* because the puffy eye stuff, it's actually 18 dollars at the Body Shop, not more than 20, so. That's what I was thinking. (laughing)

In another instance, although it is not apparent during the friendship conversation, Amber later revealed that she was not paying attention to Beth while she spoke about eating dark chocolate.

Amber29.5: Actually, *I wasn't paying attention there*.
Interviewer31: You weren't paying attention?
Amber30: No, I wasn't. Actually I have to say, like *I just didn't really care that much what we we're talking about*.

Interviewer32: ah So you kind of tuned her out.
Amber31: Yeah. I kinda did (laughing)

In this passage Amber responded, during self-confrontation, to a statement that Beth

made regarding her perception that they didn't know anything about each other's fathers.

Amber51,52: …You know, about the dad thing? I actually think like we don't interact with like our dads. We interact with each other's moms. But then I would have to say that *I actually disagree with her* because she's had a lot of conversations with my dad.

During their friendship conversation, however, Amber did not communicate her

disagreement with Beth, preferring instead to passively agree with her.

Beth48: I barely know anything about your dad.
Amber48: I know. It's weird.
Beth49: I know so much about your mom.
Amber49: Same here with your dad.
Beth49.5: Umm hmm.
Amber50: I know your dad well but I just don't, like, know much about him.

Once the interviewer brings to her attention that she had not revealed this disagreement to

Beth, Amber softens her statement, realized the incongruence, and indicated to the interviewer

that she only "slightly" disagreed and "mostly" agreed with Beth.

Interviewer59: But you didn't say it to her. That was something that was going on in your head.
Amber58-60: Yeah, it was it was one of the things. *But I do agree with her* to some point. Because I don't know her dad as opposed to her mom… But like *I slightly disagree* but then *for the most part I agree* so… with what I said.

During the follow-up interview to confirm findings, both girls independently offered

insight into why they might not always honestly share their every thought and feeling with each

other. They both saw this as demonstration of their unconditional acceptance of the other.

Although this feedback was provided separately and not in each other's company, the comments

were remarkably similar.

Interviewer: During the collage interview you stated that you are "always open and honest with Beth", and yet there were times in the conversation that you kept some things to yourself. What do you make of that?

Amber: Hmm. Well, I do most of the time, but sometimes you realize "What's the point?" It's a waste of time and it doesn't get us anywhere. I don't really care about it. It's just a waste of words.

Beth: I don't say everything because it's stuff that will make trouble and you'll just let go. With some things I might not go there.

Interviewer: What would the trouble look like?

Beth: Stuff that would make her mad or it would get awkward. There's no point to it.

Joint Project – To Explore and Discover the Self

This project was included and expressed within all the friendship projects. The friendship conversation can be seen as the forum for self-expression and discovery of the self. By sharing feelings, secrets, opinions and perceptions, the girls navigated who they think they are by revealing themselves to each other and testing out ideas about themselves in the context of their close friendship. Examples of exploration of the self are included in other sections of this chapter as the project of exploration and discovery of the self was achieved concurrently while actively pursuing other subordinate friendship projects (while maintaining the friendship, while supporting, while connecting, and while having fun).

How the girls conceptualized and navigated a sense of self within close friendships can also clearly be seen through the collage interview. In these interviews the girls actively reflected on their perceptions of close friendships, and at times stated how these relationships have come to bear on their ideas of self. Most girls reported, during the collage interview, that these close friendships afforded them with the comfort of being free to be themselves, of not trying or having to be something they are not, and knowing that they are accepted while being imperfect. Beth described how she has come to have "forgiveness" as a friendship value.

Beth2: And then, um yeah but um the hearts also in the corner down there and the heart over there are sort of like the main things like I value in friendship. And like the biggest heart is

for like forgiveness because like, I've messed up and stuff, so…I like in quite a few of my friendships is like I've done some things I shouldn't have done and like that's not good and stuff but if they're like true friends they will always forgive you. Other people that have done like bad things to me even though they are my friends but you'll forgive them.

Similarly, she went on to describe how she came to know that "trust" as a personal value

was important to her in her close friendships.

Beth73: Because without trust there's nothing. If you can't trust them – I - I just had this one friend who I really liked a lot but then I found out like I couldn't trust her at all, so ever since then we haven't been friends, so I just like gave up on that. It's really important to me after that. Uh hm

She stated that it was through these two situations that she has come to know herself with

respect to the holding of these two values, demonstrating the important forum of friendship in

exploring and developing her sense of who she is and what she believes in. Her friendship

partner, Amber, was even more explicit about this phenomenon when she described what the

term "rediscovered" meant on her collage.

Interviewer84: Okay. So this "rediscovered" does that mean perhaps that you – Ummnm, why don't you tell me what it means to you?
Amber84-86*:* Okay, well I think that – you know we've kind of gone through phases in our friendship and we've kind of rediscovered the other in each phase. And I think we also have learned a little bit about ourselves through the other person.
Interviewer87: Ah, how does that work?
Amber87-89: Well I don't know – just like you know we'll say stuff about like I might say something about Beth. that she might not see herself being. And it could be positive or negative. But it's usually positive. (laughing) Um, except and I think the same thing happens with me.
Interviewer90: Okay, so you're a good reflection for each other.
Amber90: Yeah.

Other participants also alluded to their friendships as being places where they were free

to discover and learn about themselves. Debra described her friendship as a learning

environment; particularly when she referred to how her close friends have both helped her, while

they also have let her figure things out for herself when she has chosen to be independent.

Debra30: "Laugh and Learn" Yeah – that's um like a motto that we heard. And we just wanted to put it there cause um I don't know we just like the motto and it – it's sort of like represents what we do a lot.

Interviewer31: Uh hm.. So you learn from each other. Uh hm, and you really laugh together.

Debra31: Yeah.

Interviewer32: You have fun. And just living is just you're just hanging out, being together.

Debra32: Yeah. Just live practically our whole lives together.

Debra41: And they don't always try and help you when you don't need it. Like if you try and do something and do it like by yourself, you want to be like independent.

Debra46: Yeah. And when I ask for help, she helps me, and she doesn't… like say, "Oh my God, I can't believe you don't know how to do that." Or something like, she doesn't make me feel bad about something.

Heather also referred to this aspect of her friendship with Gloria when she described how she perceived herself as having helped Gloria to see things about herself in a more accurate light.

Heather47: She can like she can be … like if she messes up, then she'll be like … "Oh my god I can't believe I did that". And then like, if she thinks she's wrong, and she isn't, I like, I can tell her that and she would like "Oh" and then all the time we hug and stuff and (laughing) which is really like … I like it because … some people aren't very comfortable with that.

Jackie reported that her close friendship with Isabel allowed her to see her friend in a way that others have not. She felt she had a more accurate understanding of Isabel as a person because they both have felt so comfortable to be their authentic selves with each other, something that has been afforded them as a result of their close friendship.

Jackie103-104: Um, well Isabel's – yeah Isabel's really – she's like when I first met her I thought of her as a really quiet person. But then when I got to know her more of a friend, she can be really crazy too. Like when she's hyper. And so she can be really fun and even though it's like she is a quiet person that like but not usually around me, but yeah.

Interviewer105: Hm. So you feel like - like a lot of people might not know that about her?

Jackie105: Um, I guess maybe well …

Interviewer106: Do a lot of people think she's a quiet person?

Jackie106: Um, I well like just people that know her, don't really but if you just meet her you might find as her maybe more of a shy person. But she's really not. She's really outgoing.

Interviewer107: Got it. So that makes it a bit special for you because you know this part of her that maybe not a lot of other people know about her.

Jackie107: Yeah.

Interviewer108: Because like, I mean most people, we all have a way of how we present ourselves and then there's all these different parts that come out.

Jackie108: Uh hm.

Interviewer109: Yeah. So do you feel you know her better than anyone else, in a way?

Jackie109: Yeah.

Joint Project – To Have Fun Together

All five dyads demonstrated (cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally) that they desired to have fun during their friendship conversation. The functional steps (the means) by which they chose to implement this project were mostly consistent across dyads (by making jokes, by teasing, by telling funny stories). The specific elements were typically laughing, smiling, and by using animated body language (leaning in, expressive hand gestures, exaggerated tone of voice).

Amber and Beth demonstrated their friendship goal of fun through a variety of means. They made jokes, teased each other, and laughed throughout the friendship conversation. Amber and Beth both engaged in teasing as a functional step in order to inject humour into their conversation as demonstrated by the following exchanges:

Amber24: And I've like been spending all my money on food.

Beth24: You're going to get fat! [in a teasing voice. Amber then attempts to slap her on the leg] Ouch! [laughing].

The previous passage also indicated an identity exploration. Beth's teasing remark about the possibility of Amber becoming fat allows Amber to test out this identity and respond with a rejection. She indicated this by slapping Beth on the leg, thereby rejecting the identity of being someone who will become fat.

Beth34: I hate sweet ones [referring to crepes]. They make me feel sick. My stomach is so delicate. It's not fair.

Amber34: [Teasing with dramatic body gestures (hands on her stomach) and exaggerated high tone of voice]] "Ohhhh, how my stomach pains me. Oh, oh, let's go outside so I can vomit...." [laughing]

The goal to have fun is also demonstrated by overt expression and behaviours. This pair, as did many of the others, laughed throughout their conversation and used animated, exaggerated body language (dramatic hand movements, facial expressions, exaggerated tone of voice, etc).

Amber68: And then-oh my god that bugged me so much. And then like it was the- you know it was at that little sushi place. And then there was the little like store and Avery took an orange and went up to the counter and [laughing]......
Beth68.5: Oh yeah...
Amber68.5: and he was like "Excuse me-I-I like I'm a vegetarian-does this have meat in it?" [mimicking the Avery]. And it's like
Beth69: [laughing] meat?
Amber69: "Does this orange have meat in it? I need to know". It was so funny.
Beth70: [laughing] And the guy was like "Meat?"
Amber70: And we're going- "Meat?" [both girls say this simultaneously while laughing]. It was so funny.
Beth70.5: Oh my God! [laughing]

During the self-confrontation interview both girls repeatedly reported that they were happy and having fun during their conversation.

Amber14: I was kind of realizing - oh my god we can actually eat! Really, like, like I can say I know what I take from this isn't all that insightful. But what I'm like really feeling now - but what I feel when we're just kinda doing the lighter chat stuff - we're just having fun and I…

Beth43: Yeah, and um how I was feeling? - Well I don't know. I - I was feeling happy and I was just talking with my friend. I don't know. I was just happy to be talking with her. Because we were really into our conversation. And like obviously I wasn't thinking about that or I wouldn't have said it. (laughing) You know.

Beth82: ah I - I felt um well during this whole thing I felt like pretty happy and content I don't know. And it was just like I was thinking about the old like memories and - well not really old memories in a way. I was thinking about last night and I was happy.

Candace and Debra also demonstrated their desire to have fun during their conversation. In the following excerpt, Candace told a humourous fictional story as a way to have fun with her friend during their friendship conversation. Although, one girl told the story and the other was listening, together they demonstrated their joint project by actively fostering interest, through asking questions, leaning in body language, and animated story telling. The humour was

obviously enjoyed by both girls during this passage. The fictional story itself also provided

evidence of a testing of a possible, fictional identity. Candace's story involved herself as the

main character, taking risks and in a situation she would not likely realistically find herself in.

Although humourous, the story also indicated Candace's testing of an exciting, risk-taking

identity, one that Debra responds to with laughter and acceptance. Receiving Debra's response

possibly allowed Candace to feel comfortable to continue her fictional, imaginary story, and

strengthening her sense of freedom to explore possible selves in the future.

Candace37: So I walked through it and then I was too scared to go for like three days. And then I asked my sister (finally, I couldn't not go anymore), who was with us, to come with me. And then she's like fine and I come with her and then the shower was really small so I had like leave my clothes outside. And then she...
Debra37: Did someone take your clothes?
Candace38: Yeah, Brenda took all my clothes.
Debra38: Oh my god. (laughing)
Candace39: So then I ...(laughing)
Debra39: Did you have a towel or something?
Candace40: She took that too. So then she runs away and then um and then I hear footsteps going away and then I'm like, "Oh shoot." So I finish my shower and then I go back and then it starts raining.
Debra40: You're naked?
Candace41: and then I'm all cold. (laughing) Yeah, So I go back and but no, it's like in the middle of the woods so it's okay and then.

During the self-confrontation interview, both girls confirmed that they were indeed happy

and having fun during the fictional story telling.

Candace56: I guess I was kind of feeling happy when I was telling the story.
Candace58: Um, I don't know kind of happy. I don't know.
Interviewer64: Just having fun.
Candace59: Yeah.
Candace76: Um, just happy I guess. And I was kind of feeling excited when I was telling her about the story because it was a pretty good story.

Debra38: Um, I thought it was kind of funny, her made up story. And
Interviewer42: yeah
Debra39: Um also, I know her, and for me, because I know her sister Brenda. I know um her story isn't true because um that her sister probably wouldn't do something like that.

Debra43: And she was trying to make it as though it was real. And I thought it was pretty good… pretty real.

Interviewer52: Okay. What else are you noticing or feeling about yourself while you're watching yourself?

Debra49: That I laugh a lot.

Interviewer53: (laughing) Yeah. Why are you laughing?

Debra50: Because it's funny.

In still another dyad (Emma and Faith), the girls sometimes used gossip as a functional step in order to achieve their goal of fun. They enjoyed talking about a teacher that they both disliked. Although gossiping also allowed the fulfillment of other goals, it is introduced here to show how much the girls enjoy doing it, as evidenced in their animated body language, tone of voice, and laughter. They entertained each other by gossiping about their teacher. Neither Faith, nor Emma, were able, on self-confrontation interview, to identify any internal processes (thoughts or feelings) occurring during this part of their conversation. It is behaviorally apparent, however, that they were having fun together.

Faith10: Mr. _____ is such a bad teacher.

Emma11: I know (laughing).

Faith11: He's all like, wooooooo.......(leans in, laughing).

Emma11.5: He like, tried to start a conversation with me.

Faith12: Yeah I know, like and after that he walks away.

Emma12: He's so, no, like on Wednesday like he's so ...

Faith12.5: He's like, I like your Jersey and I'm like (laughing)

Emma13: I know, I was like - I was like ... "I know you're trying to start a conversation, and it's not working".

Faith13: Yeah cause we know you hate us (laughing) He like hated us for that thing.

Emma14: Yeah, I know. It's like... (laughing)

Faith13.5: And now we shall hate him.

Later, these girls gossiped positively about a boy they know that can make a beat boxing sound. They had fun mimicking his sound.

Emma26.5: How does he do that? (laughing) [both girls attempt to make a beat boxing sound]

Faith25.8: (laughing)

Emma27: Something like that. (laughing) I have no idea.

Faith26: He did it so fast.

Interviewer31: What was that like?
Emma27: Weird.
Interviewer32: Yeah?
Emma28: Yeah. Cause like - yeah I don't know how Chris does that….
Interviewer33: Ah.
Emma29: …make that sound thing.
Interviewer34: But you were having fun trying to mimic it I think?
Emma30: Yeah.
Interviewer35: And, it looked like you were having fun. You were smiling and …
Emma31: Yeah.

Later they used humour-filled gossip to make fun of a group of kids from their school,

something both girls found very amusing. The girls were also trying on their group identity as

the "Frenchies" (the French Immersion group), as being separate, and somehow superior to that

of the "Engies". In this way, while achieving the goal of having fun, this pair was also exploring

their common school identity and increasing their solidarity.

Emma48: We should go downtown to watch a movie.
Faith48: Yeah. Go see a movie and then whatever.
Emma49: Well, go see the "Engies" [a term to describe the English speakers from their French immersion school] and then we're like "Hah, we have more people than you"
Faith49: Yeah, "Hah".
Emma50: And then we'll sneak into a movie.
Faith50: Yeah, then we'll say "Hah, we'll sneak into three not two, hah".
Emma51: Yeah, and we got kicked out. Oh boo, yeah.
Faith50.5: Oh "What now, what now? [said in a teasing mocking tone]
Emma51.5: Yeah. (laughing)
Faith51: That would be funny (laughing).

Emma and Faith also sang parts of songs that they both liked and practiced dance moves

while sitting in their chairs. Later, one of the girls revealed that she was having fun during the

activity.

Emma91: Did you watch Soldier Boy, the video? He's like [begins to sing the song and do the dance moves from her chair] ... And in the beginning there are these too kids and their dad, and it's just like "Who is soldier boy? And they're like, "What?"
Faith92: I don't know. I haven't seen it. I just watched it - the one where he dances. It's like ... [both girls sing and do the dance moves from their chairs] and he's wearing these big glasses and his monkey shirt or something. And he's got a big, baggy jacket and he's like "Oh,

he's that soldier boy, Oh, he's that soldier boy" [singing the words to the song and doing the dance moves from her chair].

> **Faith**61: Well, at the end we were sort of like kind of dancing, I guess.
> **Faith**62: We were happy so we were like, dancing….., I don't know.

Gloria and Heather used humour throughout their friendship conversation in order to have fun. This was apparent through their body language (animated body movement, laughing, leaning in, and smiling) but also through what they revealed during the self-confrontation interview. They took several different functional steps in order to have fun (gossip, joking, silly rhyming banter). In the following example, Heather engaged with the camera to make a joke, which her friend found funny.

> **Heather**6: That's ticking. [It's very quiet in the room and she can hear the clock ticking] (laughing) It's very hard to do a conversation because we know that you're watching and listening [she turns toward the camera and uses animated hand gestures as she speaks to the researchers]
> **Gloria**5: (laughing) [grabs her friends hands and pulls her toward her so that they are again facing each other]

Despite having talked about a more serious topic (Gloria's boyfriend would be moving away in a few months and the girls were planning how Gloria should say goodbye to him), they were also happy and having fun with each other. Again, through discussion about how Gloria could possibly behave towards her boyfriend on his last day at school, they were testing out ways of being in the world, in this case, through exploration of a future, possible self. Gloria actively asked for Heather's opinion about how she should act with her boyfriend and Heather responded by giving her guidance. Gloria also asked Heather how she would respond in the same situation and Heather then tested out her own identity when she reflected on how she would handle the situation if she was in a similar circumstance.

> **Gloria**8: Derwin is going to move in like 5 months.
> **Heather**10: And then you can kiss him good-bye, on his last day.
> **Gloria**9: Yes.

Heather11: I'm going to be like moi. [makes the sound of giving a big air kiss with her lips]

Gloria10: Should I really? Would you?

Heather12: Well, you would have to be alone like say the day after school that he was leaving. Like he was like going wherever he's going...

Gloria11: I'd kiss him on the cheek, though.

Interviewer16: What was going on for you there?

Gloria14: Um, fun. I was kind of happy.

Interviewer17: Uh hm.

Gloria15: But then sad at the same time.

Interviewer18: Because you were thinking about that - the boy moving away.

Gloria16: Yeah.

Interviewer19: Yeah. Okay and when you guys were ah sort of talking about a plan of what you might do, that was the fun part?

Gloria17: Yeah.

Interviewer20: Any other thoughts there?

Heather18: I'm fun … and I sound funny.

The girls continued to joke with each other, and frequently in their conversation they engaged in a back-and-forth type of banter and name rhyming. Sometimes they gossiped but sometimes they were playful and made overt attempts to have fun together. Gloria, in the following excerpt also asserted an identity as being "the only one" who calls Josh Joshua.

Heather16: Why do you call Derwin, Darlin'?

Gloria15: I don't know.

Heather17: It's a fun name. Derweinie.

Gloria16: Don't call him that. I call Josh, Joshua. I'm the only one who calls him that.

Heather18: I call him Bosh.

Gloria17: Oh. (laughing)

Heather19: The Doshal...(laughing) Dickle. (laughing) Pickle (laughing) My hands smell like cookies. ...

Interviewer28: And what was it like at that moment when you know you and your friend were sharing and coming up with all those names?

Heather26: Um, it was really funny. (laughing)

On self-confrontation Gloria reported that she also felt guilty because of having fun in this way (through gossiping about their common friend).

Gloria21: Um, I was kind of feeling bad. Cause she's kind of our friend. But, then, sometimes she really gets on our nerves.

Interviewer27: Yeah. Okay, so were you feeling a bit guilty about talking about her?

Gloria24: Yeah.

Interviewer28: Yeah. Okay and then there was a lot of laughter. So, again, fun.

Gloria25: Yeah.

Interviewer29: Being light and silly. Some name calling, so that was kind of fun.

Gloria26: (laughing) Yeah.

Isabel and Jackie demonstrated their goal to have fun throughout their conversation by reminiscing about happy memories they've had in the past and anticipating fun things they would like to do in the future. Their conversation was very animated (hand movement, leaning in, nodding) and was punctuated by frequent laughter and affirmations. In this part of their conversation they were anticipating playing on Isabel's driveway in the event of snow. This passage also demonstrated an identity project, as each girl constructed and identified herself as someone who enjoyed playing in the snow, an attribute about themselves they have come to know as a direct result of their previous experiences together.

Isabel20: Uh hm. Your driveway's gonna be so slippery so

Jackie20: I know. It probably will be when we get back because you know how when we're walking on the gravel on the way here, and it was like rocky......

Isabel21: It…. Oh yeah, it was so slippery...

Jackie21: And the driveway was smooth (tsch tsch tsch - [waves her arms in the air as if trying to keep her balance].

Isabel22: Yeah (laughing). That'll be so much fun.

Interviewer15: What was happening for you during that minute?

Isabel15: Well, we always play in the snow together, so it was … yeah. (laughing) I don't know um …. No. ….. (laughing)

Isabel23: Because we yeah um love to play in the snow together. (laughing)

Isabel24: We like snow and everything.

Interviewer25: You have a lot of good memories around that.

Isabel25: Yeah.

Jackie20: I was thinking - I think I was like - I was thinking sort of about when we were on the driveway again, like what we were talking about…

Interviewer24: Yeah.

Jackie21: Yeah and I'd be - I know I was thinking about…, I was hoping it was like that when I get home.

Interviewer25: Yeah.

Jackie22: So we can go out on the driveway again.

Interviewer26: Yeah.

Jackie23: And try and slide down it. (laughing)

Interviewer27: Yeah. So what kind of feelings do you think you were having based on those thoughts?

Jackie24: Um, I guess excited and happy again.

Interviewer28: Yeah.

Jackie25: Yeah, thinking about the memory again.

Later in their conversation they again planned for the future and reminisced about the past, a vantage point for them to have fun. By generating this sort of memory narrative they demonstrated their perceptions of what they have enjoyed in the past and what they anticipated they would enjoy doing in the future.

Jackie92: Yeah, Sometimes I wish it was summer again because in the summer I'd go on the trampoline at Alyssa's house 24/7.

Isabel93: I know, I love the trampoline, especially with sleeping bags, and you jump in them (laughing) and sit down and then the air goes pffffffssst and ...

Interviewer121: Um, so what would you say your general feeling is there in that moment again?

Jackie112: Um, I was feeling happy again.

Jackie116: Yeah, just sort of cause I guess we were just sort of talking about all the memories and stuff and…

Jackie117: thinking about getting to do that again and for summer and everything and Christmas.

Jackie and Isabel particularly enjoyed themselves and were visibly happy when they discovered something that they had in common. This was a source of fun for them during their friendship conversation. In this case they were discussing that they both wanted the same pair of boots for Christmas. Their obvious trying on of identities in terms of what they both liked being similar to each other, they were able to affirm in their minds that they were carving out a fashion taste identity that was correct and preferred over what others might prefer (Jackie's mother or Jessica's fashion taste). By having an agreed upon taste and aligning themselves as separate from others they were exploring their joint sense of self.

Jackie64: I want those boots.

Isabel64.5: I know, same!

Jackie65: My mom says there called Uggs and they're going out of style, but I was like ... [gestures with her hands and shakes her head no - as if she is confused by her mom's comment and doubts that it is true] (animated, excited talking over one another)

Isabel65: They just came in style.

Jackie65: Like, yeah, well they've been in style for awhile actually, but yeah.

Isabel66: For years,

Jackie66: But um everyone's wearing them.

Isabel67: I know well, like you know Jessica's. Like obviously not as nice as that... like they're redic... (laughing)

Jackie67: (laughing) Yeah, I don't want the really high ones.

Interviewer129: Um any feelings associated with what you were talking about?

Isabel124: Um, well I'm glad that she always agrees with me, kind of thing.

Interviewer130: Uh hm.

Isabel125: Yeah and happy that we have the same …

Interviewer131: taste.

Isabel126: ..taste. Yeah.

Jackie86-87: Um, I guess again there I was happy. (laughing) Joyful.

Enjoyment and fun within discovering and celebrating their similarities came up again as they talked about the fact that they received the exact same mark on a recent test. This pair, more than the others, has an identity project together that fosters similarity. Even through their collages they enjoyed identifying and celebrating their similarities. They seemed to see each more positively by virtue of their many likenesses and in a circular fashion identified more similarities, actively searched for them, and frequently celebrated them. In addition to the identity project that this process of similarity finding and celebration produced, the girls also found it fun and entertaining.

Jackie119: The test, ugghhh. (laughing) We got the same mark.

Isabel119: Oh I know! (laughing)

Isabel187: Yeah, sometimes we get exactly the same mark. It's funny.

Interviewer199: So you were laughing about that when she said that.

Isabel188: Yeah.

Isabel198: Um, well it's kind of funny that we have that (laughing) [referring to the fact that they sometimes even have marks in common].

Jackie143: …then she goes, "You got the same mark as me" (laughing), so we started to laugh really hard. (laughing)

Interviewer152: (laughing)

Jackie144: And yeah. And that's sort of what Isabel was about to say but she didn't there. Yeah that's what I was thinking there I think because yeah when we both got the same mark, so I just thought it was just sort of a funny memory again.

Interviewer153: Yeah.

Jackie145: Cuz' we couldn't stop laughing. (laughing)

Interviewer154: (laughing) Okay. Anything else you were thinking or feeling there?

Jackie146: Um, again I guess feeling joyful.

In summary, all dyads engaged in fun together throughout their conversations. The functional steps utilized in order to enact this project were joking, teasing, telling and listening to fictional stories, gossiping, and the rhyming banter of name-calling. Throughout the enactment of their "fun" project, the girls also engaged in the larger project of identity exploration.

Joint Project – To Support Each Other

Support was both sought and elicited within the five friendship conversations. The girls used several different methods (functional steps) in order to enact this project. They supported each other by gossiping about others, by offering advice and problem solving, by reciprocally disclosing perceived personal flaws, and by openly agreeing and empathizing with each other. In this excerpt Amber offered Beth support by giving her advice and offering her opinion.

Beth60.2: Now I can't do it. I can't do it as much as I want to cause people will think I'm copying her.

Amber60.3: Whatever. It doesn't really matter if people think you're copying her, does it?

During self-confrontation interviewing Amber revealed that she was empathizing with her friend on this issue. In addition, through her response to Beth, she asks Beth to challenge the notion that it would matter if others thought she was copying them. In this way, Amber encourages Beth to test out the identity of being someone who would not care if others thought she was copying them.

Amber79: I was just actually really listening to her because it would be really rough - I can relate to that. I think we relate to each other a lot.

Amber80: I get that if you really want to try to do something and then the other goes ahead and does it and Ughhhh.

Beth, while discussing her "pant" dilemma with Amber, was also exploring her sense of self. During the self-confrontation interview she indicated that she was worried about making a particular impression on others now that she has entered high school, illustrating an awareness of a school identity (one who would not copy others) she was trying to uphold. Amber's questioning allowed Beth to conclude that she doesn't need to be frustrated by the situation.

Beth61.5: (laughing) Yeah, and so um I had this hole. I didn't mean to make a hole but it just got bigger and bigger and bigger and then um I came around and there's this girl and she had hers all like you know done in sharpies and like hers was a whole lot cooler than mine. And I'm like I don't want to do it because I feel like everyone will say like I copied her pants and so yeah I was sort of frustrated a little.(laughing) uh hm. I didn't need to be though.

Beth65: … I think I was just thinking about school and stuff. And I was just looking at my pants and then um you know I just – I was thinking about school and my pants and stuff and like um I didn't want to like yeah. So that's what made me think about. And I'm just playing with my rip. That's why it's so big, because I pull the threads. (laughing) And so yeah I was just looking at it and then um I thought of that. And then um yeah also like regarding like um I was thinking like probably like in elementary school I wouldn't have minded. Like wearing the same pants as people. And now it's like new school and stuff like I don't want to be make like a bad first impression or something.

Gossip was also used to elicit support and her friend's provision of empathy was demonstrated in this passage, whereby one girl revealed a difficult situation she had with a fellow classmate.

Beth72.5: And he saw me and he was just talking with his friend and then-the day before the thing was due

Amber71.5: What a jerk. [hits the wall]

Beth72.6: ...he called me and like "Beth, what did you get for the observations?". I said "you were supposed to get them from me" so then the-and I was like watching my TV show and like I told him. What like he-what the observations were and then um-he was like. All right now what should I write for the conclusion? So I was like-you write your own conclusion. And he's like "Beth, like you're being so mean to me. You know I'm here for 5 years so you'd better be nice to me. So I was like-"No-I'm busy". And I hung up on him.

Amber72: Big jerk.

Beth73: He was so annoying. I can't stand him.

Amber73: I know.

Beth, who was eliciting support from her friend, revealed during self-confrontation that she felt gossiping with Amber was a way for her to get back at the classmate she was talking about. Through the gossiping she expressed her identity to Amber as being someone who is able to assert herself in a difficult situation with a peer. Beth also indicated that she was happy that she had the support of her friend on this issue.

Beth100: Ah I was sort of frustrated because about that, because there's like this guy and he's really like - annoying. So I was just sort of frustrated about it right then. Well, no I guess it felt sort of good. Because in a way it's sort of getting revenge on him by talking about him. (laughing) and about how mean he was to me. So yeah….
Beth118: Um, well just happy that she was agreeing with me about Avery.
Interviewer123: uh hm.
Beth119: Because he's such a jerk. Yeah, I was happy about that.

Amber responded to her friend's frustration by supporting her and she confirmed this support during the self-confrontation. Amber affirmed Beth's perceptions about the boy she is gossiping about, but at the same time she affirmed the identity that Beth portrayed (i.e. a person who would not tolerate someone who did not contribute on a group science project).

Amber115: I was kind of agreeing with her. I mean, what a jerk!
Interviewer118: uh hm
Amber116: But, I was kind of visualizing what she was saying and just kinda like agreeing with her.

They also demonstrated their support for each other by revealing potentially embarrassing and self-deprecating thoughts about themselves. The friendship project of support for Beth and Amber was advanced by self-representations about being the "class idiot". Potentially embarrassing self-revelations were responded to in kind as a way to support each other and normalize each other's experience. These remarks were not dismissed or challenged, but rather were reciprocally responded to with a corresponding and similar admission by the

other. Their apparent comfort in making such revelations about their perceived school identity

also spoke to their degree of trust, ease, and acceptance of each other.

> **Amber**74: What I don't like about the mini school is that everyone around you is smart so you don't feel smart. You know what I mean? [both girls attend Mini schools but two different ones - they don't go to school together].
> **Beth**74.5: I know. I'm the class idiot. [laughing]
> **Amber**75: I'm the class idiot in math actually.
> **Beth**75: I'm so stupid in my class.

During the self-confrontation interview both girls indicated their support and

understanding for each other and their respective situations at school.

> **Amber**122: As you know? Ah yeah. So it's, we were just kinda talking about that. And I think we were just kinda relating to each other.
> **Amber**126: Yeah, that's how a lot of our conversations go especially now that we're in different schools.

Beth's self-representation of being the "class idiot" was, however, inconsistent with how

she truly saw herself. Her self-representation, although inconsistent with her true feelings, did

advance her goal of supporting and normalizing Amber's way of thinking. In a bid to support

her friend and normalize her experience, she falsely represented herself. Her functional step at

this point in their dialogue seemed to be normalizing her friend's experience, an important

behavioural demonstration of support. Her perception of her true identity, however, was

revealed on self-confrontation whereby Beth indicated she actually felt proud and unique to be

part of a school program that is designed for smart kids, a label she feels quite comfortable with.

> **Beth**106: … I like wasn't really feeling bad about being like the class idiot because Amber and I both go to this um like program where there's like a lot of really smart people and I'm like – we're like um – we're not stupid. But we don't get – we're not like super smart. And everyone there is like super, super smart. So we seem to be like you know as far as the class is we're way down here. Like we go to different ones at different schools. And um so yeah I wasn't really feeling like upset about that. I was sort of I don't know I'm sort of proud, you know what I mean, that it sort of sets me apart. I don't know.

Although, Amber did not reveal it on self-confrontation, it is suspected that she too did not truly believe that she was an "idiot in math" even though she went to great lengths during the conversation to portray herself as such. In this continuation on the same topic, Beth and Amber continued to self-represent themselves as stupid. However, Amber ended this cycle of self-deprecating comments by saying "okay". This statement encouraged Beth to present herself in a more positive light, one that was perhaps more representative of her true self. This was another example of how they tested out their identities, looking to each other for support and subtle challenge to their negative self-perceptions.

Amber75.5: I was like – I don't get anything. I was like—"wait". Except "how can a = c cause you said a = b and he goes like "a = c". [laughing] "God"! And it's just like—"okay"
Beth76: "What???" I know, "I'm sorry…., everyone's like".
Amber76: Umm hmm..
Beth77:—in math like—one time we were like—I got 47. [laughing] 47%, And oh my god I'm so stupid.
Amber77: Okay.
Beth78: But I'm not a slacker.
Amber78: Okay, okay….
Beth79: There's always slackers, there are so many slackers, and they have no idea what's going on. There's this one girl—she's so stupid. And—like I know she's not stupid but you know what I mean, she didn't deserve to get in but _____ so she got in [to the mini school]. But she doesn't deserve it.

During self-confrontation, regarding a different situation, Beth contradicted her negative self-representation of being stupid. This opposite self-representation, which she chose not to disclose to Amber, occurred when she was reflecting on her ability to help Amber with a social scheduling problem.

Beth154: Um, well I always pride myself um thinking to myself "I'm so smart". (laughing)

Amber, in another part of the conversation, shifted her goal from fun (through active teasing) to support after Beth revealed that she was serious about her sensitivity to sweet foods, an admission she made more thoroughly during self-confrontation. Although initially, in her

friendship conversation, she appeared to be taking the teasing lightly and finding it funny, she internally felt hurt and upset by her friend's teasing. Beth, in this way, enacted her friendship value of acceptance and forgiveness, one that she repeatedly demonstrated throughout the conversation by keeping these feelings to herself. Although Amber claimed, on self-confrontation, that teasing is typically all in good fun and neither of them takes it seriously, she nevertheless adapted to the situation, realized that her friend was serious, and took a more supportive stance in the conversation.

Interviewer23: She was talking about how sweet things upset her and you were teasing her a bit.
Amber22: Yeah, I was but we were like, we were playing with each other.
Interviewer24: uh hm
Amber23: Like I like according to her I'm able to - and I'm not sure you saw this, but she'll tease me a lot too.
Interviewer25: Uh hm
Amber24: And we don't take it as bad things. It just kind of happens sometimes.
Interviewer26: Yeah. Okay.
Amber25: We don't feel bad & stuff…..

Beth17: Well, as she made fun of me when she said, "Oh, my stomach pains me…" I was like well it - it - it's true so it made me really mad. Cuz' like it's true though, like I have a really - whoops - delicate stomach. And like I feel sick really really easily so I was like "Amber, like don't make fun of me." But it's - it's true. Like I'm not being over-reactive. Yeah.
Beth18: Yeah. Because she's making fun of me. I don't I don't like it. I wish it wasn't like that. But yeah.
Beth19: Um, not really. Just - I was just a little - like mad at her. Well, not really mad at her. I was just like "Amber" -
Interviewer20: Yeah.
Beth20: don't say that. (laughing)
Interviewer21: Yeah don't take it too far.
Beth21: Yeah.

In this excerpt from their conversation, Amber adapted her desire for fun and began to soften her teasing through the use of empathic, understanding statements.

Beth35: But, it's true....It hurts.
Amber35: OK, no, I know. (tone gets more serious) It does, like I-I-I know. It would really suck actually.
Beth36: I know. All the time.

Amber36: I feel really sorry for you.

Other dyads reciprocally revealed truthfully embarrassing aspects of themselves to their

partners as a demonstration of support.

> **Heather**69: …*I need to shave my armpits.* [lifts up her arm and has a look at her armpit.]
> **Gloria**69: *Me too*. It's really long.

Other dyads elicited and offered support through the use of gossip. In this part of their

friendship conversation Debra was an active listener as Candace outlined an annoying situation

she had with her younger class buddy at school. Debra provided support by listening to Candace

gossip and by asking appropriate questions so that she would get a complete understanding of the

situation. She used words like "Really?" and "Whoa!" to demonstrate her support and convey

empathy to her friend.

> **Candace**54: We have to go in and help the grade fives. They totally hate us. In the hall…
> **Debra**54: They hate you? Like the grade fours last year?
> **Candace**55: Yeah. And the grade fives don't like us.
> **Debra** 55: Like Ms. _____ 's class or whatever?
> **Candace**56: Um no it's a new teacher um and then you see we have to go help them and they're like the worst class ever.
> **Debra**56: Why do you have to help them?
> **Candace**57: Because they're a bad class.
> **Debra**57: Like with what? With math?
> **Candace**58: With like with writing. Just today we did like poems and then and then … but you know my old guy? Cause like I don't really have a buddy so I can just go with whoever.
> **Debra**58: Yeah.
> **Candace**59: Which is pretty good. So then And I – before I had to go with Mark but then he didn't really want me to. But Mark' buddy was so bad..
> **Debra**59: Really?
> **Candace**60: He was just like, "Why do you have to do this? I know everything on supervision aids" And we're like okay what's the favourite color?. And he's like "I don't want to know that." And I'm like "oh my god". And we're like, "Okay what's the country of origin?" "I don't know, why should I care?" And we're "So you really don't know anything about these guys and it's like, " Just write down the answers" and finally when we got him to do one question he like started [unclear, sounds like "flowing out with"] with the questions."
> **Debra**60: Really?
> **Candace**61: It was really weird. (laughing) And his desk. Say this is his desk. [gestures with her hands] Papers were coming out to like here.

Debra61: Whoa!

Faith and Emma also used gossip to support each other. Faith, recognizing that another girl at school was stealing Emma's fashion style, offered her adamant support. Emma tested her style and image identity by asserting her ownership of a particular way of dressing. Faith responded by agreeing with her, confirming Emma's right to claim this style self-identity (one who dresses in baggy jeans and sweaters).

Emma63.5: Kathy copies like everyone. Oh my god.... Shelley had like baggy jeans and a sweater. That is my thing [strong emphasis on "my"]
Faith64: I know... and then they're not even that baggy. If you're going to get baggy jeans, like then you have to get like "baggy" [grabs at her friend's jeans]. I know.
Emma64: That is my thing.
Faith65: I know and then she's not even doing it right.
Emma65: I looked at Shelley and I was like, "Oh my god."
Faith65.5: ..."What's wrong with her?"
Emma66: I know. I was like "that's supposed to be me. Boo hoo hoo". [said in a mocking, tearful, tone] (laughing) "You're so lame" and Ah ... yeah.

On self-reflection, Emma revealed that "Kathy copies people a lot", but did not identify her feelings about it. She did, however, agree with the interviewer that this was annoying to her. It was apparent, however, through their friendship conversation that Emma herself felt like her style was being copied and she elicited the support of her friend to side with her against Kathy.

Interviewer80: So what was happening there?
Emma70: Talking about Kathy and Shelley.
Interviewer81: Uh hm
Emma71: And they way they dress. And yeah Kathy copies people a lot.
Interviewer82: Uh hm. So that's annoying.
Emma72: Yeah

While they also gossiped to further their goal of providing support to each other, Gloria and Heather sometimes asked for support through the use of direct questions and requests for feedback, mostly centered on insecurities they each had with their appearance. The following passage is somewhat unique, in that rarely did the participants in this study directly reveal their

insecurities and ask for feedback about their perceived self-image. They can be seen as having

actively contributed to each other's sense of self, in this case their perceived body image.

> **Heather**22: [is adjusting her shirt and sitting up straighter] Do you think I'm fat?
> **Gloria**21: No. Am I fat?
> **Heather**23: No. You're skinny.
> **Gloria**22: Am I anorexic? (laughing).
> **Heather**24: No (laughing).

During the self-confrontation, Heather revealed that she relies on Gloria to provide her

with honest feedback and correction of how she might otherwise see herself. Gloria also views

her role to be one of correcting Heather's incorrect assumptions about herself. They both felt

comfortable to be in the role of being a sounding board for each other's body concerns.

> **Interviewer**34: Uh hm. So when she asked um "Do you think I'm fat?" or "Am I fat?"
> what - what were you thinking then?
> **Gloria**30:   I was like, "Why would she think that?"
> **Gloria**32-33:   And I was like, "Why would she think that?" Because it's not true. And
> like why would she ask the question?

> **Heather**36-37:   …But (laughing) and then we were talking about cause I get kind of
> insecure about my stomach and stuff. And everybody calls Gloria anorexic because like she has
> like a bigger metabolism.
> **Interviewer**43: What's it like for you at that moment when you're talking about your
> weight and appearance.
> **Heather**40:   Um, I knew that she won't like - like lie to me and stuff. Because…
> **Heather**41:   um sometimes I've slept over at her house and um we had this big, huge
> talk about what was wrong with each other and what we could try to work on and stuff. And like
> yeah.
> **Interviewer**46: So you trust her that she will give you um her honest opinion of what
> she thinks.
> **Heather**43: Yeah.

The girls then began to gossip and make fun a boy who insinuates that Gloria is anorexic.

In this way, through gossip, Heather demonstrated her support of Gloria's "not anorexic" identity

by actively siding against Michael and calling him silly names. Heather frequently used humour

to support her friend and distract her from her self-concerns. In this way she managed to keep

the conversation light and funny, rather than one of negative self-representation.

Gloria23: But everyone and Brandon always calls me anorexic all the time. It's not fair.

Heather25: Yeah, but Buff, Buff, Buff, buff asshole. He's like….. okay, he's buffet.

Gloria24: Yeah, but even Mya called me anorexic.

Heather26: But, Mya is buffet (laughing).

Gloria25: Yes, but Michael called me anorexic.

Heather27: Yeah, but Michael is Dichael (laughing). Pickle, dickle (laughing).

Gloria26: Pickle (laughing).

Heather28: You'd be like "hi Dichael…. Michael…. Dichael" (laughing).

Gloria27: You Dickle. (laughing) I wish we had bigger boobs. My sister had boobs like C's when she was in Grade 7.

Heather29: That's like…[looks down at her own chest and puts her hands out in front of her as if to cup big boobs] (laughing)

Gloria28: That's like Alina (laughing).

Heather30: That's like great big bajoombas (laughing).

Isabel and Jackie demonstrated their friendship goal of providing support through frequent, and animated agreement. Their enjoyment of their similarities was evident throughout their conversation and most self-revelations can be seen as bids for support, whether they were an expression of taste, a commiseration, or a stated opinion about a situation or another person. Elicitations for support were typically responded to with "I know" or "Me too". They each felt comfortable communicating their honest feelings to each other, thereby expressing true identities.

Jackie64: I want those boots.

Isabel64.5: I know, same!

Jackie32: And then there's the DBA [this stands for David Beckham Academy] thing.

Isabel33: I know ... I'm so glad that I'm not going. (laughing)

Jackie33: I know, I came home and my mom, she didn't ask me and I was like "Whoa".

Isabel34: I know my dad didn't ask me either and then finally he was like "all right" well he asked me and then I was like well no, probably not and then he signed me up anyways. And then so ... it was pretty bad but.... But um Herb really wanted me to go. And we didn't want to say that I didn't want to so we said we were going to go Pender Island (laughing). My dad was sitting visiting our cousins there and he felt all bad because he said that but... (laughing).

Jackie34: (laughing)

Isabel35: So (laughing) I know. Because we didn't want to say that I really didn't want to go.

Jackie35: I hate going to soccer without you there.

Isabel36: I know I hate that too.

Jackie36.5: No offence to him but…

Isabel37: . Yeah, I know. He's like, really impatient. Cuz' like yesterday when I was at Tina's house, he was super mean.

Jackie37: I know and that, like in the summer, he was like picking us up, "You guys get in the car. Hurry up. Get in the car." (laughing)

Isabel38: (laughing) Yeah I know, he's really impatient I think. Like that time when we were all trying on different shirts and everything. And he was getting so mad. (laughing)

Jackie38: (pause) I like Tina's mom.

Isabel39: I know, she's really pretty.

Jackie38.5: Her dad is so intense, Herb.

Isabel39.5: Yeah, I know he is scary. (laughing)

Jackie39: At soccer practice he'd be like "ha ha ha, Go run a lap". (laughing)

Isabel40: I know, he's evil.

On self-confrontation, when asked what it's like to be able to talk about their coach with each other, Isabel reported feeling supported and validated.

Isabel65: Yeah. It's good to know that somebody else feels the same way, though.

Jackie45: Um, I think I'm thinking about my soccer coach and he's really impatient. And yeah. And kind of just, not mad, but kind of well I guess kind of when I feel - whenever I feel - before I go to soccer I always feel really nervous because I'm afraid he's going to get mad.

They openly reported that they like the fact that they agree with each other. The fact that they frequently support each other in agreement speaks again to the affirmation of each other's selves and the co-creation of identities.

Isabel124: Um, well I'm glad that she always agrees with me, kind of thing.

Support was also provided spontaneously. Isabel directly demonstrated supportiveness by ensuring her friend would be spared embarrassment during the conversation. Near the end of their conversation Isabel softly told her friend that she could see she had sweaty armpits. This statement was made so softly that Jackie did not hear her and rather than saying it again louder, Isabel elected to let it go and change the topic. Later, she revealed her intent to the interviewer.

Isabel130: Yeah but um, I see (laughing), that your underarms are sweaty. [could not pick this up on the audio but Isabel tells me that this is what she had said during the self-confrontation interview]

Jackie131: Hm?

Isabel132: Never mind, um... but then - I know we spent how much - 29,000 or something? (laughing)

Isabel203: She went like that [raises her arms in the air] and I think she was … she was nervous because she had sweat in her armpits so …

Interviewer217: So is that what you said to her?

Isabel204: Yeah.

Interviewer218: I can see sweat on your armpits? (laughing)

Isabel205: Yeah. (laughing)

Interviewer219: But then you let it go.

Isabel206: Yeah, well because I didn't want, because of the camera, I didn't want to embarrass her.

While Gloria disclosed a difficult situation about her father, Heather accurately read the emotional need of her friend and spontaneously offered her support by way of a comforting hug. On self-confrontation Gloria agreed that she was looking for support by bringing up the topic and Heather offered support by listening, showing interest, asking questions, and making physical contact with her friend during the middle of the story.

Gloria86: (laughing) I'm really stressed out. [tone changes and she gets serious] I'm really sad.

Heather87: Why?

Gloria87: Well today his friend Brad, is dropping off his clothes [referring to her father's clothes]. Him and Krista's clothes. Krista sent me a letter to my grandma's house, and then my dad, he's thinking of the worst, my grandma said, because.. And I sent a letter to my grandma's house and then my dad he's thinking of the words my grandma said. Because he said he's going to be there for about like two - two years. But if he gets to the pen,

Heather88: What is the pen?

Gloria88: The penitentiary.

Gloria90: Yeah, like where you know you're going to be there for a while I guess. I don't know. North Frasier, you know, I like to think of it as a holding place, a holding jail. That's what I like to think of it as. Because he only stays there for about two months [during Gloria's speaking turn Heather leans over and gives her a big hug] and then he moves to the pen. And then when he goes to the pen, he stays till summer maybe.

Gloria137: I was kind of sad and thinking about what's going to happen after and stuff.

Interviewer154: For your dad or …?

Gloria138: Yeah.

Interviewer155: Okay. So - so in telling her about it, were you - you were looking for some comfort or support or something?

Gloria139: Yeah.

Interviewer156: Yeah. The hug was nice in the middle of the story.

Gloria140: Yeah.

Interviewer157: That was - she seemed to read that really well because you didn't ask for it.

Gloria141: Yeah.

Interviewer158: But she seemed to know that you needed a hug then.

Gloria142: Yeah.

Heather189: Um, she has problems with her dad and stuff right now. And …

Interviewer202: Uh hm.

Heather190: You know it's like a hard kind of time for her and so I just felt like giving her a hug. And it was like telling her it's like okay and stuff. It will be okay.

Interviewer203: Kind of reassuring her as a friend there.

Heather191: Yeah.

Further support was demonstrated when Heather offered Gloria advice on how to respond to a promise Gloria's father has made to her. In this way, Heather helped Gloria envision a different way of being with her father, one that would be more assertive. The identity of being a daughter who would be more challenging to her father is tested between the two girls.

Gloria91: And then he's like "I promise - or no - I give you my word that this time I'm going to get a job and I'm going to stop doing that stuff." ... and ...

Heather92: That's what he said last time, right?

Gloria92: Yeah, but then this time he's like I promise. I know I said it last time, but you can take my word on this. You know what I want to do? I want to make a contract. This is what you said and we sign it. Then when he gets out of jail, I'll say "So, this is what we agreed to. Are we going to do it?"

Heather93: No. Say "we're going to do it". Not "are we going to do it?" because then it's a question.

Heather also sought support from Gloria when she asked for information and advice about the possibility of getting her nose pierced. As Gloria has had her nose pierced, Heather consulted her, giving her the position of expert during this exchange. Heather was exploring a future self-identity (possibly being a girl with a nose piercing) with her friend by working out the details as to how she might go about doing it. She relied on Gloria to help guide her in this exploration of what she might be willing to do. Gloria offered support through the provision of information and the sharing her personal experience.

Heather75: Do you think I'd look good with my nose pierced?

Gloria75: Umm hmmm. [shrugs her shoulders] I don't know. We'll have to see.

Heather76: Ow. [pokes herself in the nose as if simulating what it would be like to have it pierced]

Gloria76: Just don't do it yourself. It hurts. Well it doesn't, but it hurts. It takes a long time. That's what I meant.

Heather77: Did it hurt? When you did it?

Gloria77: Hm, that I remember? Not really.

Heather78: Did it feel like a simple little pinch?

Gloria78: Well, in some spots it hurt cause it went through all the cartilage.

Heather79: Ahhhh [a sympathetic ahhh] ... Would it be easier with a gun?

Gloria79: No, they always use a needle. Cuz' guns are always dirty and gross. And you don't get it done properly, so they put a clamp in your nose. And then they put the needle through. It's way easier cause they just like stab through. That's what I heard.

Heather80: But what would you rather do it yourself or professionally?

Gloria80: Professionally, because it's faster and it doesn't get all infected and gross.

During self-confrontation Gloria reports she felt comfortable in the expert role and tried to anticipate how her friend would look with her nose pierced. By providing the answers to Heather's questions, Gloria helped Heather explore the possible identity. Heather sought advice from Gloria because she was curious about Gloria's experience.

Gloria121: So, I don't know if she wants it or she's just thinking about it.

Gloria125: I was just kind of like trying to imagine what it would look like.

Heather160:   Um, I kind of want my nose pierced. And then I was wondering if it hurt or not. It was just kind of gross when she said that. (laughing) And kind of scary and stuff.

In summary, the functional steps (the means used to achieve the goal of support) of gossip, seeking and providing advice, displaying physical affection, dropping a conversation topic, and agreeing with each other were demonstrated within early adolescent friendship conversations. They sometimes represented themselves falsely in order to normalize their friend's experience. Frequently, while implementing their project of support to each other, they were also are enacting their identity exploration project. On a micro level of analysis, several elements of conversation were utilized to achieve the functional steps. While gossiping the girls described past situations and talked about absent others, either positively or negatively. While

soliciting advice the girls asked questions or provided hypothetical situations for their friend to respond to. Physical affection was achieved through a comforting hug and preventing a friend's embarrassment was achieved by talking softly and then by changing the topic of conversation. Agreement or empathy was achieved through such behavioural elements such as nodding in agreement or making statements of "I know" or "me too".

Joint Project – To Connect with Each Other

All dyads demonstrated the friendship project to connect (to foster closeness or intimacy) with each other, although they utilized several different functional steps (means) to achieve their connections. They did this through the sharing of stories (both fictional and factual), through the use of gossip, through the disclosure of desires, and/or feelings, through the celebration of similarity and common ground, through reminiscing about past memories together and/or planning for the future, and through bids and acceptance of physical contact. Although there was no explicit evidence on self-confrontation interviewing to support that "connection" was indeed the goal, when I asked myself "why, or for what reasons are they engaging in this functional step", fostering a connection seemed to be the most logical and likely possibility. Each dyad had a tendency to use one method of connection more than others and often this goal overlapped with either the goal to have fun or the goal to support each other. Also, of note was that "connection" is an adult construct and girls of this age may not have an awareness of this as an area of conscious intention. Their language for "connecting" may be included in such statements as "hanging out", "relating to each other" or "having a nice vibe together", which they tended to use to describe the closeness of their friendships during the collage interview.

Amber and Beth repeatedly told stories as a way to keep each other informed and connected to their everyday lives, particularly because they do not go to the same school. These

bids for connection, through storytelling, were responded to with interest and enthusiasm. Candace and Debra also utilized this strategy, with Candace typically doing the storytelling, but with Debra also being an active and contributing participant. Other pairs used gossip more readily, in which case the gossip became a way for the girls to increase their own solidarity and view themselves differently from those whom they were gossiping about. Gossip created a welcome and intentional "us versus them" dichotomy, ultimately facilitating the connection they each desired. Some dyads used bids for physical contact as a way of connecting with their friend. Physicality varied widely across the dyads, with some being very physical (touching very frequently) to others being completely nonphysical. Those that did touch and were touched referred to it in affectionate terms, thus satisfying their desire for connection with their friend. The fostering of happy memories and planning for the future also demonstrated the goal of connection. By bringing up fun situations from the past and excitedly planning joint activities in the future they made explicit their intentions about the longevity of the friendship, thus increasing their commitment and connection to each other.

Amber, in a previously cited example, demonstrated her comfort and her desire for connection by becoming physically intrusive with Beth, putting her foot up to her friend's face to show her how bad her feet smelled. Although her friend was disgusted, she did not fully express this, but instead also self-disclosed how much her own feet smelled when she has worn orthotics.

Amber88: Yeah, I know. Um. Oh my god. These shoes make my feet like, These shoes smell so bad when my feet get all hot. It's so bad.
Beth89: Eww. You should smell my orthotics.
Amber89: [Amber puts her foot up to Beth's nose]
Beth90: Hey, eww! And like-and I'm sure I was telling you that if you put orthotics in and afterwards all the shoes smell bad. [laughing] They don't smell like new shoes anymore. Like oh my god I feel so bad if you're beside them. Cause it's like the used shoe store.

Later on self-confrontation, Beth revealed her light-hearted disapproval of her friend's

behaviour, although she also admitted that it would be just as likely for her to do something like

that to her friend, as well as acknowledged that it was a display of affection.

Beth-128: I was disgusted when she put her foot in my face. I was like "Hey…..
yuk….Don't do that like (laughing) Put it back down". Yeah.
Interviewer133: You were - were you kind of surprised too?
Beth129: Yeah I was when she went whoo hoo … (laughing) Yeah I was very surprised
and I was like "Eew what are you doing?" She was starting to get like too into the conversation.-
"Wait a minute, put your foot down!" (laughing).
Interviewer134: Is this something that happens?
Beth130: Ah yeah actually like if she does stuff like that I'm just like "okay stop it - stop
it". (laughing) I will do that to her too, though. Yeah.
Interviewer135: It's a mutual affection thing.
Beth-31: (laughing) yeah.

Amber, on the other hand, viewed the physical maneuver as only a gesture of affection

and a demonstration of her openness and physical comfort with her friend.

Amber139: Um, that's just me. I wanted to, you know, demonstrate how bad these
shoes make my feet smell. (laughing)
Interviewer145: (laughing) and you felt comfortable to do that.
Amber140: yeah. I did. (laughing)
Interviewer146: So she must be a good friend.
Amber141: Yeah, she is.
Interviewer147: (laughing) You wouldn't do that with just anybody?
Amber142: No, I probably wouldn't.

They also connected with each other and demonstrated trust with each other by revealing

embarrassing moments that have recently happened in their social lives. This also demonstrated

their willingness to be vulnerable, thus increasing their connectedness. Again, Amber had

indicated this value (a sense of vulnerability) as a determinant of a close, connected friendship

during her collage interview. Beth also had "connection" as a strong motif in her collage, having

used several different symbols to represent it (Appendix H, Figure 2.0) (intertwined pipe-

cleaners, bars getting gradually closer and closer, use of the words "tight" and "connected"). In

this part of their friendship conversation they were taking turns revealing past embarrassing

moments to each other, a clear bid for intimacy and connection. They each felt safe and

comfortable to reveal these situations to their friend.

Beth50.5: I'll be like (refers to what others say to her about being a messy eater) "Beth, there's a little something there [gestures to her face], a little something there [gestures to her top], a little something [gestures to the other side of her shirt] and I'm like-"Okay guys, just shut up" . It's so annoying though, because I feel like such a slob and I'm so embarrassed walking down the halls. Or I have to wear my coat which weighs like 40 pounds.

Amber51: Oh my god. Okay. I was like wearing this yesterday.

Beth51: Umm hmm.

Amber51.5: and I like spilled water like all over my boob...[gestures to her chest area]. and then-I think Kevin, he was like-"Amber you have water on your shirt" but it was like only on my boob.. And I was like well "You perv, you are staring at my chest. Chest [does finger quotes for the word chest when she says it the second time] - but whatever.

Beth53: We were walking down the hall-and I'm like oh! Right there. [gestures that someone elbowed her in the chest area]

Amber52.5: Ouch!

Beth53.5: And I was like on the ground..

Amber53: Oh my gosh! Did he know?

Beth54: Yeah. And he was like "Oh my god, I'm so sorry" -and then he like walked away. And now whenever I see him I take my like-my binder and [laughing] walk like that. [gestures that she carries her binder in front of her chest].

This sense of connectedness was confirmed on self-confrontation interview as the girls

reflected on their comfort about disclosing their embarrassing moments to each other. They

reported that they see themselves as similar in that they are physically underdeveloped and this

has increased their degree of comfort to disclose to each other about this topic. They were

sharing a physical body-image identity in this situation, one that Amber stated is frequently a

topic of conversation between them.

Amber67: Um, that part when we looked at our chest…, We both kind of think we are underdeveloped in that regard compared to everyone else that we know.

Amber68: So we (laughing) just talk about that a lot.

Amber71: Yeah. Well anyway it was - it was kind of embarrassing you know. Well, not really that much, but like we talk about that a lot. Because it bugs us a lot.

Interviewer74: Okay and it felt okay for you to disclose that to her and

Amber74: Oh yeah yeah yeah. We do that alot. We talk about way more uncomfortable stuff compared to that I think together.

Beth42: Um, (laughing) I was just remembering like as soon as I said that I forgot we were on camera. (laughing) [is referring to the part in the conversation where she reveals that she got elbowed in the breast area by a boy at school] I was really embarrassed. (laughing)

Interviewer45: Okay.

Beth43: Yeah, and um how I was feeling? - well I don't know. I - I was feeling happy and I was just talking with my friend. I don't know. I was just happy to be talking with her. Because we were really into our conversation. And like obviously I wasn't thinking about that or I wouldn't have said it. (laughing) You know.

Amber and Beth also used the sharing of a secret to connect with each other, a behaviour requiring trust that they both stated as an important aspect of their friendship through the collage interview. By sharing a secret they increased their bond together, and demonstrated their trust and intimacy with each other. As well, the sharing of the secret allowed the two of them to engage in problem solving, another functional step employed to increase their friendship bond. A secret that was shared between them created an aspect of exclusivity, and brought forward their friendship values of trustworthiness and safety, and ultimately increased their connection with each other.

Amber101: Wait. OK, don't...actually-ummm, wait. Susan told my mom not to tell me this and then my mom told me this so-I'm obviously telling you this but don't tell anyone obviously like really-really.

Beth102: Except for the camera....[points to the cameras].

Amber102: Well okay. [speaks towards the cameras]. Don't tell anyone this-except. [laughing] Yeah. because I kind of need to tell you. So what happened with my like-Matt was complaining about David to Kathy and then Kathy told Dylan. Which was just so stupid. Now Dylan's really mad at Matt. So now like I can't have Matt and Dylan together. Which means I can't have Amy because Debra would kind of be lost without Matt.

Beth103: Well why can't you have Debra without Matt?

Amber103: Well it's because it's like well who else is she going to bring from the mini?

Beth104: She could come with me then.

On self-confrontation, Amber indicated that the sharing of the secret and the solving of the problem together was nice and that she felt safe doing so. Beth, on the other hand, was somewhat disappointed by the caliber of the secret, as she had excitedly thought it was going to be juicier than it was. However, she did enjoy the aspect of problem solving with Amber.

Amber151: I was kind of telling her stuff and she was cutting in and helping me with that so….

Amber152: That was nice.

Interviewer161: What about when you were telling the secret?

Amber155: Oh that, well we tell each other everything.

Amber156: But then I know it's going to be like safe with her. There's that trust thing again..

Amber: I just kind of felt safe with it, but now it was kind of weird with it being on camera….

Interviewer167: I know

Amber161: …it's just like you guys, now know the secret too…..

Beth145: Um, well I was really excited to hear, like this here, because I thought it would be like really good like "mom-gossip" about something that was like really cool and like I was sort of disappointed when it turns out that it was just like "oh no Matt's mad at David" - like I was expecting more than that but I was still happy because Amber was like telling me.

Beth148: Um, I was excited when she said "Oh I have a secret" blah, blah, blah, and I was just like "Okay, just tell me!" (laughing).

Interviewer151: (laughing) Yeah.

Beth149: Yeah, but I was excited to hear that but I was a little disappointed when she actually told me it because it wasn't as good as I expected but it wasn't a bad secret.

Beth150: At this point I was feeling sort of smart because like Amber thought she had this huge problem and I was like, "Well, it's pretty simple." (laughing)

Beth152: Yeah. I was thinking "Oh this is a pretty simple problem, Amber".

Beth154: Um, well I always pride myself um thinking to myself "I'm so smart". (laughing)

In addition to telling stories in order to have fun, Candace relayed another story to Debra, whereby she explained the circumstances of receiving a cupcake from a boy in class. Debra asked questions and Candace gave her all the details, so that they both could make sense of a confusing social situation. They were also engaging in their identity exploration project, whereby Candace was questioning her identity of being a girl who is attracting the attention of a boy. Problem solving by making sense and sharing details about a personal situation, the girls increased their connection with each other and kept each other informed about important social happenings.

Candace4: It's pretty weird that he just gave it to me and like he just came up to me and like….

Debra5: Did he just say "I like you, here's my cupcake"? (laughing)

Candace5: He's like he came up to me and he's like "Hey Candace, do you want my cupcake? I don't want it" like I said "what'd you do to it?" (laughing) Like he's like "Nothing, I didn't do anything to it" I'm like "Oh, thanks"

Debra6: (laughing) What did he do to it? (laughing)

Candace6: No well like actually the guy came up and gave me a cupcake. I didn't know what to think.

Debra7: Yeah, that's true. (laughing)

Candace7: Yeah…

Debra8: But he's nice though. But like …

Candace8: I don't like him. (laughing) Well, I like him as a friend but not .. I can't figure out …

Debra9: Yeah.

Candace9: Yeah. So (laughing)

Candace24: So then he gave me his.

Debra25: So then you didn't win at bingo, so....

Candace25: No.

Debra26: That's why you didn't get one then?

Candace26: uh hm

Debra26.5: But everyone got half, right at least?

Candace26.5: [nods yes]

Debra26.8: But Andy..... So, he won? (laughs)

Candace26.8: Umm hmm. He's like a whiz in math, but he's like a kind of math geek. He's kind of weird.

On self-confrontation the girls did not overtly identify that they were using the

storytelling as a method of getting closer together but they did state that they were each trying to

make sense out of the situation by discussing it together.

Candace17: I was kind of feeling weirded out there, that he gave me a cupcake.

Interviewer21: Hm. Yeah but you didn't tell her that.

Candace18: No.

Interviewer22: You were thinking it. Okay. Um, and any feelings? Well weirded out… I guess. (laughing) Okay what does - what does "weirded out" mean just … you didn't like it? Or?

Candace19-20: Just …No I … no I liked it because I got a cupcake but um I don't know it was kind of weird that he'd give me one cause we're just kind of friends and …

Debra9: Um kind of surprised that Andy would give Candace a cupcake that he got cause I don't think he's kind of the guy that like would do that.

Interviewer11: Okay.

Debra10: Cause… well I don't really know him too well. But, just… yeah, kind of surprised.

Emma and Faith used gossip as a method of connecting with each other and to demonstrate their closeness and solidarity. At times gossiping about others created a way for the girls to align themselves together, as a unit apart from others. In this passage the girls were gossiping about a girl who does not behave the way they think she should while she was in friendship with another girl (saying she doesn't like someone but then acting friendly with her later). By gossiping negatively about her behaviour they separated themselves from her and agreed that "they" as friends would not behave this way with each other. This was also a way for them to carve out a friendship identity, as in how they are as friends to each other and how they see themselves within the friendship. This demonstrated their desire for a more authentic friendship identity than what they perceive the other girls to experience.

Emma55: Do you know when Heather and Kathy are together, they're like really good friends. And like Heather hates Kathy. (laughs)
Faith55: It's like "then don't be friends with her".
Emma55.5: Yeah, and Kathy has no style.

As did Candace and Debra, Emma and Faith also kept each other up to date and connected with each other by informing each other about social events that have already occurred. They also stayed connected through sharing their respective desires for electronic devices and shoes.

Emma35: But those are so radical. It's so sharp. The ... the new iPod. The nano.
Faith36: Yeah I know.
Emma35.5: It's so sharp.
Faith36: It's like tiny too. It's like (laughing)
Emma37: I know and I saw it at Costco and I was playing with it. I was like, "Oh my God! Holy shit! This is so sharp."
Faith37: I want to get a new iPod. I'm saving up for a video.
Emma38: Oh. I want a Wee [a new Nintendo gaming system)
Faith38: A Wee?
Emma39: Yeah. And also I want a DS [Nintendo Dual Screen - a hand held gaming device).
Faith39: Yeah. I want a new laptop.
Emma40: Yeah. I want a computer. I could play on it everyday and watch movies.

Faith40: Umm hmm.

Emma52: You can sneak into a movie right before like ten minutes before it stars, like starts and then um and then no one is there to take your ticket.
Faith52: Really?
Emma53: When you walk in...
Faith52.5: That so bad. (laughing)
Emma53: I know. Once I went to the movies and then, like ... we're like ten minutes early and we're waiting and all this like looking at the tickets ... holy crap. Someone could come and buy one ticket and go in. Come out, go in, come out, buy 2 tickets, and give the ticket to someone else. Then they go in and come out. And then give another to someone else. And that person goes in and comes out and then yeah...
Faith53: Yeah.
Emma53.5: (pause) Yeah, awkward.

Emma and Faith also attempted to make sense of past social situations that have

occurred, demonstrating their desire for connection through problem solving and sense making

together.

Emma92: So what about the dance?
Faith93: It was so boring. No one came.
Emma93: I know it was supposed to be packed.
Faith94: The only French ah Engie guys that were ... no Engie guys came.
Emma95: Umm hmm. I don't believe Elaine and Justin didn't get together.
Faith95: I know.
Emma96: They were like so...
Faith96: Yeah, like...
Emma96.5: ... like Justin was like. There was like a group here, a group there, and Justin was just like standing there and then across a group was Elaine and she was standing here.
Faith96.5: and she was way over there...
Emma96.6: And he was like, and both of them were alone.
Faith96.6: Yeah...he was way over there.
Emma96.7: They weren't even together. It was so sad. [both girls say this in a teasing tone]
Faith96.7: So sad.
Emma97: It was so funny.
Faith97: They should have ... they should have gone and danced.

Faith and Emma also engaged in planning for the future as a way to stay connected.

They were also enacting their broader friendship maintenance project by planning for ways to

continue their friendship.

Faith46: We should go see a movie like this ... next weekend or something ...
Emma47: Yeah.
Faith46.5: ...with the whole class or whatever?
Faith47: ...well not with the whole class but like .....people..
Emma48: We should go downtown to watch a movie.
Faith48: Yeah. Go see a movie and then whatever.

Gloria and Heather used several different methods to demonstrate and carry out their goal to connect and remain connected. They used physical contact as a demonstration of their intimacy much more than any other friendship pair.

Heather45: Yay! [as in a cheer for someone] [gets up and hugs her friend]. You smell good.
Gloria44: Okay. Go away. [pushes her friend away, laughing] Um, we should talk about Natalie.

They frequently reciprocated expression of their private feelings and desires to each other in an open, easy fashion. They made plans for the future and this planning included the encouragement of a scheme for one of the girls to orchestrate and influence a "boy" connection for Heather so that they would be more likely to spend time together as couples. Throughout their friendship conversation were examples of physical contact. Gloria admitted on self-confrontation that she felt somewhat pressured to organize something for Heather (making the boy connection occur) but instead of revealing these feelings she constantly reassured Heather that it would "work out and they will hang out" together. In this way they were both exploring their future couple-identity, testing and trying on how their relationships will change in the future.

Gloria53: I hope he goes here for high school.
Heather54: I want Josh to like me.
Gloria54: I want Derwin not to move.
Heather55: And I want him to get braces. (laughing) and then I can kiss him.
Gloria55: Today I was like over text with Derwin I was like um ... "hey, what's up? I'm moving." And then he's like, "oh yeah", with a sad face. And then I'm like "yeah". And then he's like "are you moving schools?" I'm like "hell no. I'm taking the bus to school". He's like "okay". And then it's like, oh wait, this was way earlier, I'm like "do you still like me?" And he's like

"yeah". And I'm like "good." I'm like "we should hang out some time". But he probably obviously knows. Like we're all going to hang out. Because my sister said that whenever ...

  Heather56: He should have a guy friend for me too.

  Gloria56: Yeah.

  Heather57: Because if you and me are going to go with just him, then you guys will be like talking and then I'll just be standing there and you two will be side by side, and holding hands and I'll be like ... "ah my god" ... [makes an exaggerated crying face]

  Gloria85: I was feeling that like - "when would we hang out?"

  Gloria86: Yeah. So I was kind of like wondering, still. Yeah.

  Interviewer96: Uh hm. Wondering. And were you thinking it would be difficult to orchestrate that again?

  Gloria87: Um yeah.

  Interviewer129: Uh hm. Okay. So, what were you feeling then? Hearing your best friend (laughing) talk about the encounter this morning.

  Heather121: Um, ah like I'm kind of jealous because um she likes Derwin and he likes her and they're both like aware of that.

  Interviewer130: uh hm

  Heather122: And they want to hang out and stuff. I want that to happen (laughing) with me and Josh. And then he's got really crooked teeth. So, I want him to get braces. (laughing)

  Heather58: So if you, tell him if he wants to hang out with you, then he has to find out Josh's phone number. Or get him to come with us.

  Gloria58: You remember last Friday, when we were getting ready for the dance.

  The following is an example of the girls' demonstration of physical caring and connection. Later, although Gloria wanted Heather to leave her hair alone, she eventually allowed Heather to fix her hair and revealed that she was not bothered by her friend's behaviour on self-confrontation. Heather, during self-confrontation revealed that her friend's hair was bothering her and she just had to fix it, an example of her own "perfectionism". Her desire to fix her friend's hair and her claiming of the personal trait of perfectionism was also an exploration of her own personal identity. She saw herself in a particular way (one who is a perfectionist) and has come to name this aspect of herself through her interaction with her friend. Physicality also came up in Heather's collage interview, where she indicated not all of her friends are okay with her physical nature. She stated that acceptance by others of her physical nature was something

that was important to her in her close friendships. This kind of physicality was thought to be

usual and acceptable between them. Here she connects through grooming her friend.

Heather59: [leans over and brushes a stray hair over to one side of her friend's face]
Gloria59: ....And we were like, are you going to the dance? That was basically like us hanging out.
Heather60: Yeah I know. [Leans over again to move the friend's hair aside]
Gloria60: Go away.
Heather61: Well there's this one strand and it's supposed to be on this side. And now there's two.
Gloria61: There. [attempts to fix her own hair]
Heather62: Let me do it, let me do it [leans in] [friend slaps her hand away] (both girls are laughing) Please. There.
Gloria62: (laughing) Okay, Okay good. [her friend fixes her hair for her] Okay. And like, my sister said that whenever she used to hang out with Derrick, she was like "I'll meet you here, and Cathy's coming with me".So he just kind of expected somebody to come. We have to hang out with him before he moves. If he does move. And I really hope he doesn't.
Heather63: And I need Josh to come. (laughing)

Interviewer102: Yeah. And when she was fussing with your hair…?
Gloria92:   (laughing) I was like, "What are you doing?"
Interviewer103: (laughing)
Gloria93: Leave me alone. Leave me alone. (laughing)
Interviewer104: But it was okay.
Gloria94: Yeah.
Interviewer105: Yeah, you weren't irritated by her …
Gloria95: No.
Interviewer106: by her doing that or anything.
Gloria96: No.
Interviewer107: You guys seem to be quite physical with each other and that that's okay.
Gloria97: Yeah.

Interviewer134: Okay, so in that minute there what was happening for you?
Heather125:   Um, she had like - like …
Interviewer135: Her hair went like, was yeah.
Heather126:   her hair was like this and it was just like that. And I wanted to fix it, but then she made it even worse. And yeah just kind of like a perfectionist. So, I like to fix everything.

When the girls engaged in a serious conversation about their respective fathers, both girls

revealed their feelings to each other, engaged in physical affection, and openly empathized with

each other. As well, Heather and Gloria explicitly stated their empathy and concern for each

other during self-confrontation interview, demonstrating the intimate quality of their relationship.

They recognized they have a connected bond together because of the similarities between their

respective situations with their fathers. At the very end of her interview with the researcher,

Heather revealed, "I love Gloria", clearly demonstrating the depth of her feelings.

> **Heather**189-190:   Um, she has problems with her dad and stuff right now. And … You know it's like a hard kind of time for her and so just felt like giving her a hug. And it was like telling her it's like okay and stuff. It will be okay.
> **Interviewer**203: Kind of reassuring her as a friend there.
> **Heather**191: Yeah.
> **Heather**192: Um, like I feel bad for her because she's really sad about it.
> **Interviewer**212: That's why you reached out and gave her a hug?
> **Heather**200: Uh hm.

> **Interviewer**168: Yeah. Okay so then she started talking about her dad. And um were you thinking or feeling anything?
> **Gloria**152: Hm. Um, I felt sad for her.
> **Interviewer**169: Um, and were you also - were you - did you feel at all relieved to tell your story?
> **Gloria**153: Yeah.
> **Interviewer**170: Yeah. It feels good to chat with her about it.
> **Gloria**154: Yeah.
> **Interviewer**173: Were you thinking anything?
> **Gloria**157-158: It was kind of funny how she was making fun of it. But then I also felt sympathy for her.
> **Interviewer**175: Oh, okay. You knew that what she was talking about was kind of serious at the same time.
> **Gloria**159: Yeah.

> **Heather**204-205:   Just have a normal family and that. That's what I like because me and Gloria, we have the same kind of bond and connection because our dads are like the same that way, very messed up and stuff. So that's good to talk together with her because we know what each other is going through.
> **Interviewer**219: So that common understanding is a very strong bond for the two of you because probably somebody else from outside, they may or may not understand?
> **Heather**206:   Yeah.

Isabel and Jackie stated their connection with each other and their happiness about it most

openly of any of the other friendship pairs. They both looked for and actively celebrated their

numerous similarities; interpreting them as meaning they were connected. As in other pairs, they

planned for future activities, making explicit their desire to connect and remain connected, at the

same time fostering their overall friendship maintenance project.

> **Isabel**15: I hope it snows on Christmas Day, that'd be awesome. I don't think it.....
> **Jackie**15: I think that it's snowing right now.
> **Isabel**16: Yeah. But on Christmas morning, it would be awesome to wake up and it'd be snowing.
> **Jackie**16: ..and you could go outside and play in the snow.
> **Isabel**17: Yeah, well there it's just that ...
> **Jackie**17: We can slide down the driveway....
> **Isabel**18: I know. (laughing) I love that. We can call each other in the morning to see what we got. (laughing)

> **Jackie**21: Yeah and I'd be - I know I was thinking about…, I was hoping it was like that when I get home.
> **Interviewer**25: Yeah.
> **Jackie**22: So we can go out on the driveway again.
> **Interviewer**26: Yeah.
> **Jackie**23: And try and slide down it. (laughing)

When they recalled circumstances that would prevent them from being able to be

together at a soccer clinic, both girls openly admitted that they did not like being apart.

> **Jackie**35: I hate going to soccer without you there.
> **Isabel**36: I know I hate that too. Because it's like...

> **Isabel**46: Um, well I was kind of wishing I was going to be with her, but (laughing)
> **Interviewer**53: And so it was, you know I mean she shared with you that she doesn't really like going to …
> **Isabel**52: Yeah.
> **Interviewer**54: soccer when you're not there, so …
> **Isabel**53: Yeah.
> **Interviewer**55: Did you have any kind of feeling when she said that?
> **Isabel**54: Well, good, because you know…
> **Interviewer**56: You had a nice feeling.
> **Isabel**55: Yeah…she misses me or something when I'm not there. But I feel the same way with her.

> **Isabel**65: Yeah. It's good to know that somebody else feels the same way, though.
> **Interviewer**67: Yeah. So you guys were connecting about that.

> **Jackie**27: Um, I was thinking about how much I don't want to go to the soccer camp.
> **Jackie**29: (laughing) I really don't want to go to that. I think that's kind of what I was thinking.
> **Interviewer**34: What were the feelings that you had around that?

Jackie30: Um, kind of disappointed that I don't get to hang out with Isabel on that day. Or do anything.

Even the fact that they have had the same taste in clothing or have received the same marks on exams demonstrated their reciprocal perceived closeness and connection with each other. The similarity itself was seen as bonding.

Isabel77: Yeah, it's kind of funny that we wore the same thing [both girls are wearing a long t-shirt with a blue hoody over top] (laughing)
Jackie78: (laughing) We're connected.
Isabel78: I know. We always do that! (pause). It's so funny when we, like.....
Jackie79: Like we even have the same shoes.

Jackie95: And yeah I was thinking we're connected… (laughing)
Interviewer103: (laughing) Yeah.
Jackie96: in a telepathic way.
Interviewer104: You both have the fashion fairy visit you that morning and pick out the clothes, so to speak?
Jackie97: I think so (laughing).
Interviewer105: Yeah? So what does that make you feel when you're thinking that?
Jackie98: Um, I was thinking we must be very close friends to like really be a lot alike to be able to choose the same clothes.

Jackie119: The test, ugghhh. (laughing) We got the same mark.
Isabel119: Oh I know. (laughing)

Interviewer196: So you're talking about schoolwork.
Isabel185: Yeah, we share a lot of the same marks so.
Interviewer197: Same grades too?
Isabel186: Yeah.
Interviewer198: Wow. How does that ….
Isabel187: Yeah, sometimes we get exactly the same mark. It's funny.
Interviewer199: So you were laughing about that when she said that.
Isabel188: Yeah.
Interviewer200: "Oh we got the same mark". It was … what were you thinking?
Isabel189: Well, well we already knew that we got the same mark. But it's kind of cool that we get that with each other.

The search and celebration of similarity was also evident when Isabel stated she is happy about getting Mr. _____ as a teacher for Grade seven. Jackie happily reframed this statement to reflect the fact that they both, as a unit, have him as a teacher.

Jackie121: I love Mr. _____.

Isabel121: I know, Mr. _____ is so cool, our teacher (pause). I'm so glad that I got him this year.

Jackie122: We got him (laughing).

Isabel122: We got him. (laughing).

In answer to the first research question for this study, the joint projects evidenced within friendship conversations across dyads have been identified (to have, preserve, and maintain the friendship, to explore identities, to have fun, to support each other, and to connect with each other) and at times, were demonstrated concurrently. As well, the functional steps (the means) and the particular behavioural elements used toward the achievement of these goals were also illuminated. The internal processes (thoughts and feelings) of the participants have been described throughout the findings chapter. Appendix T, Table 1.0 provides a succinct summary of the action projects, the functional steps utilized, and the particular behavioural elements employed by the participants in order to further their functional steps.

4.2   Self-representations as Advancing Best Friendship Projects

Self-representations, defined earlier as "how one describes oneself" (Harter 1999, p. 3) were identified across dyads within their common joint friendship projects. The self-representations were seen to mostly advance the friendship projects, however, sometimes the girls presented inaccurate self-representations in order to implement the larger project of maintaining and preserving the friendship. Self-representations have been discussed within the friendship projects identified earlier in this chapter. This section is provided in order to illustrate the difficulty that some participants had with the self-reflection process. As well, this section specifically reports on the self-representations made during self-confrontation interviewing. Although all participants openly were able to self-represent to each other during their

conversations and throughout the collage interviews, self-reflection during self-confrontation interviewing sometimes proved difficult for some participants.

Most self-representations gleaned from the self-confrontation interview were self-descriptions of thoughts and feelings (evaluative), rather than self-disclosures of facts or information about onself (descriptive). Some participants found the task of self-reflection during the self-confrontation interview to be extremely difficult, frequently reporting that they weren't thinking anything beyond the subject matter. In fact, most participants reported this difficulty at some point within the interview, albeit some to a greater extent than others. Both girls in dyad three, reported difficulty with the self-confrontation process, as did dyad two.

Emma22-23: Cause I don't really think about like how I feel when I talk. I just talk.

At times, the interviewer had the impression that Emma did not wish to reveal what she had been thinking or feeling. At one point during the interview, Emma admitted that the interviewer's suspicion was accurate.

Interviewer65: …. Okay so when you were talking about going into a movie … being able to sneak in. Were you thinking anything? Or?
Emma57: No.
Interviewer66: No? You weren't feeling anything in particular either?
Emma58: No. (laughing)
Interviewer67: You looked a bit guilty there when you looked at the camera. It was like "Oh, Oh dear, now they'll know." (laughing)
Emma59: Yeah. Yeah. You're not supposed … you're not supposed to know that. (laughing)

Interviewer104: So, anything you want to share about that?
Emma92: No.
Interviewer105: No? No feelings, no thoughts?
Emma93: No. Yeah, that's all.

Faith also had difficulty with the self-confrontation interview, frequently reporting that she could not remember what she had been thinking or feeling.

Interviewer29: Okay. How about this minute here?

Faith26: I don't know. Not really.

Interviewer32: Any thoughts around that?
Faith29: No.
Interviewer33: No? Cause it does seem like you sat back and …What were you thinking there? Was it like hmm—you know that's enough talking about teachers or?
Faith30: Yeah, kind of..
Interviewer34: Did you deliberately want to move away from that topic?
Faith31: Yeah, I don't know. I can't remember.

Faith54: Umm, I can't remember. Cuz' it's kind of like—we were switching topics.

She also reported that she felt awkward with the notion of the video taping, as did

several other participants. However, most of the participants reported this awkwardness on

reflection during the beginning of the conversation.

Interviewer40: So when you felt kind of awkward what were you thinking about?
Faith36: About how weird having your conversation videotaped.

Although she was able to self-reflect on most of the friendship conversation passages,

Candace also indicated that she typically said whatever she was thinking.

Interviewer102: Okay, so any - any um particular feelings or thoughts you were having?
Candace94: Um, ah not really. (laughing) I'm probably really bad at this. (laughing)
Interviewer103: There's no "bad" here. (laughing) Sometimes it's hard to remember?
Candace95: Yeah (laughing).
Interviewer104: You know? And sometimes um what you're thinking is actually what you're saying.
Candace96: Yeah, that's much of the time (laughing). I pretty much blurt out everything I think.
Interviewer105: uh hm. So… so that's when it gets a bit harder because you - you think okay well I'm saying everything that I'm thinking so no there isn't something else going on. But for some people they're having a whole other … thing that's going on. And they're not saying.
Candace97: Yeah…(laughing), That's pretty much why I talk a lot because I say pretty much everything that I'm thinking.

Other participants (Debra and Amber) also shared the same sentiments with the

interviewer when asked to reflect.

Debra26: I don't know. Normally when I talk I don't have too many feelings. Just when I try and connect stuff it's a bit confusing sometimes or something.

Amber131: Um I was actually just thinking about what I was saying.

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Within the conversations themselves, self-representations tended to be disclosures of feelings, thoughts, perceptions, or opinions, as well as the disclosure of facts or information about oneself. Examples of the advancement/or not of joint goals through the use of self-representations are identified for illustration.

Self-representation and Joint Project – To Have Fun Together

Self-confrontation provided numerous examples of the participants directly utilizing self-representations to indicate they were having fun or happy during their friendship conversations. As such, the self-representations of the girls during the self-confrontation interview provided information about the internal processes (the thoughts and feelings) of the girls during their friendship conversations. Direct self-representations indicating having fun were expressed as "I was happy" or "I was having fun". At times, however, their expressions indicated that they found something funny or that a situation was fun, which was an indirect self-representation. Both indirect and direct self-representations are illustrated in the following examples.

Amber14: …But what I'm like really feeling now - but what I feel when we're just kinda doing the lighter chat stuff - *we're just having fun* and I
Amber15: am not really thinking and I don't really you know. I'm just feeling oh yeah *it's kinda fun*.

Beth107: yeah. And then also like um like being the stupid one like it's sort of funny. So I wasn't like sad about that, *I was sort of like happy* you know. *It's like fun*. (laughing)
Beth43: Yeah, and um how I was feeling? - well I don't know. I - *I was feeling happy* and I was just talking with my friend. I don't know. *I was just happy to be talking with her.* Because we were really into our conversation. And like obviously I wasn't thinking about that or I wouldn't have said it. (laughing) You know.
Beth82: ah I - I felt um well during this whole thing *I felt like pretty happy* and content I don't know. And it was just like I was thinking about the old like memories and - well not really old memories in a way. I was thinking about last night and *I was happy*.

Candace56: I guess *I was kind of feeling happy* when I was telling the story.
Candace2: Um, *I was thinking about talking to and having fun* with Debra.
Debra38: Um, *I thought it was kind of funny*, her made up story.

Emma and Faith both had a lot of difficulty with self-reflection and did not spontaneously describe themselves as having fun or being happy during the conversation. However, when asked directly about what was going on for her as they were mimicking a friend's beat boxing skill, Emma was able to confirm that she was indeed having a good time.

> **Interviewer**34: But you were having fun trying to mimic it I think?
> **Emma**30: Yeah.
> **Interviewer**35: And, it looked like you were having fun. You were smiling and …
> **Emma**: Yeah.

> **Faith**62: *We were happy* so we were like, dancing….., I don't know.

Other participants were more readily able to self-reflect during the self-confrontation interview.

> **Gloria**14: Um, fun. *I was kind of happy.*
> **Gloria**29: I was kind of thinking like… why does he call me that? And then *I was kind of having fun* at the same time.

> **Heather**18: *I'm fun … and I sound funny.*
> **Heather**26: Um, *it was really funny.* (laughing)
> **Heather**186: *I'm kind of like happy* cause she's not really like "ew … look at my connect the dots and stuff".

> **Isabel**29: *That was a really fun memory.*
> **Interviewer**30: Okay, so you guys are enjoying talking about that.
> **Isabel**30: Yeah. (laughing)

> **Jackie**109: *It's really fun.* (laughing)
> **Jackie**126: Yeah and - and I guess I was feeling … um … (pause) well *I thought it was funny.*
> **Jackie**142: We were talking about the um preparing for the test um me and Isabel got the same mark and I kinda forgot that and *so it was just sort of fun teasing her.* And then I was laughing really hard. And I was going "ha ha" just like jokingly and …
> **Interviewer**27: Yeah. So what kind of feelings do you think you were having based on those thoughts?
> **Jackie**24: Um, *I guess excited and happy again.*
> **Jackie**59: Um, *I was kind of sort of happy* and not sad actually. *I was happy* the whole time.

> **Jackie**69: And wear the poodle skirt and back comb my hair and everything so *I was really excited in that moment.*

Interviewer76: Yeah. That's great.
Jackie70: *And happy.* (laughing)

Jackie81: Um, um *I was happy* that we might be able to get the skirts together for it.
Jackie82: Maybe like – get our stuff together so *that'd be fun*.
Jackie86: Um, I guess again there *I was happy.* (laughing)
Jackie87: *Joyful.*
Jackie146: Um, again I guess *feeling joyful*.

Self-representation and Joint Project – To Support Each Other

Self-representations around the goal of supporting each other were identified if the

participant made a statement that indicated that they either felt supported, or were supporting

their friend. "I" statements indicating this intent are highlighted for illustration. Several

examples of self-representations have already been cited in other sections of this chapter. For

example, the use of self-deprecating remarks were included in the support as a goal section

because they were used as a means to providing support to their partner. Statements indicating

agreement, as well as reciprocal exchange of feelings, and desires have also been previously

highlighted in other sections of this chapter.

Some dyads used the self-representative term "I know" to demonstrate empathy,

understanding, and support.

Amber35: OK, no, *I know*. (tone gets more serious) It does, like I-I-I know. It would
really suck actually.
Beth36: *I know*. All the time.
Amber36: *I feel really sorry for you*.

Beth47: Remember when we were watching "Mr. & Mrs. Smith", Remember that?
Omigod.
Amber46.5: *I know*.
Beth47.5: *I was so mad because I wanted to see the end of the movi*e and your dad's like
"It's too much violence"…

Faith10: Mr. _____ is such a bad teacher.
Emma11: *I know*.
Faith11: He's all like, wooooooo…….
Emma11.5: He like, tried to start a conversation with me.

Faith12: *Yeah I know*, like and after that he walks away.

Self-representation and Joint Project – To Connect with Each Other

The participants rarely used self-representations that included a direct reference to the self in order to advance their friendship goal of connection. For example, it was unusual for the participants to use terminology referring directly to "connection" when self-referencing during the friendship conversations. The participants did, however, use several different strategies to indicate their feelings or thoughts about situations throughout the friendship conversations that point to the goal of connecting to each other. Use of the term "I know", reciprocal revelations of feelings, desires, or embarrassing moments were the most commonly used self-representations evidenced within the friendship conversations for this goal.

The frequent use of "I know" between Isabel and Jackie was not so much meant as an indicator of support, but rather more so as a device to emphasize their agreement and camaraderie. In this case "I know" meant "I agree". Although this was supportive to a minor degree, it was seen as a frequent celebration and confirmation of their similarities. As such, these self-representations are thought to advance the goal of connection.

> **Jackie**51: *I'm so excited* because we get to do the hair and everything ….
> **Isabel**51.5: *I know*. It will be so much fun..
> **Jackie**52: …and the makeup..
> **Isabel**52: Yeah *I know*.
> **Jackie**52: It's going to be so great.

Gloria and Heather reciprocally revealed their feelings and desires to each other in order to advance their goal of connection. By revealing intimate feelings to each other they fostered their friendship and increased their intimacy.

> **Gloria**51: *I really like Derwin*.
> **Heather**53: *I love Josh* [says this in a whining voice and falls over onto her friend's lap, as if collapsing].
> **Gloria**52: *I love Derwin*.

Heather54: Hmmm.
Gloria53: *I hope* he goes here for high school.
Heather54: I want Josh to like me.
Gloria54: *I want* Derwin not to move.
Heather55: And *I want* him to get braces. (laughing) and then I can kiss him.

Emma and Faith also reciprocally expressed their desires (about what electronic devices

they each would like) in order to connect and agree with each other.

Emma35: But those are so radical. It's so sharp. The … the new iPod. The nano.
Faith36: Yeah *I know*.
Emma35.5: It's so sharp.
Faith36: . It's like tiny too. It's like (laughing)
Emma37: *I know* and I saw it at Costco and I was playing with it. I was like, "oh my god. Holy shit. This is so sharp."
Faith37: *I want* to get a new iPod. I'm saving up for a video.
Emma38: Oh. *I want* a We.
Faith38: A We?
Emma39: Yeah. And also *I want* a DS.
Faith39: Yeah. *I want* a new laptop.
Emma40: Yeah. *I want* a computer. I could play on it everyday and watch movies.
Faith40: Umm hmm.

Isabel and Jackie also expressed their feelings directly as a way of advancing their goal

for connection.

Jackie35: *I hate* going to soccer without you there.
Isabel36*: I know. I hate that too*. Because it's like…
Jackie36: Because and Herb is so mean.
Isabel36.5: Yeah, *I know*…
Jackie36.5: No offence to him but …
Isabel37: . Yeah, *I know*. He's like, really impatient. Cuz' like yesterday when I was at Tina's house, he was super mean.

Self-representations, through direct reciprocal self-disclosure of embarrassing

experiences can also be seen as advancing their goal of connection and intimacy. Beth and

Amber, in the following excerpt, took turns revealing embarrassing moments that have occurred

to each of them while they have been at school. Again, this also demonstrated an identity

project, as they both explored aspects of themselves (being one who is a messy eater and the

consequences of it). Both Beth and Amber took turns making negative self-evaluations, while at the same time they revealed their embarrassment and annoyance with the situation.

> **Beth**50: … *I'm such a messy eater.* [looks down at the crumbs on her shirt and brushes them off]. *It's so annoying.* Whenever I eat lunch at school I get stains all over...
> **Amber**50.5: *Me too* [laughs].
> **Beth**50.5: I'll be like (refers to what others say to her about being a messy eater) "Beth, there's a little something there [gestures to her face], a little something there [gestures to her top], a little something [gestures to the other side of her shirt] and I'm like-"Okay guys, just shut up". *It's so annoying* though, because *I feel like such a slob and I'm so embarrassed* walking down the halls. Or I have to wear my coat, which weighs like 40 pounds.
> **Amber**51: Oh my god. Okay. I was like wearing this yesterday.
> **Beth**51: Umm hmm.
> **Amber**51.5: and *I like spilled water like all over my boob...*[gestures to her chest area]. and then-I think Kevin, he was like-"Amber you have water on your shirt" but it was like only on my boob.. And I was like well "You perv, you are staring at my chest. "Chest" [does finger quotes for the word chest when she says it the second time] - but whatever.
> **Beth**53: We were walking down the hall-and *I'm like oh*! Right there. [*gestures that someone elbowed her in the chest area*]

Another interesting self-representation demonstrated within this dyad, as well as within another one, was the phenomenon of using the pronoun "we" to indicate reflections of thought or feeling. Amber frequently used "we" when asked to reflect on her thoughts and feelings during self-confrontation interviewing, frequently generalizing her own feelings or thoughts to those of her friend, stating them as belonging to both of them as a unit. Her partner, Beth, however, rarely used "we", almost always using "I" to describe her personal reflections. These generalizations were not confirmed through self-confrontation, although some of them are disconfirmed in light of Beth's reflections. As an example, Amber reflected about teasing Beth about her sensitivity to sweet foods.

> **Amber**22-25: Yeah, I was, but *we* were like, *we were playing with each other*. Like I like according to her I'm able to – and I'm not sure you saw this, but she'll tease me a lot too. And *we don't take it as bad things*. It just kind of happens sometimes. *We don't feel bad* & stuff…..

Beth, on the other hand, did not share her friend's sentiments about the teasing episode, demonstrating that Amber's "we" was, in fact, inaccurate in this instance.

Beth17-18: Well, as she made fun of me when she said, "Oh, my stomach pains me…" I was like well it - it - it's true *so it made me really mad*. Cuz' like it's true though, like I have a really – whoops – delicate stomach. And like I feel sick really really easily so I was like "Amber, like don't make fun of me." But it's - it's true. Like I'm not being over-reactive. Yeah. … Yeah. Because she's making fun of me. I don't *I don't like it. I wish it wasn't like that*. But yeah.

When the phenomenon of using the pronoun "we" discussed through the written narrative at the follow-up interview to confirm findings, Amber maintained that "they are both equally confidant about what the other is thinking or feeling, but that they each choose different language to express it". Although her partner, Beth, in a separate interview without Amber present, indicated that a good friendship is "knowing everything about that person and what makes up that person" so that "you know what they will say or do", she also admitted that she cannot always be sure that she knows what her friend is thinking or feeling.

Isabel also utilized the "we" pronoun, whereas her partner Jackie, rarely did so. In this case, it appeared that Isabel used the "we" pronoun in order to provide the interviewer with a context for her reflection.

Interviewer5: So what were you thinking?
Isabel4: Well, *we didn't really know what to talk abo*ut right away. So,

Interviewer32: What about when there was like a pause there? Kind of there was that – there was that long pause and …
Isabel32-33: Oh … cause *we didn't know what to talk about* I don't think. Yeah. Well I think that doesn't happen if there's no camera. Because we're not sure what to talk about, but. Yeah.

Isabel66-67: (laughing) Um, sorry but *we (laughing) our desks changed* – we changed desks yesterday. Yeah, *we don't really like them* because we're like the farthest away from each other.

In summary, and in answer to the second part of the first research question, self-representations (descriptions or disclosures about the self) were demonstrated for all three

commonly identified joint projects (to have fun, to support each other, and to connect to each other). Self-representations also demonstrated the testing out and trying on of personal identities (perceptions of self). The use of these self-representations can be seen to advance or propel forward these joint goals for each dyad. As well, some inconsistent self-representations (between conversation and self-confrontation) can still be seen to advance the larger goal of maintaining and preserving the friendship. Appendix T, Table 2.0 provides a summary of the friendship projects and the self-representations used to advance them.

4.3   Consistency/inconsistency of Collage Data with Conversation Data

The collage interviews were analyzed within an action theory framework as per the previously outlined procedure. The goals of the researcher were identified to be three-fold; to build rapport with the participant, to gain an understanding of the images and symbolism used within the collage, and to fulfill the requirements of the interview (i.e. to get information from the participant about her collage). The broad inferred goals of the participants were to provide information, to make clear the images and symbols used within the collage, and to communicate their understanding and meaning associated with their close friendships. It is possible that the participants also had other goals (to please the researcher, to present friendship in a positive light, etc), but these cannot be confirmed due to the lack of a self-confrontation interview for this part of the study.

The larger overriding action projects of friendship maintenance and the exploration and discovery of a sense of self has already been presented throughout this chapter. They will not be discussed again here as examples of these projects have already been illustrated.

The three friendship projects identified within the friendship conversations could easily be seen within the collage data (collages themselves and the ensuing individual interviews with

the researcher) (Appendix H, Figures 1.0-10.0). These figures are consecutively numbered for the participants in the following order: Amber, Beth, Candace, Debra, Emma, Faith, Gloria, Heather, Isabel, and Jackie. Specific illustrations for the friendship projects (to have fun, to support each other, and to connect) will be provided later in this chapter.

There were also, however, other prominent features of the collages and the interview that were not as strongly demonstrated within the friendship conversations in addition to the three joint projects identified within the conversations. Because the friendship collages and the ensuing interviews about the collages were done individually, comparing and contrasting the collages and the interviews for each dyad can help infer joint friendship projects. How each girl within each dyad chose to focus her collage and her verbal answers within the collage interview was thought to be illustrative of her main intention or goal around close friendships.

4.4   Friendship Goals Demonstrated Within Collage and Collage Interview

Most girls presented their collages as a story and were guided through a complete examination of the collage itself by the interviewer. As per the procedure, at the end of the interview, the participants were asked to describe what was important to them in a very good friend and what values and qualities they felt were desired or crucial to their close friendships. As a result of this analysis, the participants identified several important aspects of their close friendships. These friendship projects, listed in order of common prevalence, were to have fun, to have a trusting, reciprocal, accepting, and supportive relationship, to have a loving, caring, and connected relationship, and to enjoy activities, similarities, and common interests together, and to discover each other. Several values were listed as being important qualities of good friends (honest, trustworthy, fun-loving, loyal, forgiving, risk-taking, willing to do things, accepting, supportiveness, openness, compatible, respectful, kind, caring, connectedness, invested in the

friendship, outgoingness, spending time together, nonjudgmental, loving, sense of humour, understanding, being a good listener). A brief summary outlining the friendship goals demonstrated within each participant's collage and collage interview is provided for each dyad in the following section. A few of the dyads completed or did part of their collages together and it was noticeable that these collages were more similar in terms of colour, layout, and content than were those that were done separately.

Brief Description of the Collages

Dyad #1 – Amber and Beth

Amber: Amber's collage (Appendix H, Figure 1.0) was focused on the way she feels within her close friendships (open, loved, emotionally connected, secure, and valued), as well as the qualities that she values within these friendships (values indicating support and trustworthiness). She also described activities that she enjoys doing with Beth, while, at the same time, recognizing that they each have individual interests that differ from what they like to do together. Her main friendship goals were to feel loved and cared about within the friendship, to have a support system that is safe and trusting, to have a forum to discover herself and her friend, and to have fun doing things together with her friend.

Beth: Beth's collage (Appendix H, Figure 2.0) was focused on her ideas about being connected and bonded with Amber, and how the longevity of their friendship and interconnectedness of their respective families contributed to their sense of history together and the ultimate strength of their friendship. Friendship values were also central in her collage and in the collage interview. Her main friendship goals were connection, forgiveness, and nonjudgmental acceptance.

Dyad #2 – Candace and Debra

Candace: Candace's collage (Appendix H, Figure 3.0) and the ensuing interview were centered on fun and the happy memories they have had while engaging in activities that reflect their common interests, as well as how they enjoy spending time together. Candace's main friendship goal was to have fun with someone she has a lot in common with.

Debra: Debra's collage and interview were (Appendix H, Figure 4.0) also focused on fun, happy memories they have had doing activities that reflected their common interests. As well, during the interview, Debra also described several qualities of a good friend (respectful, trustworthy, kind, etc). Debra's main friendship goals were to have fun, to be accepted, and to have a loving bond with history.

Dyad #3 – Emma and Faith

Emma: Emma's collage itself (Appendix H, Figure 5.0) was centered on the common areas of similarity and interest that she and Faith enjoy, as well as some friendship values (being happy, being understood, getting along, having someone to tell your problems to). As well, during the collage interview, Emma's main friendship goals were to have a friendship that is supportive and built on understanding, but also one that involves common interests and tastes.

Faith: Faith indicated fun and happiness were depicted as fundamental aspects of close friendships in her collage (Appendix H, Figure 6.0). Her goals were focused on the supportive nature of close friendships, indicating they keep secrets, listen, and are there for each other so they can talk to each other about anything. Fun and enjoyment of common interests and activities were also important goals for her within the friendship.

Dyad #4 – Gloria and Heather

Gloria: Gloria's collage (Appendix H, Figure 7.0) was focused on the activities that she and Heather enjoy together. During the interview Gloria described friendship goals that are mostly centered on support and fun.

Heather: Heather's collage (Appendix H, Figure 8.0) was mostly about trust, love, and having fun, silly times together. Her interview expanded on her friendship goals, which were focused on support, as well as love, safety, and the sharing of common interests.

Dyad #5 – Isabel and Jackie

Isabel: Isabel's collage (Appendix H, Figure 9.0) was the most elaborate of all the participants. Qualities of friendship she values and the special bond she shares with Jackie are evident. The collage focused on their many similarities and what they have in common (interests and activities). The main goals of friendship, or at least of this particular friendship, were love, compatibility of interests, support, fun, and similarity.

Jackie: Jackie's collage (Appendix H, Figure 10.0) emphasized support, fun, and the common interests and similarities they share. She symbolically described her friend and enjoyed the fact that no one knows her like she does, demonstrating the bond between themselves and their connectedness. Her interview was also focused on love and compatibility. Her friendship goals were connection, love, similarity of interests and taste in fashion, and fun.

When reviewing the collage data from the perspective of the joint projects demonstrated within the conversations, striking consistencies are apparent (Appendix T, Table 2.0).

Collage Data About Friendship Project – To Have Fun Together

The friendship project of having fun and being happy was explicated within several collages and/or during the interview itself.

Amber11: Um and we just added some things because like we get a lot of support from each other and *we have a lot of fun*.

Beth9: …And then um "it has everyone smiling" is because kind of like it's like a big happy face*, it's a lot of fun*. And like in the end, *friendship you have to be happy in it*. So like that's sort of why I have the big "happy yet" thing, in the big letters, …..
Beth10: Cause like um the main like part to the main like *the reason you're friends is to be happy*.

Candace29: Um, I think it would have to be umm, not exactly nice *but fun to be around*.
Candace30: And I like them crazy, cause it's – yeah *it's more fun to be around them*.
Interviewer31: What do you mean crazy?
Candace31: Like, just like outgoing and being like not afraid to do stuff.
Interviewer42: uh hm. Okay. So when you say close what is that – what is … when someone's close,
Candace42: Like I don't know. *Just like being around them and like having fun*. And …
Candace54: …. *I just like people that are fun to be around*.

Emma20: And, um *we're happy*. (laughing)

Faith3: …Well because when you're with friends *that it's usually fun and you're happy*.
Faith7: Well, um *we have fun*.
Faith54: You *have fun together* and um I don't know…

Heather2: And like about how *you … like have fun with each other and stuff*.
Heather6: Like yeah and then *you've always gotta have fun together*. Or else like it's not really a friendship.

Isabel153: (laughing) Well *it's just kind of fun*, like I don't know *having fun together*.

Jackie78-79: … *she's lots of fun to be wit*h. Like *we never have a bad time*, like maybe we're both tired sometimes, but *we always have fun*.

Collage Data About Friendship Project – To Support Each Other

Supportiveness was also a common value described either within the collage or during the collage interview. The participants spoke about supportiveness in several different ways. Amber's collage includes the words "feel better", which had not been asked about during the original collage interview. However, at the data-check interview Amber explained her intended meaning:

Amber: If *I'm down she'll support me and help me feel better and vice versa*, I hope. *If I'm doubting myself, she'll give me reassurance*. She will say it isn't true… I mean she won't

dismiss it because she's also going through the same stuff at school and everything. *If I need support I'd call Beth* but I would go to my mom first, she's first. But Beth is my number one friend, definitely."

Both Amber and Beth suggested that being there to listen to each other was an act of

supportiveness, something they both value in their close friendships.

Amber11: Um and we just added some things because like *we get a lot of support from each other* and we have a lot of fun.
Amber151: And you know *I support and hear her stuff.*

Beth12: Yeah, it says "*I feel safe and comfortable when I know I have a person I can say anything to*". I don't know that's just one sort of thing I want in like my good friends. I feel like *I can say anything to them* and stuff.
Beth29: ….But um, even if you are friends and you know you're only talking or whatever you're doing, even though there's lots of distractions *you're still there for each other* and not for like their TV or their room or something like that.

Other participants also referred to the supportive nature of their best friends, indicating

that friends were there for them when they had problems or were in need.

Emma35: And um *I don't think about my problems when I hang out with her*.
Interviewer36: Oh. Is she somebody that you can talk to about your problems?
Emma36: Yeah.

Faith23: Yeah, because *friends are supposed to listen to your problems and stuff.*
Interviewer24: Uh hm. So do you do that a lot with your friends?
Faith24: Yeah.

Gloria30-31: Um*, listening to what you have to say and like ... understanding.*
Gloria35: Um, I don't know, *just being there for you like when you're in – like having bad times and stuff.*
Gloria58: And like just kind of like just *being there for you* and stuff.

Heather28-29: Um, like if *you're having a bad* day… and um *you can always count on them to be there for you and like try and help you solve your problems* and like - like – like, um you can cry and they won't like make you feel like "what a wuss" and stuff. Because I know some people think that and stuff.
Heather36: Um, just that like sometimes *you can get really lonely and they're like there and like you can trust them.*
Heather39-40: Um, um ... *like just being there for each other and supporting each other and not judging each other* and having fun and like, *being there for them.* That – that *you can trust them.* And like … like I said before, *I think the most important thing in a friendship is that they can – you can support each other without being judged.*

Interviewer147: Yeah. And she's there for you if you're not having a - a good day.
Isabel147: Yeah. Always. *She always helps me.*
Interviewer148: Yeah. Process things and …
Isabel148: Yeah.
Interviewer149: if you get hurt or upset by something.
Isabel149: Uh hm.
Interviewer150: She's there.
Isabel150: *She's always there.* And you know *if she knows something is up, then she'll call me* or something.

Interviewer49: …What about those "stress and relief and caring"? [refers to words on the collage]
Jackie49: Um well when we're around each other, if we're both stressed out, *we'll both give each other relief*…and that's kind of what that means.

Collage Data About Friendship Project – To Connect with Each Other

Although some participants explicitly described a desire to be "connected" with their close friends, this was not consistent across dyads. What they did do, however, was infer that connection was important to them with the use of other, related constructs. Examples, such as loving each other like sisters, re-discovering each other, being a unit, being stronger together than as individuals, using words and phrases such as "tight", "caring", "always loving each other", "being popular doesn't matter", "trusting each other", and "my best friend forever" were used within some of the collages to convey closeness and intimacy values within the friendship. Amber, for example, referred to a graphic on her collage that said "just the 2 of us" when she explained about the connection that she and Beth enjoy.

Amber49: So, I think basically since then we've always been at our best when it's just one on one. And of course now that we're you know mature. Like I'll have a lot of fun with her and some other people. But I think that *we always just connected*. That's just when it's the both of us.

Amber111: Yeah they won't have the same history, but also *they may not be as emotionally connected*. But I don't really think there is such a big gradation – I mean like there are some people that you don't know as well.

She also referred to her relationship with Beth being very loving and sister-like.

Amber58: Yeah, like ah *I think we're like sisters* a lot, where *we bug each other* a lot (laughing) except then at the end of the day like *we really love each other*.
Interviewer60: You care about each other.
Amber60: Yeah.

Also on her collage was the word "re-discover". She indicated that they offer the other a

reflective way to see each other as they go through stages.

Interviewer84: Okay. So this "rediscovered" does that mean perhaps that you – Ummnm, why don't you tell me what it means?
Amber84-86: Okay, well I think that – you know we've kind of gone through phases in our friendship and *we've kind of rediscovered the other* in each phase. And *I think we also have learned a little bit about ourselves through the other person*.
Interviewer87: Ah, how does that work?
Amber87-89: Well I don't know – just like you know *we'll say stuff about like I might say something about Beth that she might not see herself being*. And it could be positive or negative. But it's usually positive. (laughing) Um, except and I think the same thing happens with me.
Interviewer90: Okay, so you're a good reflection for each other.
Amber90: Yeah .

Her friendship partner, Beth, referred directly to a connection theme within her collage,

using symbols to refer to it on her collage visually with intertwined pipe cleaners and gradually

closer columns of construction paper (Appendix H, Figure 2.0), as well as verbally during the

collage interview. She saw this intertwined aspect of friendship as a special type of bond, one

that affords them the ability to know what the other is thinking.

Beth53: Yeah. Just cut – that's also sort of connected to everything. Because with tight – I don't know it's like. I don't know it's like a saying you know. *We'll be tight friends forever*. It's like um it's tight like *you just know everything about each other*, right. Joined at the hips.

Beth76: there's something associated with it. I can't think of what. I know there's something that. I value um ah just like *there's like a bond*. I don't know how to describe it. But *when you're friends with someone you have this bond. It's just like you have this bond* – I don't know, but I think every friend has a different bond with each other and so, I guess you know it's like a true friend when you have that bond. And my bond is like ah um it's so you can do anything in front of them and they won't care and you won't care. You can just let yourself go and feel free in front of that person.

Beth3: It's probably like a weird diagram but it means like um when you make friends you start really far apart. *Then as time like goes along you get closer and closer and closer until*

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they're like touching each other. And as in like the twisty – the twisty – like the two pipe cleaners,

        Interviewer4: This one? (points to the pipe cleaners that are twisted together in the bottom right side of the collage)

        Beth4: Yeah. They're sort of like um it's like *tight, like intertwined. Because in friendship you have to be like connected with each other. Or really good friends I find we are connected so basically you know what each other's thinking. And then um the - the um the swirly thing on the bottom is like basically the same thing. It's like you know they're connected, they're like intertwined together so like one thing.*

The collages of Debra and Candace were both focused on the activities that they enjoy doing together and have enjoyed doing together in the past. However, during the collage interview Candace indicated that these happy memories and fun times that they have shared together are evidence of their closeness.

        Candace40: And I don't know, *we've had a lot of fun times together.*
        Candace41: And *I think that brought us a lot closer* as well.
        Interviewer42: uh hm. Okay. So when you say close what is that – what is … when someone's close,
        Candace42: Like I don't know. *Just like being around them and like having fun.*

She also alluded to this closeness later in the interview when she described what it means to "hang out" with her friend. Like Amber, Candace referred to what it's like when it is just the two of them together.

        Candace56: No. kind of, Um *I don't know just kind of in your own world* is the best. That's what that's like. *When we're hanging out together it's like we're in a world all our own.* Like stuff that a lot of people wouldn't do. (laughing)

Another way that the participants suggested the theme of connection and closeness in their friendship relationships was through the sharing and keeping of secrets.

        Faith40: *Cause friends never really have secrets from each other.*
        Gloria59: Yeah. And like actually *trusting them with like a secret* maybe you told them.
        Heather2:   …. And *not tell anybody's secrets* and have fun.

        Interviewer134: Okay, so "secret" – Is she a good place to store those?
        Isabel135-137: Yeah, no! Nothing gets out once I tell her. Which is good, which I mean a lot of people you think you can trust them but you really can't. And, you know, she's never, I don't think ever, told….. anyone my secrets, yeah.

The expression of love and feeling a loss if the relationship was to end was how Heather further expanded on the closeness and bond of their friendship. When she was asked what separated a best friend from an acquaintance, Heather offered this explanation.

Heather58: Um, well like you like, *love them* and like if - if you lost your best friend, or your friend, then *you'd be really sad*, but if like if something happened to somebody that you don't really know that well, you just feel like well that's – that's a shame and feel sorry for their parents and stuff, but not really anything else.
Interviewer59: Like no strong attachment to it, so to speak?
Heather59: Yeah.
Interviewer60: So *you feel you're very much closer* than… it's almost like there's an emotional bond there…
Heather60: Yeah

Heather6: And *loving each other because like if you don't then it's not really like sincere.*

Many of the participants referred to their sense that their friendship with their partners would continue long into the future. Several girls put the term "bff" on their collages, an acronym for the phrase "best friends forever". Debra summed up this sentiment most clearly during her collage interview with the statement "I think we're going to be friends for our whole lives".

In summary, and in answer to the second research question, evidence of the three commonly occurring joint friendship projects was also easily identified within the collage data. Having fun, supporting each other, and fostering a loving bond or connection within their friendships were expressed within the collages, both visually and verbally, as important friendship goals. The data demonstrated a consistency of friendship goals depicted within the collages and the friendship conversations. Appendix T, Table 2.0 presents a summary and examples of the consistent processes and meanings between collages and friendship conversations.

4.5   Summary of Findings

The research questions set out at the beginning of the study have been answered by this data. The first question centered on identifying the joint friendship projects demonstrated within early adolescent friendship conversations. The processes (cognitions, feelings and behaviours) and meanings (goals) were expressed within the participants' friendship conversations. The sources for information were observation of the participants during the friendship conversation itself, the internal processes (thoughts and feelings) of each participant identified through the self-confrontation interview, and the meanings of friendship portrayed and shared through the friendship collage interview.

The overriding, largest level of action identified in this study was the participants' identity project. This identity project may extend long into the future and then become a career, in a non-occupational sense. The identity project likely will be a long-term project, one occurring also in the context of family, school, group peer relationships, as well as other broader socio-cultural contexts. Of concern for this study was the dyadic, close friendship context. The girls' identity project encompassed the developmental task of exploration of possible selves and the trying on of different identities within the context of the close friendship relationship. Exploration and discovery of the self was evident throughout the friendship conversations (through participant self-disclosure of feelings, opinions, and perceptions), and within the collage interviews. Self-discovery and the trying on of identities were demonstrated in the context of working towards and achieving other friendship projects. As well, during the collage interview, some girls explicitly stated that they have come to know themselves better within the context of their close friendships.

Second, occurring with the identity action project was also a dyadic best-friendship project. The friendship project was seen as a long-term action project for the participants as they have all been friends over a number of years, and encompassed the participants' desire to preserve, maintain, and continue the friendship.

Across dyads, in service of their larger project of maintenance and continuation of their close friendship, three main sub-projects emerged from their friendship conversations. At times these sub-projects could be seen to overlap with each other. In addition to providing meaning to the friendship itself, these sub-projects provided the forum and safety for the exploration of possible identities.

1. Having fun together. The functional steps (the means) used to achieve this sub-project were joking, teasing, gossiping, sharing similarities, and telling stories (fictional and factual).

2. Supporting each other. The functional steps (the means) used to achieve this sub-project were gossiping, offering advice and opinions, reciprocation of feelings and perceived personal flaws and insecurities, empathic responses, revealing embarrassing moments, expressing agreement, and problem solving.

3. Connecting with each other. The functional steps (the means) used to achieve this sub-project were gossiping, reciprocation of feelings, physical contact, planning for the future and reminiscing about the past, as well as celebrating and sharing similarities.

The next part of the first research question addressed the use of self-representations (descriptions or disclosures about the self) as either advancing or not advancing their friendship projects. Friendship conversations included self-representations that advanced the friendship

projects. At times the desire to achieve higher order projects (maintenance and preservation of the friendship) resulted in an inconsistency of self-representation as determined through the self-confrontation interview. As well, some false self-representations were evident within the conversations in service of the other three friendship projects (fun, support, and/or connection).

In answer to the second research question as to the consistency or inconsistency of meanings and processes evidenced between the friendship collage interviews and the friendship conversations, the findings showed a strong consistency between the two data sources. However, some friendship values and conceptions identified by the participants on the friendship collages were not overtly acted out during the friendship conversations. For example, shared activities were described by some dyads as being very important but this was not always expressed across all dyads during the friendship conversations. However, all friendship projects (having fun, supporting each other, and connecting with each other) demonstrated within the friendship conversations were evidenced in some way within all friendship collages and/or interviews.

5   DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore "best friendship" projects and how they are manifested within female, early adolescent friendship conversations. The processes (cognitive, affective, and behavioural) and meaning (the goals) of friendship were identified within five early adolescent friendship conversations. As well, self-representations within these conversations and from collage interviews were viewed from the vantage point of whether or not they advanced friendship projects. Data from friendship collages, done by all the participants, were shown to be very consistent with friendship projects identified within the conversations, although other expressed goals were not overtly enacted within their conversations. As a data source, the collages were very complementary to both the conversation and the self-confrontation interview data.

In this chapter I discuss how the findings of this study are situated within and add to the present literature, the limitations of the study, and the implications for theory and practice. Implications for parents, educators, and counsellors of early adolescent girls, as well as recommendations for future research are suggested in light of the findings.

5.1   Comparison to the Literature

The findings of this qualitative study relate to and fit in with several areas of the literature. The relevance of the findings of the study to each of the following subject areas will be discussed in sequence: adolescent cognitive development literature, self and identity development literature, friendship quality and characteristics literature, attachment theory literature, and conversation elements in friendship conversations.

Adolescent Cognitive Development

The findings of this study fit in with the basic tenets of adolescent developmental psychology. The early adolescent's cognitive developmental advances allow the adolescent to think abstractly, to reason more deductively, to more fully take the perspective of others, and with a more elaborate cognitive system, to be more able to develop a clearer conception of a theory of self (Collins & Steinberg, 2006; Harter, 1999). With these new skills, early adolescents are more able to work on their identity project (to explore and discover their sense of self). To a large extent the adolescents in the current study were able to both express abstract thoughts and perceptions, communicate them artistically through both symbolic and verbal representation, and were able to reflect on their internal processes (thoughts and feelings) during a self-confrontation interview, thereby demonstrating their cognitive abilities. Self-confrontation interviewing, as well as through the creation of the friendship collage and the collage interview itself, facilitated and demonstrated the expression of these cognitive abilities.

Self and Identity Development

The findings of this study complement and expand on the existing identity/self development literature in several ways. First, the findings of this study contribute to the body of knowledge about how close friendships in early adolescence contribute to early identity exploration. Sparse qualitative research has focused on the processes of identity exploration between best friends, particularly that which is not focused on identity status achievement. The unique ability of this study to contribute to this body of knowledge rests in the identification of internal processes of the participants as they engaged in close friendship conversation.

This study supports Erikson's (1968) postulate that adolescence presents the individual with a crisis of developing an identity and goes beyond Marcia's (1966) paradigm to provide

insight into how the resolution and discrimination of whom one is evolves and is navigated within the context of a friendship relationship. Erikson stressed that successful interactions with others influenced how this process would proceed. During adolescence, Erikson theorized, adolescents began an active exploration of the self. With their own interests, personal beliefs, and perceived talents adolescents begin to test out these perceptions in the presence of environmental influences. In part, he believed adolescents conducted comparisons of themselves with others in order to distinguish between sameness and uniqueness. It is precisely this teasing apart process of sameness and uniqueness that was evidenced within the current study, with possible identities being put forth and challenged in the friendship dyads. The findings of this study also challenge previous research that assumed little self-exploration activity would occur in such young adolescents. The majority of the literature on identity development is dedicated to late or middle adolescence. The findings of this study indicate that early adolescents also actively question and explore aspects of the self.

Harter's (2006) more current developmental view of identity formation fully included the early adolescent's influential relationship with friends and considered adolescent development in light of their different roles and contexts. She identified a "proliferation of selves that vary as a function of the social context" (p. 531). This study demonstrated the exploration of the self that is apparent and tested in relation to the close friendship context. It differs, however, from Harter's work in that it has identified goal-directed behaviour occurring directly within a dyadic relationship. The current study did not rely on self-report or quantitative measures, but rather identified naturally occurring self-representations during friendship conversation, self-reflection, and through self-confrontation interviewing.

The current study is also complementary to the findings of Damon and Hart (1988), in that the participants were able to identify attributes of friends that are appealing and desirable during the collage interview. They all emphasized the importance of their friendships and the social skills that they use to maintain them (i.e. listening to each other, being there for each other, keeping secrets, acceptance and forgiveness). The girls demonstrated a self-knowledge that included interpersonal relationship characteristics (attributes that influence social appeal, sensitivity, communicative abilities and the social skill within relationships). These interpersonal characteristics were fostered within the context of their close friendships.

The bidirectional and dynamic nature of the development of the self is supported by the findings of this study. Through the movement toward joint goals of friendship, and the exploration of possible identities and selves during conversations within the context of the close friendship, the participants come to know themselves better. One participant reported this phenomenon directly when she indicated a type of rediscovery of each other as they move through different stages of their lives. This phenomenon fits in with the meta-analysis of Markus and Cross (1990) regarding the interpersonal nature of influence between self and others. Their findings fit with the findings of this study, and in conclusion they stated, "with a view of the self as constantly responding, adjusting, and incorporating the responses of others, we necessarily move toward a more dynamic view of the self and toward a view of behavior as reciprocally determined" (p. 601).

Harter (2006) expanded this proposition of the developing self in contextual relation to others. As adolescents develop they are increasingly able to differentiate and compartmentalize their many selves within the roles and relationships they have with others. For instance, youth may experience and define themselves differently within one context and another (i.e. with

parents, with friends, at school). Although, this study does not suggest that close friendships are the only source of self-exploration and development, it does support the notion that a sense of self is explored and developed, in part, through relationships with close friends. Like other research before it, this study demonstrated that while still allowing for individual agency, the self exists, is explored, and develops in the context of others.

The friendship projects identified within the friendship conversations of the participants (having fun, supporting each other, and connecting with each other), while they advanced and informed their overall project of maintaining and preserving the friendship, also advanced their goal of exploring and developing a sense of self. The role of supportive, close relationships as a main contributor to a sense of self is well documented in the literature (Bosma & Gerlsma, 2003; Brinthaupt & Lipka, 2002; Gable & Reis, 2006).

The view that close friendships provide an important context for self-exploration and ultimately, identity formation is supported by this study. Previous qualitative research studies that include process data have been sparse. The actual mechanisms by which adolescents explored a sense of self have not been extensively studied beyond theoretical suppositions. If we accept the premise that early adolescent close friendships provide a context for development of the self, how they go about achieving this developmental task should be of particular relevance. This research explored directly how female, early adolescents engaged in goal directed behaviour within their close friendships. One of the main projects of the participants, as determined through their conversations and their reflections afterwards, as well as through a collage interview about friendship, was to explore who they are in terms of their beliefs, thoughts, feelings, and perceptions. Although they did not often verbalize this project to their partners, they demonstrated it through their use of reciprocal questions about self-image, advice

seeking and problem solving, revelations of embarrassing moments about the self, and expression of personal thoughts and feelings. Directly asking for advice about personal situations and questioning each other about physical concerns are additional ways that the participants demonstrated they were seeking feedback about their selves from their friendship partner.

Friendship Quality and Characteristics

The current study also firmly belongs in the literature addressing the developmental functions and qualities of close friendships. In addition to the demonstrated goal of identity exploration, the current study found that the predominant projects that early adolescents engage in together within their close friendships are fun, support, connectedness, and the preservation or maintenance of the friendship itself. Within the friendship literature there is much evidence that adolescents seek reciprocally supportive, and connected relationships with their peers (Hartup & Stevens, 1997; Kindermann, 2006; Scholte, van Lieshout, & van Aken, 2001). The findings of the current study are very much in keeping with the existing literature.

The most important friendship quality, reciprocity, or mutuality, was actively demonstrated within the conversation between participants in this study. At the most basic level of analysis, language (both spoken and unspoken) can be seen as a highly reciprocal process, and a joint process for the expression of meanings and understanding. Conversation itself, with its inherent back and forth structure is thought to be an active creator of friendship, as well its product (Holtgraves, 1990). Holtgraves described self-disclosure within friendship conversations as being reciprocal in nature. Usually one self-disclosure begets another, sometimes more revealing self-disclosure. This was demonstrated throughout the present study. The participants frequently engaged in this type of reciprocal activity, with one self-disclosure or

revelation of an embarrassing experience leading to a similar or more personal disclosure by the conversational partner. The failure of one partner to continue self-disclosure had a tendency to end the subject as a topic of conversation. When reciprocity did not continue, as determined by one partner, this signaled the need to pursue a different conversational topic. In this way, the girls demonstrated their joint participation in topic setting.

Reciprocal mutuality consisting of give and take (of support, of advice, of comfort, of humour) was consistently demonstrated within the conversations of the participants in this study. Through their goals of support, connection, and fun, the girls showed their responsiveness to and interdependence on each other. Reciprocity took several forms within their communication but the performance or doing the reciprocity, was to achieve the goals of support and connection. They also reciprocally tested out their identities, as demonstrated in the example of the two friends discussing they body image with each other in a back and forth fashion, both seeking and providing feedback. As well, the reciprocal nature of self-deprecating remarks also demonstrates their bids for and action of connection and support. Within early adolescence, but also demonstrated throughout the lifespan, reciprocity of support and a sense of connection are thought to be main characteristics of close friendships (Hartup & Stevens, 1997; Kindermann, 2003). This study is also consistent with the finding in previous research indicating that grade seven early adolescents perceive their peers to be as supportive as their parents, a trend that continues with grade ten adolescents perceiving friends to be more of a support than parents (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992).

Another important friendship quality identified in the literature that was strongly supported by the present study was the concept of similarity, sometimes referred to as assortativeness or homophily between friends (Kindermann, 2003). Conceptualizations of "we-

ness", being a unit, the search for and celebration of similarity, were common themes throughout conversation and collages of all participant dyads. Similarity has previously been shown to be a salient component of adolescent friendship, with friends across all age groups being more similar to each other than non-friends (Hartup & Stevens, 1997; Kinderman, 2003). Although researched in early adults, it may also have applicability to adolescents, that those individuals who seek closeness and connection within their friendships become more similar to their friends (Gabriel, Carvallo, Dean, Tippin, & Renaud, 2005).

Similarity, however, can be looked at from two different vantage points. First, individuals within a friendship pair may self-select those friends who are more like themselves in the first place, or alternatively, friends, by virtue of the time they spend and the resultant shared experiences they have together, may become more like each other over time (Newcomb, Bukowski, & Bagwell, 1999). These authors showed that both mechanisms occur during adolescent friendships. It is not known which mechanism was more at play with the participants of this study, but regardless, similarity between friends was strongly demonstrated in the present study. With the exception of one dyad, who reported to not share many interests and activities in common, all pairs reported being very similar to each other on several dimensions (i.e. interests, activities, school performance, or preferences for fashion and music). Perhaps, although all pairs demonstrated exploration of the self, this would have been more pronounced within pairs of friends who self-reported being dissimilar. Even the pair who reported they did not have much in common demonstrated a sense of "we-ness" and connection through their collage depictions, as well as through the frequent use of "we" as a pronoun to describe internal processes of the self. Use of the pronoun "we" has been interpreted as being a way that friends show their identification and perceived similarity with one another (Wiener & Mehrabian, 1968).

Interestingly, in terms of the theories regarding contributing factors of identity exploration, it is posited that individuals who present more of a dialectical incongruity, confrontation, or a need for resolution create an environment that is more conducive to self-exploration, synthesis and/or resolution than do those who do not challenge us with this dialectical tension (Adams & Marshall, 1996). It is likely that the tensions or dilemmas presented through dyadic interactions between opposites would be more likely to foster questioning and identity exploration. This has been demonstrated in the adult relationship literature, whereby expansion of the self is seen to occur when one enters a new romantic relationship (Aron & Aron, 1996). As all friendship dyads in this study were long-term friends, it is possible that this expansion or dialectical challenge had already occurred in the past and was therefore, not as prevalent as it might otherwise be in friendships that were not as longstanding.

Attachment Theory

Attachment theory literature has not been previously discussed in the context of this research as the linkages were unexpected. Because of the clear identification of support and connection as being important projects the girls' enacted during their conversations, parallels to attachment theory are now apparent. Bowlby (1969), and later Cassidy (1999) reported that two systems come into play to explain intrapersonal behaviour in close relationships. First, an attachment system develops whereby the target individual will seek contact with those persons who will likely provide support and assistance in times of distress. This attachment system links directly to the concept of support seeking that all participants both enacted in their conversations and stated as being an important and central friendship value during the collage interview. All participants indicated that they viewed their close friendships as sources of support during times of crises, or loneliness, or personal problems with family or other friends. Second, attachment

theorists have also identified an affiliative system, which Weiss (1998) described as behaviours that are driven by desires to have companionship, to develop alliances against others, and to obtain stimulation and knowledge (cited in Mikulincer & Selinger, 2001). Cassidy reported that this system is activated by a need to be sociable and connected to others. Again, the data provide a clear link to this system, with all dyads implementing their affiliative, connecting friendship project in both the conversation and through the collage interview. An affiliative system is also evident by the overriding project of friendship preservation and maintenance.

Although their work was with slightly older adolescents (15-17 years old), Mikulincer and Selinger (2001), confirmed that close friends demonstrated both the attachment and the affiliative system, during which time they used these peer attachment figures as "not only a source of support but also a partner for exploration, play and learning" (p. 86), especially for girls. Those adolescents who were securely attached were able to form rich friendships while balancing both attachment and affiliative systems. The participants in this study, through their demonstration of both attachment and affiliation, confirm these authors' findings, but within a younger adolescent population.

Attachment theorists have characterized secure individuals (those who have been attended to as infants by a responsive caregiver), as being more likely to utilize their significant other as a "secure base" from which they can then explore their environment (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). Other authors have found that young adolescents (12-15 years old) as opposed to older adolescents (16-19 years old and 20-28 years old) more frequently seek "secure bases" in their best friends, with all adolescents still primarily relying on their mothers to meet this need (Markiewicz, Lawford, Doyle & Haggart, 2006). Young adolescents, however, do rely on their best friends to be "safe havens", a term used to describe an attachment figure who

provides comfort, support, and reassurance.   This role, particularly during early adolescence, is more likely to belong to a best friend than to either parent. All dyads in this study demonstrated the phenomenon of providing a secure, safe, and accepting base from which to explore identities. The girls' reported feelings of security and the sense that they could say or do anything without any discomfort in the relationship reflected their secure attachment to their friendship partners. With such a secure and safe attachment, the girls were free to explore not only their environments but also their inner selves.

In addition to the influential attachment relationships that adolescents have with their parents, close one-on-one peer friendships provide another safe venue for developmental self-exploration. Conversation between close friends, particularly between those who feel safe, comfortable, and accepted with each other, can be seen as the perfect forum whereby intimate others exchange and test out possible notions of the self. Close friendships and the conversations and experiences they have within them provide the early adolescent with a playground in which to discover who they are.

Conversation Elements in Adolescence

As demonstrated within this study, several functional steps (means) were commonly used across dyads to implement friendship projects during the conversations. Surprisingly, one of the more prevalent means was gossip, which was demonstrated within the quest to achieve all of the friendship projects (fun, support, connection, preservation of the friendship and exploring and testing of identities). It was demonstrated to be a tool to maintain the qualities of the friendship (by gossiping about girls who don't behave well within their friendships), and to explore a sense of self (by gossiping negatively about girls who copy a personal sense of style).

As this is an unexpected finding, literature regarding the role of gossip in friendship relationships is briefly discussed. The findings of the current study are in keeping with previous research, whereby gossip has been shown to be a source of support and solidarity enhancement between adolescents who use it in conversation (Gottman & Mettetal, 1986). Gottman and Mettetal outlined a process framework of friendship conversation identifying occurrences of self-disclosure, gossip, exploration of similarities and differences, and problem solving. These authors found that, not unlike the current study, gossip, message clarification, attempts to find common ground, resolving conflict, and exchanges of information all contributed to the overall goal of self-exploration and expression during adolescence.

In a recent study with younger girls and their close friends, McDonald, Putallaz and Grimes (2007) found that girls tended to gossip more frequently with those they were close to and that gossip served several different functions within their friendship conversations. Although other functions of gossip were evident (social aggression, establishment of norms, facilitation of intimacy, entertainment, or information sharing), the majority of gossip was neutral in valence (non-evaluative) and done primarily for the purpose of information sharing. However, these authors also found that relationship closeness between gossipers was positively related to the occurrence of gossip that served the intimacy function and facilitated even greater closeness.   These findings are very much in keeping with the findings of this study, in that gossip, without exception, was utilized for the purposes of achieving friendship projects, such as entertainment (fun), support (through alignment against a gossipee), and/or connection (through the identification of common dislikes or disapproval of other people's behaviour). There were no incidences of gossip being used for malicious purposes by the participants.

Support for the notion that gossip has the potential to shape identities borrows from the early adult literature of Jaworski and Coupland (2005). These authors maintain that gossip, particularly that of a pejorative nature, creates "othering" and succeeds in defining the gossipers as different or otherwise better than the target of their gossip. It is not unreasonable to propose that early adolescents would engage in this same kind of social comparison, whereby gossip and slander of an absent other would have the effect of elevating the gossipers or separating undesirable traits or features of the gossipee(s) from those who gossip. The adolescents in the current study frequently used gossip as a mechanism to distance themselves from the behaviour of others, again testing their identities and gaining support for their ideas in the context of a safe and supportive relationship. Derlega and Chaiken (1977) also proposed that the gossip process itself creates greater intimacy that further solidifies the relationship. Obviously the calculated risk of engaging in gossip rests in the confidence with which one can assume that the gossip partner will agree, a likelihood that is probably considerably higher in the context of a close friendship. Leaper and Holliday (1995) found that once gossiping has occurred, intimacy is strengthened by the knowledge that the gossipers share the same evaluations about the gossipee(s). This supports the finding in the current research that the friendship project of connection was achieved through the finding and expression of similarity as a result of gossip.

This also leads one to consider the unexpected function of teasing demonstrated within this study. Where teasing was used between participants, it helped achieve the goal of fun, particularly on the part of the person doing the teasing, but also allowed the girls to participate in the testing out of identities (i.e. one who has a sensitive stomach, one who will get fat if she eats too much, one who is overemotional because she cries during a movie). Pichler (2006), in her qualitative study of 15-16 year-old British Bangladeshi girls, found that teasing can function as

fun and bonding, in addition to being a way for girls to explore identities. Other authors who have studied teasing at the dyadic level report that teasing can be used to "bond, nip, or bite" depending on the context (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997). Teasing between two people about an absent party would be more likely to bond the teasers, whereas teasing of one person to a present partner has more of a potential to nip or bite. It is with the nip or bite that the testing of identities comes into play. By teasing a partner about the possibility of becoming fat, as was the case in this study, both girls explored this idea as a possibility for the self. The teaser passively told the teased one that this would be an undesirable self, and the teaser, through her response (slapping her partner on the leg) also indicated that this state would be undesirable. The relationship effect is one of bonding and an exploration of selves. Boxer and Cortés-Conde also found that the potential for teasing to be bonding was increased by the presence of contextualized cues (exaggerated body language or tone of voice) by the person doing the teasing. In this way, it would be more apparent to the teasing recipient that the teaser was joking. All instances of teasing or joking within this study were accompanied by these contextualized cues. Other authors have found that the perceived bite of teasing is determined by who is doing the teasing and what the teasing is about (Carlson Jones, Burrus Newman & Bautista, 2005). These authors found that teasing by a good friend was not as likely to be received negatively as that received by an acquaintance classmate. Girls in their study interpreted the most negative effect as a result of teasing about weight, particularly when delivered by a male classmate. If, on the other hand, a friend delivered teasing, humour was perceived to be greatest.

In the current study, as brought to light in the self-confrontation interviews, teasing was received in one of two ways. In one situation a teased participant reasserted her position that she indeed does have a sensitive stomach, rejecting the proposed identity that she was being overly

finicky, and managed to elicit an attempt at repair through an empathic, sympathetic response by her partner. In another example, the teasing was dismissed as fun, as if the tested identity of being overemotional was deemed to be acceptable by the teased participant. Therefore, no further dialogue or challenge of the teasing took place. It was construed as being fun, with teasing having been only a nip as opposed to a bite.

Summary

In summary, the findings of the present study fit into several streams of literature providing new linkages between adolescent development, self and identity exploration, attachment perspectives, conversation functional steps, and research involving the nature of close friendships in adolescence. These linkages are particularly relevant as they pertain to the goal-directed actions that friends implement within the context of their close friendships (fun, support, connection, self-exploration, and the preservation and maintenance of quality and rewarding friendships).

5.2   Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to female participants and does not encompass the dimension of gender in the analysis. The reason for this delimitation is the well researched finding that adolescent females are more relationally oriented and that their conversations are more personal and reflective than are those of males, whose conversations are more likely to revolve around instrumental activity (Johnson & Aries, 1983). It was also assumed, due to the more verbal expressiveness of females, that they would provide greater depth than would males (Johnson & Aries, 1983; Rafaelli & Duckett, 1989). Females, in their same-sex friendships are also more likely to value intimacy, and are therefore, more likely to self-disclose than are males (Johnson

& Aries, 1983). Due to the complexity of the tasks, it was hypothesized that females would provide more valuable, and more in-depth reflections than would males.

This study was limited to early adolescents and may not be reflective of the nature of friendship conversations between older adolescents or younger children. The rationale for choosing this age group was outlined in the methods section. It was apparent that some of the participants were more able or willing to meet the cognitive demands of the study than were others. Several participants claimed that the task of self-reflection was difficult, often indicating that they could not remember what they were thinking or feeling or that they were not thinking or feeling anything other than what was overtly apparent within the dialogue. A possible explanation for this difficulty may be the phenomenon of increased self-consciousness and egocentrism that peaks in early adolescence (Elkind & Bowen, 1979; Rankin, Lane, Gibbons, & Gerrard, 2004). The participants may have felt overly self-conscious and not completely comfortable revealing their internal processes to the interviewer, preferring instead to keep their selves private and inaccessible, despite questioning.

With the unavoidable difference in perceived power between the researcher and the participant, it is also possible that participants did not feel comfortable to bring up any concerns or corrections to the narrative summaries they might have had at the meeting to confirm the findings. Only two of the dyads put forth challenges to the narrative summaries. Every endeavor was made to let the girls know that their input was valued and desired and that their co-authoring was necessary for a partnership of understanding. It is possible that, despite these assurances, the girls did not feel comfortable to challenge the researcher's ideas.

The study was also limited to those who were fluent in the English language and may not, therefore, be representative of the processes and associated meanings of close friendship and

ways of self-representation by adolescents were are not as proficient with English. Also, in terms of race, four out of five dyads were Caucasian. Only one dyad was not Caucasian, with one member of the dyad being Asian and the other being half Asian and half Caucasian. Therefore, Western values may be over-represented in this study. It was beyond the scope of this study and not expected that it would be able to speak to any cultural differences that may exist between the participants.

As with any qualitative research project it is impossible to generalize the findings beyond the sample. This research does, however, provide an indepth look into the friendships of five pairs of close friends. It might have been more representative to of obtained an equal distribution of participants by grade level (i.e. three grade sevens and three grade eights). The most expressive dyad (Amber and Beth), was also a year older and in a higher school grade than the other pairs, which may have afforded them an advantage in their ability to express their thoughts and feelings more readily. It is possible, as well, that these particular girls, the ones who self-selected to participate in the study, may not be representative of early adolescent girls in general. Perhaps the girls who volunteered for such a study are already ones who are more open, outgoing, confident, and insightful about their friendships, and these personality traits may have influenced the data. This study did not account for individual differences in personality, such as shyness. It is possible that shyness could impact the degree of reflection during self-confrontation interviewing. These girls wanted to say something about their close friendships by virtue of their interest and participation in the study, and this desire and lack of shyness may only represent a small portion of early adolescent girl qualities. Another interesting occurrence with respect to possible self-selection is the fact that all dyads reported very stable, time-enduring friendships, with friendship length reported at two years, seven years, seven years, eight years

and ten years for the five dyads. It is possible that the closeness and duration of these friendships is also not what could be usually expected in the general population of 12-13 year old girls.

Conducting such a study within a laboratory setting with audio and video equipment present may have influenced the comfort of the participants and the actual content of the friendship conversations. It would have been more naturalistic, and may have afforded a more intimate conversation, had the girls had been able to have their conversations in environments they are more comfortable in (i.e. in their own home, or at least in a more homey environment with less conspicuous audio and video recording equipment). However, despite these inherent procedural limitations, most of the dyads indicated that they eventually felt comfortable with the cameras being present and even forgot about them entirely at times demonstrated by some dyads covering intimate territory in their conversations

From a methodological point of view it would also have been better to have two people reviewing and coding the transcript data rather than having an assistant only review and contribute to the summative narrative after data had been coded and analyzed. This would have presented an insurmountable practical and financial difficulty. It is hoped that the review by the assistant provided an adequate check on the possible biases of the researcher. There is also the possibility that because I had more than one assistant I may have created another confound to the data, that of individual differences in the interviewing process. It is possible that differences in personal style could have influenced how comfortable the participants felt in each interview context despite uniform training of assistants.

However, despite the procedural limitations, the data collected within this study are rich and full of the complexities of female friendships within this age group. Utilizing the action theory method provided a holistic lens from which to view the joint projects that early adolescent

girls enact in their close friendships. The additional information from the self-confrontation interview and the data from the collage interview allowed the researcher to obtain as complete a picture as possible of their inner world (thoughts, feelings, and meanings) of friendship.

5.3   Implications for Counsellors, Educators and Parents

Knowing the values and common joint projects of girls within their early adolescent friendships is useful for both teaching and counselling practice. Viewing close, intimate peer friendships as a source of support and connection could lead counsellors and educators to enquire as to whether an adolescent client or student has such an individual in their life. If the adolescent reports no close friendships with peers, this could point to a lack of support and intimate connection with others, particularly if the youth is coming from a troubled family context in which case this lack of friend support would not be moderated. As this project also had a creative component (the completion of the friendship collage), I am reminded of the usefulness of utilizing the creative domain for the expression of values, thoughts, and emotions. All of the collages created by the early adolescents in this project were wonderfully symbolic and expressive. Creative arts provide a unique window into the adolescent's internal world and counsellors may find that richer, and otherwise inaccessible information becomes more available through artistic expression.

Interestingly, the finding of this study around the use of gossip as a means towards achievement of all the identified friendship projects (identity exploration, maintenance and preservation of the friendship, fun, support and connection) has implications for how counsellors might practically utilize gossip directly within the counselling session. As a new counsellor, throughout my training, I have been taught to discourage client storytelling and gossip within the counselling session because it has a tendency to detract from clients' important issues that lead

them to seek counselling. However, in light of the positive function of gossip illustrated through this study, I now question the logic of that instruction, especially as it applies to adolescent clients. Perhaps full exploration of gossip, and even the encouragement of it in the counselling session, would provide adolescents with the support they are likely seeking within the counselling relationship. Discouragement of gossip and storytelling by adolescents may have dismissive and otherwise relationship-damaging effects on the counselling relationship. If an adolescent client has a significant, close friend, they might benefit from receiving counselling jointly, following the evidence of the benefits of systemic family counselling.

Parents would do well to encourage the development of close intimate friendships for their children in order to provide another context for support and intimate connection during the time of adolescent development. Parents would also likely benefit if they could establish enough rapport with their adolescent to engage in gossip with them. Non-judgmental acceptance, such as was demonstrated by all participants in this study could foster safety and encourage disclosure, and ultimately increase relationship solidarity, intimacy, and connection.

The role of supportiveness in the context of close friendship has broad implications for adolescent mental health. Several authors have found positive links between supportiveness in friendship and school achievement, self-esteem, and psychosocial adjustment (See Harter & Stevens, 1997 for a review). Harter, Waters, and Whitesell (1998) found that perceived supportiveness, in the form of validation, contributed to a global sense of self-worth or self-esteem, particularly in the context of close, same-sex female friendships. Further, if supportiveness of the self was not perceived to be present in the friendship context, not only was there negative impact on the adolescent's sense of self-worth within the context of the friendship, but global self-worth was also negatively affected. As well, self-worth in the friendship context

was most highly correlated with global self-worth, as opposed to with other contexts (parents, teachers, classmates). Harter and her colleagues were careful, however, to avoid any attempt at determining the directionality of their findings. For example, it is not known if the supportiveness of friends creates a positive sense of self, or if in fact, a pre-existing positive sense of self creates or fosters a sense of supportiveness within one's relationships. Either way, the findings of the current study point to the benefits of having close, quality peer friendships.

By extension, developing qualitatively close and supportive friendships can be seen as preventative for the many maladies low self-esteem predicates (i.e. conduct disorder, antisocial behaviour, eating disorders, suicidality, etc) (Bosacki, Dane, & Marini, 2007; Lansford, Criss, Pettit, Dodge, & Bates, 2003).   In fact, Bagwell, Newcomb, and Bukowski (1996) demonstrated that having friends in early adolescence has long-term benefits. They found that later in life, those children who had been able to enjoy friendships were also more likely to have better attitudes about family and better feelings of self-worth. The friendship quality of all dyads in the current study was high. All participants reported and demonstrated through their functional steps that their friendships were sources of closeness, connection, validation, and support.

Many problems leading to the requirement of counselling for youth and young adults today results in the incomplete attainment of a healthy sense of self. The finding that close friendships in early adolescents provide a forum for the exploration and discovery of different identities puts early adolescent friendships in higher estimation. A lack of this kind of exploration and discovery, or one that occurs in an unsafe, unsupportive environment has the potential to lead to both externalizing and internalizing behaviours. Parents, educators, and counsellors, therefore, in light of this research should actively encourage and foster close peer friendships between early adolescents.

5.4   Implications for Future Research

The early adolescent participants in this study demonstrated their ability to participate in action-theory research, providing richly narrative and insightful data. As dyads of this age had not previously been studied using this research method, the door is now open for further research within this age group. Having witnessed the cognitive ability and willingness of the participants, for the most part, to engage in the self-confrontation process, I can see that it may be possible that this particular group of girls may have had cognitive abilities above that which is suggested in the literature. Perhaps conducting the same study with a younger population or replicating it would illustrate clearer cognitive ability boundaries. The participants in this study, however, demonstrated individual variability in their self-reflection skill, as some found this task very difficult, whereas others were able to reflect easily. It is only through conducting this type of research with different age groups that one might be able to increase knowledge in this area.

An obvious avenue of exploration for future research would also be to replicate this study with boys in order to determine if the meanings and processes in boys' friendship conversations differ substantially from that of girls of the same age. The replication of this study in a cross-cultural population would also likely reveal differences, particularly in terms of the pursuit of identity. Perhaps with participants from more collectivist cultures, the goal for exploration and development of individualistic identity would not be as prevalent.

There is a formidable interest in the literature about the processes and functions of peer groups or cliques during adolescence. It would be very interesting to conduct a methodologically similar study with a group of girls who are friends. The examination of the joint goals of groups of friends could prove enlightening, particularly with the self-confrontation interview information. This would provide interesting comparison data as to the functional steps

that groups of friends employ during their conversations as compared to those used by pairs of friends. Relational aggression, malicious gossip, and "outing" are some aspects of group behaviour that may come to be understood better utilizing this method of study. Of particular interest would be to see if gossip and teasing would have the same benevolent qualities (to provide support, to have fun, and to connect with each other) within a group conversation as it has been shown to be at the dyadic level in this study.

It is also possible that more direct exploration of the role of their friends on how they see themselves would elicit representations of the self. Questions such as "How does your friend influence who you are as a person?" or "How have you changed since you have known this friend?" or "What are some examples of how you influence each other?", may have provided interesting information. In the current study, any direct reference to the role of their friends on the "self" was purely incidental as it was not asked of the participants directly. I have a keen interest in how early adolescents would discuss the answer to these questions in conversation with their close friends. Self-confrontation interviewing after such a conversation would likely reveal interesting findings. This kind of information, including the internal processes of the participants, would provide a holistic account of peer influence and the processes of early identity exploration.

Through the course of conducting this project I was also able to witness the friendships of the participants' mothers. In a number of cases the participants' mothers identified themselves to also be close friends. I was struck by the interactions that they too seemed to engage in. The processes seemed to be remarkably similar to those of their daughters (i.e. joking, teasing, and gossiping), despite the vast age difference, causing me to speculate about the enduring qualities and functions of long-term, intimate friendships. This raises the possibility of replicating the

study in the adult, female friend population. This kind of study would contribute to the body of knowledge about the goals and meanings within adult friendships.

It would also be interesting to follow friendship dyads over time to determine if friendship goals, functional steps and behavioural elements would change over time. This would also show a more dynamic process of self-exploration as the particular types and methods used to self-represent would likely change. Of interest would be to see if the phenomenon of inconsistent self-representations in the service of friendship goal achievement would persist over time.

Particularly with youth, it would be more appropriate to conduct any future research in a more naturalistic setting, given that most of the girls in the study reported feeling awkward about the cameras, at least initially. Perhaps the concealment of cameras so they would not be as obtrusive would be helpful to increase comfort, thereby increasing the likelihood that the participants would feel more natural and free to converse the way they usually do. It would be ideal to capture the conversation with them in their own environments in order to more fully recreate a natural, comfortable environment.

5.5   Conclusion

The qualitative data collected during this research are rich and meaningful. The friendship projects of early adolescents demonstrated their active engagement in identity exploration, their fun-loving natures, and their prevalent desire for support and connection during friendship conversations. Their ability to self-reflect during self-confrontation interviewing has provided new information about the internal processes (thoughts, feelings, and personal meanings) of these early adolescent females within their close friendships. As well, the depictions of friendship through their collage creations and their discussions with the researcher

afterwards demonstrated their symbolic representations about the meanings of close friendship, which were wholly consistent with what they acted out within their friendship conversations.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

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THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Faculty *of* Education UBC

WOULD YOU LIKE TO PARTICIPATE IN A FRIENDSHIP STUDY?

If you are female, 12 or 13 years old, have a very good friend, 4 hours of time, and would like to participate, together with your friend, in a University of British Columbia study entitled "Expression of self-description within early adolescent friendship conversations" please have your parent(s) contact Carla Haber, an investigator in this study who is completing her Master's in the Arts through the completion of this thesis research project, at bestfriendstudy@hotmail.com or 604-XXX-XXXX. The principal investigator is Dr. Richard Young (Dept. of Educational Psychology & Counselling Psychology & Special Education).

The study involves creating a collage about friendship and talking about it with a researcher and then having a conversation about a topic of your choice with your friend.
A $25.00 honorarium will be paid to participants to assist with travel and time costs.

Appendix B

Information letter for parents

Date

Dear Parent(s):

RE: Self-Description In Early Adolescent Friendship Conversations Study

The University of British Columbia is conducting a research study of early adolescent female friendships and their conversations. This research is being conducted to fulfill the requirements for my Master of Arts thesis. The purpose of the study is to explore how early adolescents talk about themselves during their friendship conversations. As well, we are interested in exploring how early adolescents describe themselves in conversation to a researcher. In total, the time required for this study will be approximately 4 hours. A small honorarium of $25.00 will be paid to cover transportation and inconvenience costs.

Female, early adolescent girls can be included in the study if they meet the following criteria:

- 12 or 13 years of age.
- Has a best or very good friend who is also willing to participate, nominates them as a best or very good friend, and also has parental consent to participate.
- Has had this friend for at least 6 months.
- Has no mental illnesses or developmental language delays.
- Fluent in English.

If you think your daughter would be interested in participating, please contact me by telephone at 604-XXX-XXXX or by email at bestfriendstudy@hotmail.com and I will be pleased to give you further information and go over the procedures in greater detail. You may also call my thesis supervisor, Dr. Richard Young at the University by telephone at 604-822-6380. Thank you for your consideration,

Yours sincerely,

Carla Haber
Master of Arts Graduate Student
Counseling Psychology

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THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Faculty of Education UBC

Dept. of Educational and Counselling Psychology and
Special Education
2125 Main Mall
Vancouver, BC, Canada V6T 1Z4

Tel: 604-822-6380 Fax: 604-822-3302

Expression of Self-Description in Early Adolescent Friendship Conversations
Parental Informed Consent Form

Principal Investigator: Dr. Richard Young
Professor, Educational and Counselling Psychology, and
Special Education
(604) 822-6380

Co-Investigator: Carla Haber
Master of Arts Graduate Student
Counseling Psychology
(604) XXX-XXXX

Dear Parent,

We are writing to request permission for your daughter to participate in a research project that is being conducted at the University of British Columbia in the Department of Education and Counseling Psychology and Special Education. This study is being conducted to fulfill the thesis requirement for a Master of Arts degree for Carla Haber under the direction of Dr. Richard Young.

The overall purpose of this study is to explore and describe how early adolescents think, feel, and behave as they have conversations with their close friends. We are also interested in how adolescents describe themselves to each other as well as to a researcher, and how they define a "very good" or "best" friend.

This study will provide valuable information as to how early adolescents come to have a sense of who they are and how this sense of self is described and communicated in their friendship conversations.

The research study, should you agree to have your daughter participate, will entail the following:
1. <u>Creation of a collage by the participant at home</u>. One week prior to the first interview, art supplies will be provided for your daughter to create an "All about friendship" collage. Using pictures, words, drawings, magazine images, etc, your daughter will create a poster that will visually represent what friendship means to her. This collage will provide the basis

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for the first interview. It is expected that creation of the collage will take approximately 1 to 2 hours but there is no minimum time requirement.

2. <u>Individual interview with the researcher to discuss the collage.</u> At a mutually agreeable time, both members of the friendship pair would visit the research laboratory at the University of British Columbia. Interview will consist of open-ended questions regarding the content and meaning of the collage. Participants may refuse to answer any question at any time in the interview process. The interview session will be audio and videotaped to allow for transcription. A digital image of the collage will be obtained. At the end of the collage interview, the participant will also be asked to describe what a "very good" or "best" friend means to them. This will provide a transition to the next part of the interview. This part of the visit would be expected to take approximately 30 minutes.

3. <u>Brief interview with researcher and friendship pair and friend conversation without presence of researcher:</u> After the collage interview both members of the friendship pair would be reunited. After a brief explanation the pair would be invited to engage in a videotaped conversation on the topic of their choice. Suggested conversation length would be approximately 15 minutes.

4. <u>Individual interview with the researcher to discuss the friend conversation and watch video:</u> Friend pairs would again be separated, each with one researcher. The researcher and one member of the friendship pair would then watch the taped recording of the friend conversation. At one-minute intervals the tape will be stopped and the participant will be asked "What were you thinking or feeling at this point in the conversation?" Other open-ended questions may be asked for clarification. The interview session will be audio taped to allow for transcription. This part of the visit will be expected to take approximately 30 to 45 minutes.

5. <u>Meeting to discuss the results of the researchers findings:</u> At a mutually agreeable time, the participants will be invited to review the researchers summary of findings. Any errors, omissions or additional information that the participant deems to be accurate will be incorporated into the findings. This meeting would be expected to take no more than 30 minutes.

There are no known risks associated with being involved in this study. In the unlikely event that your child feels uncomfortable or upset as a result of the research questions, she will be provided with the opportunity to speak to a counsellor. I will provide you with a list of counselling resources before the onset of the study.

All information collected for this research will be kept in a locked filing cabinet on the UBC Point Grey campus. No names or other identifying information will appear in any reports of the completed study. Portions of transcripts may be used in the final research document but measures will be taken to prevent individuals from being discernable.   An additional MA, Counseling Psychology student will be employed to assist with the interviews.   Only the investigator and the co-investigator will have access to the data. All data with identifying information will be kept strictly confidential. After five years all data (paper transcripts, audio and videotapes) will be destroyed. The digital image of the collage may be used in a future analysis and/or may be presented at a professional conference. However, all identifying information, particularly if photographs have been used in the collage, will be altered so as to protect the identity of all individuals portrayed on the collage.

In order to defray the costs of transportation and inconvenience each participant will receive an honorarium in the amount of $25.00.

If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact Dr. Richard Young at 604-822-6380. You may also contact Carla Haber at 604-XXX-XXXX or by email at bestfriendstudy@hotmail.com. If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may refuse to allow your child to participate or choose to withdraw your child from the study at any time without any consequences.

Your signature below indicates that you consent for your daughter to participate in this study. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received of a copy of this consent form. Thank you for your time and consideration of this research study.

I consent/ I do not consent (circle one) for my child, _____ (child's name) to participate in this study.

_____
Parent or Guardian Signature   Date

_____
Printed Name of the Parent or Guardian

_____
Witness   Date

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Faculty *of* Education UBC

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2125 Main Mall
Vancouver, BC, Canada V6T 1Z4

Tel: 604-822-6380 Fax: 604-822-3302

Expression of Self-Description in Early Adolescent Friendship Conversations
Participant Assent Form

Principal Investigator: Dr. Richard Young
Professor, Educational and Counselling Psychology, and
Special Education
(604) 822-6380

Co-Investigator: Carla Haber
Master of Arts Graduate Student
Counseling Psychology
(604) XXX-XXXX

Dear Participant,

You are being asked to participate in a research project that is being conducted at the University of British Columbia in the Department of Education and Counseling Psychology and Special Education. This study is being conducted to fulfill the thesis requirement for a Master of Arts degree for Carla Haber under the direction of Dr. Richard Young.

The overall purpose of this study is to explore and describe how early adolescents think, feel, and behave as they have conversations with their close friends. We are also interested in how adolescents describe themselves to each other as well as to a researcher, and how they define a "very good" or "best" friend.

This study will provide valuable information as to how early adolescents come to have a sense of who they are and how this sense of self is described and communicated in their friendship conversations.

The research study, should you agree to have your daughter participate, will entail the following:
1. <u>Creation of a collage by you at home</u>. One week prior to the first interview, art supplies will be provided for you to create an "All about friendship" collage. Using pictures, words, drawings, magazine images, etc, you will create a poster that will represent what friendship means to you. This collage will provide the basis for the first interview. It is expected that creation of the collage will take approximately 1 to 2 hours but there is no minimum time requirement.
2. <u>Individual interview with the researcher to discuss your collage.</u> At a mutually agreeable time, both members of the friendship pair will visit the research laboratory at the University

of British Columbia. Interview will consist of open-ended questions regarding the content and meaning of the collage. You may refuse to answer any question at any time in the interview process. The interview session will be audio and videotaped to allow for transcription. A digital image of the collage will be obtained. At the end of the collage interview, you will also be asked to describe what a "very good" or "best" friend means to you. This will provide a transition to the next part of the interview. This part of the visit is expected to take approximately 30 minutes.

3. <u>Brief interview with researcher and friendship pair and friend conversation without presence of researcher:</u> After the collage interview, you and your friend will be reunited. After a brief explanation you will be invited to engage in a videotaped conversation on the topic of your choice. Suggested conversation length will be approximately 15 minutes.

4. <u>Individual interview with the researcher to discuss the friend conversation and watch video:</u> Friend pairs will again be separated, each with one researcher. The researcher and one member of the friendship pair will then watch the taped recording of the friend conversation. At one-minute intervals the tape will be stopped and the participant will be asked "What were you thinking or feeling at this point in the conversation?" Other open-ended questions may be asked for clarification. The interview session will be audio taped to allow for transcription. This part of the visit will be expected to take approximately 30 to 45 minutes.

5. <u>Meeting to discuss the results of the researchers findings:</u> At a mutually agreeable time, you will be invited to review the researcher's summary of findings. Any errors, omissions or additional information that you deem to be accurate will be incorporated into the findings. This meeting would be expected to take no more than 30 minutes.

There are no known risks associated with being involved in this study. In the unlikely event that you feel uncomfortable or upset as a result of the research questions, you will be provided with the opportunity to speak to a counsellor. I will provide your parents with a list of counselling resources before the onset of the study.

All information collected for this research will be kept in a locked filing cabinet on the UBC Point Grey campus. No names or other identifying information will appear in any reports of the completed study. Portions of transcripts may be used in the final research document but measures will be taken to prevent individuals from being discernable.   An additional MA, Counseling Psychology student will be employed to assist with the interviews.   Only the investigator and the co-investigator will have access to the data. All data with identifying information will be kept strictly confidential. After five years all data (paper transcripts, audio and videotapes) will be destroyed. The digital image of the collage may be used in a future analysis and/or may be presented at a professional conference. However, all identifying information, particularly if photographs have been used in the collage, will be altered so as to protect the identity of all individuals portrayed on the collage.

In order to defray the costs of transportation and inconvenience each participant will receive an honorarium in the amount of $25.00.

If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact Dr. Richard Young at 604-822-6380. You may also contact Carla Haber at 604-XXX-XXXX or by email at bestfriendstudy@hotmail.com. If you have any concerns about your

treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or choose to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

Your signature below indicates that you agree to participate in this study. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received of a copy of this assent form. Thank you for your time and consideration of this research study.

I _____, agree with the decision of my parent(s)
      (Printed Name of the Participant)

 or legal guardian(s) with respect to my participation in this study.

_____
Participant signature   Date

_____
Witness   Date

Appendix E

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA UBC

Faculty *of* **Education**

Dept. of Educational and Counselling Psychology and
Special Education
2125 Main Mall
Vancouver, BC, Canada V6T 1Z4

Tel: 604-822-6380 Fax: 604-822-2328

"All About Friendship" Collage

Date:

Dear Participant:

In the next week, prior to our meeting, please create a collage that will best describe your close friendships. Please complete this task without assistance from others. It can be helpful to look at this as a way of telling me the story of how you think and feel about your friends. The idea is for you, through the collage, to introduce your ideas about friendship to me in the most complete way possible. Some of the areas you can consider when making your collage are:

- What do you like to do with your friends (leisure or sports, favourite activities, hobbies)?
- What are some of the memories you have with your good friends?
- What do you value or think is important to have in a "good" or "close" friend?
- How do you feel when you are with a good friend?

You may use any materials you wish to create your collage (drawings, words, images from magazines, photographs, etc). You will have an opportunity to show me your collage at our first meeting, during which time I will ask you to tell me the story about what you have created and what the images mean for you. Keep in mind that this is not a test. There are no right or wrong answers or a right or wrong way to complete the collage. The researchers will not be evaluating or grading your collage. No one will be looking at the collage other than the researchers and you. It will not be shown to your friend if you do not want to do so. You may take up to a week to create your collage but there is no minimum time requirement. The collage will be returned to you at the end of the study. A digital image of the collage will be taken and kept as data.

Please bring your collage with you to the University of British Columbia when we meet together with your friend next week on _____ (date) at _____ (time)."
Thank you for your cooperation and I look forward to meeting with you and your friend.

Yours sincerely,

Carla Haber
Master of Arts Graduate Student
Counseling Psychology

Possible open-ended questions for the Collage Interview:

❑ Tell me the story of what you have created here.
❑ Can you tell me more about this image, and why you've chosen to include it in your collage about friendship?
❑ What does this mean to you?
❑ I notice there is a picture of _____, how does this relate to your idea of friendship?
❑ What are some of the qualities that you admire in a friend? (This may have been difficult for the participant to capture with an image)
❑ What does this picture or image or word mean to you?
❑ I notice you have chosen to focus on _____ (could be her feelings about friendship, specific memories, hobbies, qualities of her friends, things she likes to do, etc) in your collage. Is that an important aspect of friendship to you?
❑ Is there anything else you would like to add that is not expressed in the collage that you either thought about and didn't have an image for, or have just thought of now through our discussion?

The last question is meant to be a warm-up to the conversation.
❑ Describe, in your own words, what it means to be a "very good friend" or "best friend". What do you value in a very good friend or best friend? What is most important to you?
❑ What does it mean to you when you hear someone say they are very good friends or best friends with someone? How do you interpret that description? How do you determine who are very good friends and those that are just acquaintances? What's the difference?

Please go over every aspect of the collage (colors chosen, pictures, words, relative size of the images). Get curious about the creation. What does it all mean to the participant? Don't assume, ask!

Self-confrontation Interviewing
Script to introduce the activity:

- ❑ Now I'm going to playback the tape of your conversation with your friend from the beginning. At first it may seem weird to watch yourself on tape.
- ❑ I will stop the tape after 1-minute intervals and ask you what you were thinking or feeling at that point of the conversation. If you want, you can stop the tape at any time to report what you were thinking or feeling at that moment.
- ❑ I will try to keep the segments to 1 minute but I won't interrupt a speaker in the middle of their speaking turn so it could be a bit longer.
- ❑ Once I stop the tape please try to remember what was going on for you inside during that portion of the conversation. What were your feelings or thoughts during that portion of the conversation?
- ❑ Do you have any questions before we begin?

Possible open-ended questions for the Self-Confrontation Interview:

- ❑ What were you thinking or feeling during that 1 minute segment of your conversation with your friend?
- ❑ What was going on for you inside while she was saying that?
- ❑ What were you thinking during that portion of the conversation?
- ❑ Were there any feelings that you were having during that portion of the conversation?
- ❑ Is there anything else you want to add about that minute?
- ❑ (if the participant only regurgitates the content of the conversation or begins to tell you how she is feeling now or what she is thinking now, gently probe for more. For example, "So when your friend was telling you about the party she went to, what were you thinking about at that moment?" "When she said _____ or you said _____, what were you perhaps not saying?")

Appendix H

Figure 1.0   **Amber**

Figure 2.0   **Beth**

Figure 3.0   **Candace**

Figure 4.0   **Debra**

Figure 5.0   **Emma**

Figure 6.0   **Faith**

Figure 7.0   **Gloria**

Figure 8.0   **Heather**

Figure 9.0   **Isabel**

Figure 10.0   **Jackie**
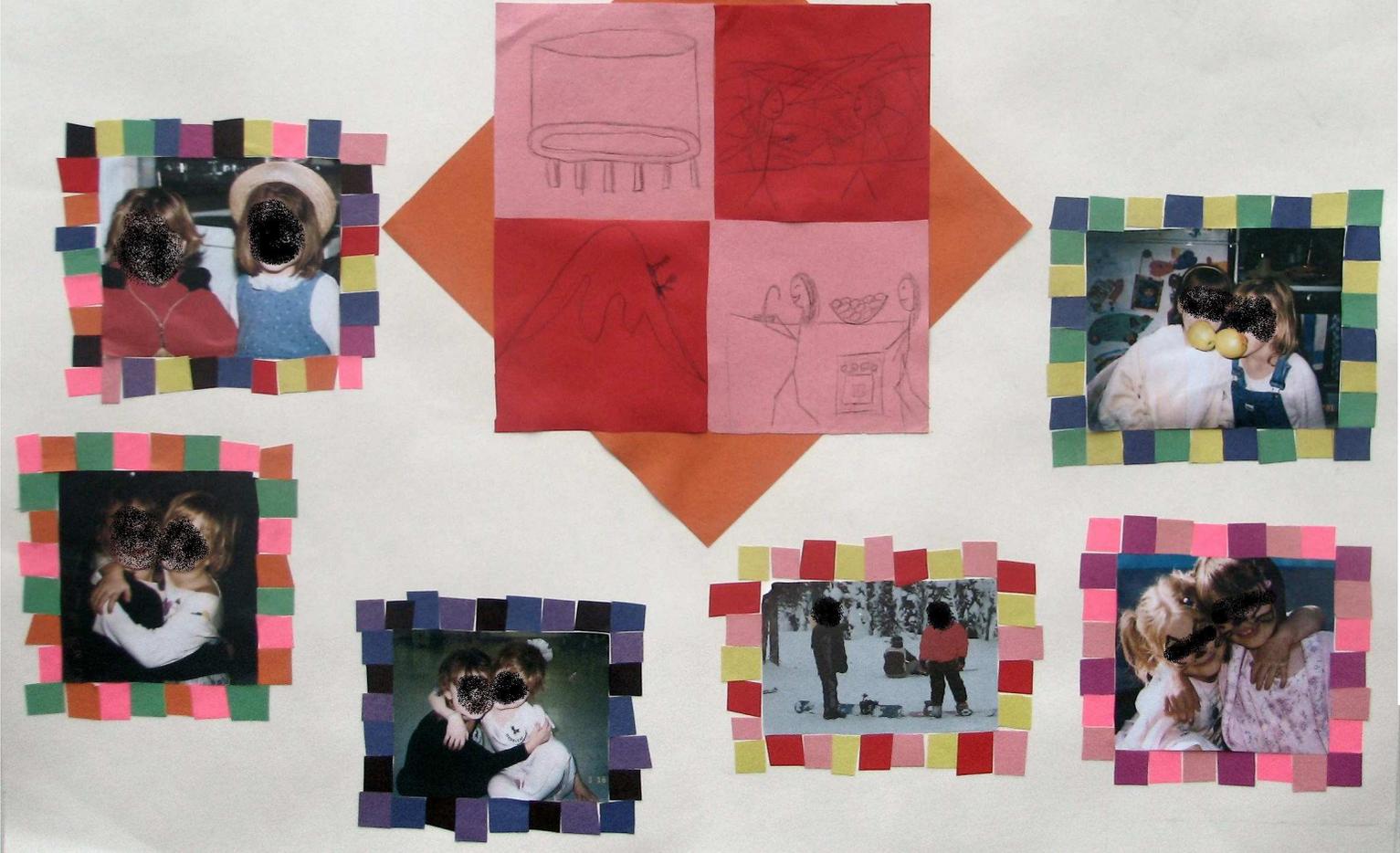
Friendship Means...

The Fights...

Having Boyfriends...

And Breaking Up

Soaking Up Some

SUN...

DRESSING UP!

Smelling

Good...

Experimenting

With Makeup

Trying on designer brands...

BOYS, Never CHANEL

I ♥ Boys

Forget them ♥

But not buying!!
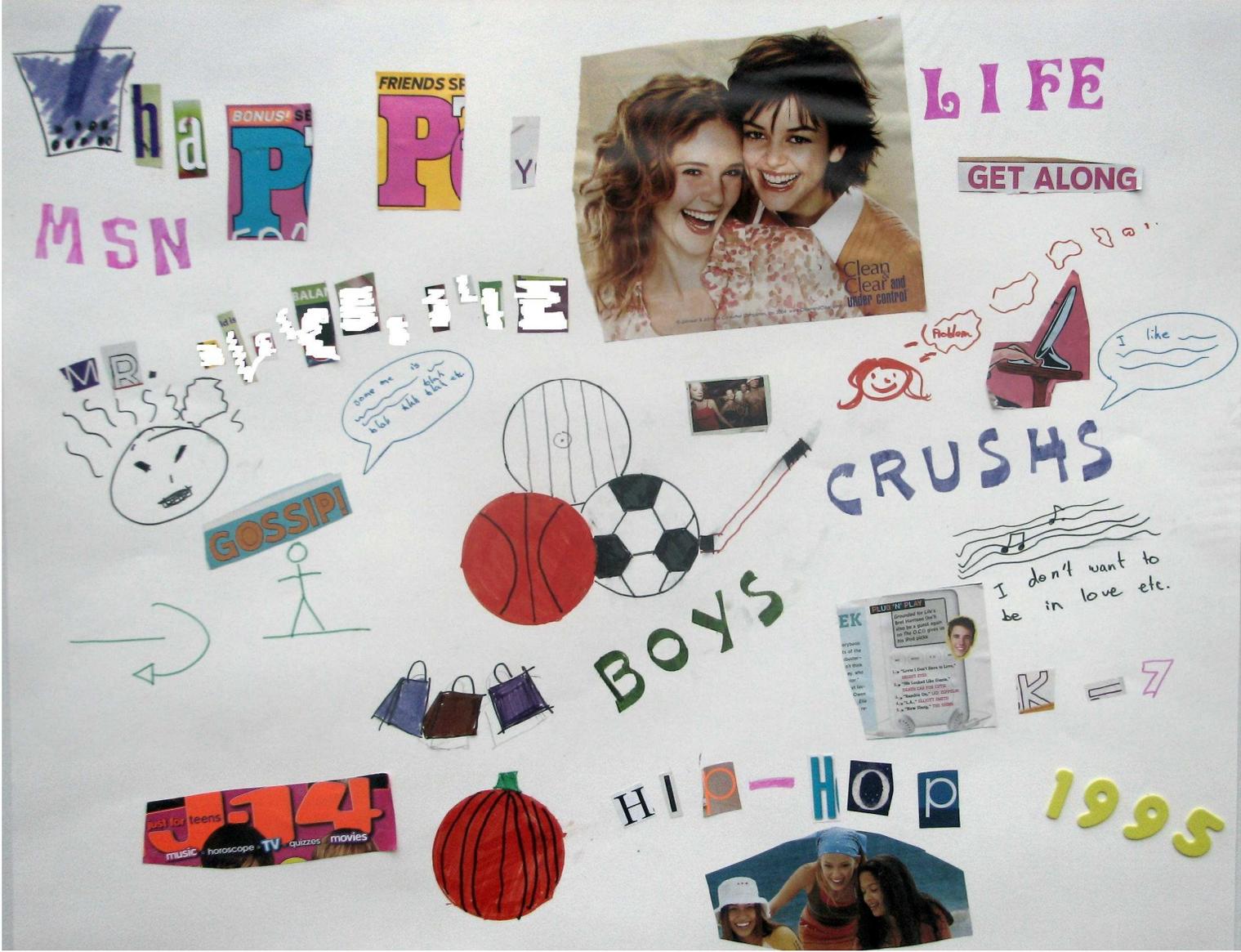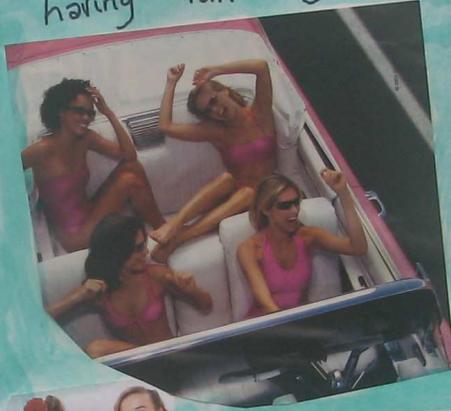
Appendix I

Narrative for Amber – Dyad 1

Amber feels the most important aspects of friendship are how she feels in the relationship and, to a lesser degree, the qualities she likes and appreciates in a good friend. She reports values (openness, honesty, trust, supportiveness) as well as traits of a good friend (fun-loving, trustworthy, compatibility to a limited degree, accepting, respectful) as being central to her vision of "best friends". Amber indicates that she sees herself and feels these ways about her best friend – special, valued, open, loved, confident, whole, happy and compatible. Of significance to Amber is the fact that she and Beth have been friends for so long. They spend a lot of time together and their respective families are also friends. She indicates that this has had an influence on the closeness of their friendship. Being compatible is nice but is not necessarily a prerequisite of a close friendship, as acceptance becomes important as close friends can still "rub you the wrong way at times". She admits that they sometimes disagree but are not afraid to discuss their differences, knowing that differences are OK and interesting. She feels she can be herself within the friendship and that her friend will accept her. She feels emotionally connected and warmly describes their relationship as loving, secure, strong, and supportive. She reports that they can talk about anything together and that they are able to have long, deep conversations. She states that she feels she can tell her friend anything and that her friend tells her everything. Amber also indicates that she might only express her feelings to a close friend, whereas potentially embarrassing revelations can easily be shared with most friends. Amber also indicates that the friendship provides an opportunity for them to "rediscover each other" as they go through phases and recognize and point out things (mostly positive) to each other that they might not otherwise be aware of. She reports, with great confidence that she knows how her friend will feel and respond in many situations. When asked to reflect on her own feelings or thoughts about her friendship conversation, she often provides reflections that also encompass her best friend, often using the language of "we" instead of "I". During the follow-up interview Amber indicates that she thinks they are both equally confident about what the other is thinking or feeling, but that they choose different language to express it (Amber uses "we" and Beth uses "I"). She reports that they could both be pretty sure of what was going on for the other person.

Amber and Beth came together and engaged in a sixteen-minute friendship conversation. Throughout this conversation they fostered and enacted their personal meanings of what it means to be "best friends" together and to maintain their close friendship. Within their friendship conversation, both girls demonstrate their desire to have fun through the use of humour, teasing, and expressive body language (animated hand movements, joking, and laughing). They support and commiserate with each other about school (marks and being in a Mini school) and body image concerns, and engage in problem solving social activities. They share inside jokes, reminisce about their happy memories together, share information, and enjoy making plans for the future. Together, Amber and Beth frequently use gossip as a forum to connect with each other, to validate and support each other, to demonstrate their perceived similarity of thought to each other, to express their feelings about others, and to speculate and figure out the motivations of others. Perceived flaws of the self are openly shared and reciprocal in nature between the two girls, demonstrating comfort and trust in the friendship.

Amber enacts her friendship values of acceptance and support by revealing personal embarrassing moments to her friend. Despite the claim that she is "almost always" open and honest with her friend, at times, possibly in order to avoid possible conflict, or to prevent her friend from being embarrassed on camera, she keeps some of her thoughts and feelings to herself. She reports that she sometimes keeps things to herself because the issue "doesn't really matter" or it "is a waste of words" or "revealing her thoughts about it will not get them anywhere". She indicates that this is a form of acceptance in that she doesn't feel it's necessary to tell her friend things that don't matter enough to potentially create conflict over. In order to comfort and support her friend when she explains frustrating situations (about a laboratory partner at school, about a girl who draws on her pants) Amber responds by listening, asking questions, showing interest, offering advice, and then changing the subject to another topic. She allows her friend to vent her frustrations and concerns, providing support through emphatic agreement and solidarity. At times Amber uses physical contact to express her comfort, affection, and closeness with her friend. She demonstrates her trust in her friend by disclosing a "secret". Amber enjoys generating excitement and entertaining her friend.

Appendix J

Narrative for Beth – Dyad 1

Beth describes the most important characteristics of very good friendships as being capable of forgiveness and going with the flow (a form of nonjudgmental acceptance), fun and happy, trust, compatibility, caring, having a bond and becoming interconnected with each other. She sees this bond as an important and progressive one (moving from being something that changes over time, getting progressively closer as the friendship develops so that eventually the pair are "tight and connected"). This is the main theme of her assertions about best friendships – they are close, tight, and connected and she chose several ways to express this symbolically within her collage (pipe cleaners, progressive sticks, and words). She feels safe and comfortable saying anything to her best friend, and to let herself go and be free in front of her. She sees compatibility as a bit of a mystery in that, although she describes Amber as her best friend, she states a lot of things between them are not all that compatible. She believes that compatibility can come out of knowing each other for a long time and having a history together, rather than sharing all the same interests and activities. She realizes that although you can call someone a best friend at one point that might not remain true forever. Although she would like her close friendships to remain intact she indicates that some factors have an influence on a friendship's longevity (going to different schools, personal changes, getting a different group of friends, or falling out of contact). She also reports that being there for your good friend is important and that it is not only spending time together doing things that defines a good friendship. She elaborates, saying, "Having a good, close friendship is about knowing everything about your friend. You know what they will say or do. You know what makes up that person". When asked to reflect on her own feelings or thoughts about her friendship conversation, she easily provides reflections that clearly identify her experience, almost always using the language of "I". When asked if she can confidently know what her friend is thinking or feeling, Beth replies "no, not always". She reports that friendship should also be colorful, vibrant, interesting, moving and exciting at times.

Beth and Amber came together and engaged in a sixteen-minute friendship conversation. Throughout this conversation they fostered and enacted their personal meanings of what it means to be "best friends" together and to maintain their close friendship. Within their friendship

conversation, both girls demonstrate their desire to have fun through the use of humour, teasing, and expressive body language (animated hand movements, joking, and laughing). They support and commiserate with each other about school (marks and being in a Mini school) and body image concerns, and engage in problem solving social activities. They share inside jokes, reminisce about their happy memories together, share information, and enjoy making plans for the future. Together, Amber and Beth frequently use gossip as a forum to connect with each other, to validate and support each other, to demonstrate their perceived similarity of thought to each other, to express their feelings about others, and to speculate and figure out the motivations of others. Perceived flaws of the self are openly shared and reciprocal in nature between the two girls, demonstrating comfort and trust in the friendship.

Beth enacts her friendship values of nonjudgmental acceptance, forgiveness, and support by revealing personal embarrassing moments to her friend, and by keeping some thoughts and feelings to herself. She allows her friend to be physically intrusive (putting her foot up to Beth's face), indicating that she herself could be just as likely to do this behaviour as her friend. Beth demonstrates her acceptance of her friend's behaviour, at times feeling embarrassed for her and wishing she would behave differently. However, in keeping with her friendship value of acceptance and allowing each other to be free to do anything, she makes light of these situations through joking around and teasing, by changing the subject, and keeping any judgment or criticism to herself. She reports that "stuff that will make trouble (make her friend feel angry or awkward) she just lets go and doesn't reveal to her friend". She indicates that there would no point in bringing up things for which there would be no point. Beth feels comfortable openly sharing a number of "difficult" or "frustrating" personal social situations and her feelings about them with Amber and allows her friend to offer advice and support. She also feels happy and able to give advice when Amber presents a social dilemma to her later in the conversation.

Appendix K

Narrative for Candace – Dyad 2

Candace values a "best-friend who is fun-loving, outgoing, and not afraid to try new things." She reports that it is important to have a best friend who doesn't care too much what other people think. She likes friends who are a bit crazy because she feels this quality makes them more fun to be around. She likes the idea that she and Debra have known each other for a long time, that their parents are friends, and reports this as one of the reasons they are such good friends and not just acquaintances. Candace's collage centers around the interests and activities that she and Debra share. Her collage has photos and drawn images of herself and Debra doing things together, either in the past (bobbing for apples at Hallowe'en, hugging at a ballet class, going to the children's festival, etc) or in the present (baking, snow sports, bushwacking, playing on the trampoline). Candace explains that being close to her best friend means "being around them and having fun".

Candace and Debra came together and engaged in an eleven-minute friendship conversation.. Their goal throughout the conversation is to understand and be understood. The girls embark on a joint exploration and sense-making exercise, through the use of storytelling (both fictional and factual). The fictional storytelling revolves around Candace's "most embarrassing moment story", one that she made up entirely for the purposes of a school assignment. The factual storytelling is the recounting of previous situations and events (usually within the school setting) that have occurred while Candace and Debra have been apart from each other. They each enjoy and have fun during the storytelling process. This fun and enjoyment is demonstrated by laughter, animated turn taking, the portrayal of interest through questions, building on the story, and the use of body language (leaning in, encouragement with smiling and head nodding, etc). Within their friendship conversation, both girls demonstrate their desire to have fun through the use of humour and expressive body language (animated hand movements, joking, and laughing). Gossip is used throughout the conversation for several different reasons (as a means to better define themselves, to compare themselves as a unit to others, and to both elicit and provide support to each other).   They demonstrate support through empathy and openly relating to each other's situation. The expression of feeling is met with

empathy and validation. The girls also assert their opinions and are comfortable doing this despite disagreement.

Candace enjoys storytelling and entertaining her friend, although she states she does not do this intentionally. She gossips in order to gain support from her friend and to make sense of a "cupcake giving boy" and a "buddy" situation. Candace does most of the talking within this conversation, leading the way in terms of topic choice and length of discussion on each topic. Near the end of the conversation, when Debra has embarked on her own recount of a story, Candace asserts her desire to end the conversation, despite the fact that her friend is wishing to continue on the topic. Candace does make room for her friend to finish her thought but then effectively steers the conversation to a close, even though the conversation could have continued for a number of minutes longer.

Appendix L

Narrative for Debra – Dyad 2

Debra, although her collage centers around the interests and activities that she and Candace share, during the interview Debra reveals several qualities of a "best friend" that she admires. Respect, letting her be herself, letting her make mistakes and allowing her to be independent, kindness, not making her feel bad if she asks for help, and a desire to be in the friendship are key qualities of a "best friend". Central to Debra's conception of friendship is the history that she and Candace share, which is full of activity (skating, going on family vacations together, celebrating birthdays together, going to the pumpkin patch, scuba diving, and baking). Debra describes her "best friend" as being someone she cares about, respects, has fun with, learns from, and spends a lot of time with. She expresses her anticipation and confidence that they will be friends their whole lives.

Debra and Candace came together and engaged in an eleven-minute friendship conversation. Their goal throughout the conversation is to understand and be understood. The girls embark on a joint exploration and sense-making exercise, through the use of storytelling (both fictional and factual). The fictional storytelling revolves around Candace's "most embarrassing moment story", one that she made up entirely for the purposes of a school assignment. The factual storytelling is the recounting of previous situations and events (usually within the school setting) that have occurred while Candace and Debra have been apart from each other. They each enjoy and have fun during the storytelling process. This fun and enjoyment is demonstrated by laughter, animated turn taking, the portrayal of interest through questions, building on the story, and the use of body language (leaning in, encouragement with smiling and head nodding, etc). Within their friendship conversation, both girls demonstrate their desire to have fun through the use of humour and expressive body language (animated hand movements, joking, and laughing). Gossip is used throughout the conversation for several different reasons (as a means to better define themselves, to compare themselves as a unit to others, and to both elicit and provide support to each other). They demonstrate support through empathy and openly relating to each other's situation. The expression of feeling is met with empathy and validation. The girls also assert their opinions and are comfortable doing this despite disagreement.

Debra enjoys the storytelling that her friend is doing. She eagerly contributes to the flow of the conversation by asking questions, showing interest, and offering support and suggestions. Debra has a keen desire to fully understand what her friend is saying and does her best to create a complete mental visual picture of the situations Candace describes. Although Candace does most of the talking, Debra does not mind this and enjoys listening to her friend. Debra demonstrates that she can assert herself within the friendship by directing the topic near the end of the conversation (hoodie choice at school). Debra uses gossip to gain support for her influence on the voting process of others (her attempts to get others to vote the way she prefers them to). When there is a difference of opinion between Candace and herself, Debra is fully able to admit she is wrong, particularly when she is able to conjure up a visual image of the event in her mind. When her friend decides to end the conversation, Debra interrupts and insists on finishing her story. Debra, through listening, showing interest with questions and body language, is an active co-constructor of Candace's stories. Debra is having fun throughout their friendship conversation.

Appendix M

Narrative for Emma – Dyad 3

Emma's collage about friendship and the interview about the collage revealed that Emma relies on her close friend as a safe and understanding person to discuss her problems and share personal information, without the fear that her friend will talk behind her back. Of central importance to Emma is the fact that she and her best friend are able to do a lot together (team sports at school, bubble tea, playing on the computer, shopping, chatting on MSN), share common interests (taste in music, sports) and enjoy talking to each other on a variety of topics (celebrities, sports, boys, problems of life, teachers they like and dislike). It is important that her friend understands and listens to her, is nonjudgmental, is trustworthy, and does not make her do things that she doesn't like to do. She indicates that they get along well together and like to hang out with each other. She describes herself as happy within the friendship, which they have had for eight years, and feels that her problems diminish when she talks them over with her friend. She reports that gossiping about other people is something that they enjoy doing together

Emma and Faith engaged in a sixteen-minute friendship conversation. Throughout the conversation the girls engage in humour-filled gossiping (discussing other people and situations about them), mostly for the purpose of increasing their own solidarity [creating an us-them picture when talking about teachers, the "Engies" (English speaking kids from their French immersion school), and other girls that they know], providing support to each other, and strengthening their friendship. At times gossip is used to indicate how similar they are to each other (demonstrated by agreement with each other or by opposing the way others are or behave). In this way gossip creates a forum for the girls to explore contrasts between how they see themselves as a unit and how they perceive others to be. An example of this contrast is implied through their gossip about a girl who behaves in a way within her friendships that the girls do not agree with (claiming she dislikes someone but still hangs around with her as though they are good friends). They appear to be having fun while gossiping and sometimes do so in order to speculate and attempt to make sense of situations involving others (to figure out others motivations, to discuss how a boy is able to make a beat boxing sound, to speculate about a boy's Hallowe'en costume). At times the girls also share their desires and openly express their likes and dislikes when it comes to taste in clothes, shoes, video games and music, even when these

opinions differ from their partner's. Together they enjoy practicing dance movements and singing from their chairs during their conversation, again demonstrating their similar tastes and connection through music. During interviews after the conversation, both girls reported difficulty in recalling internal processes (thoughts or feelings occurring during their friendship conversation) and revealed that they felt awkward and nervous because of the presence of the cameras.

During the friendship conversation Emma shares her perspectives and commiserates with her friend in a supportive way while gossiping about others (by agreeing and building on her friend's disclosures and opinions). Emma allows her friend to frequently switch and direct the topic of conversation, although she is an equal and enthusiastic contributor to a topic once it is set. She sometimes elicits her friend's support by discussing another girl who attempts to dress like her (shoes and baggy sweaters and pants), a style both girls agree belongs to Emma. She also provides support to her friend later in the conversation when the topic switches to their respective upcoming school debate opponents. Emma expresses humour throughout her friendship conversation, demonstrated by making jokes, laughing, and the use of expressive body language (hand and body movement, leaning in, and smiling). Emma frequently reveals to her friend that she feels awkward during the conversation. During the interview after the conversation, she reports that she does not feel awkward during the actual speaking turns with her friend until there is a lull in the conversation, at which time she becomes increasingly nervous and aware of the cameras. She also reports that she finds the interview questions difficult to answer, frequently indicating that she was not thinking or feeling anything beyond the actual content of their friendship conversation.

Appendix N

Narrative for Faith – Dyad 3

Faith, through her collage and the interview about the collage, reveals what is important to her in close friendships. She values being happy and having fun within her friendships. She reports that friends should listen to your problems, be trustworthy, have a good sense of humour, and be helpful. Faith states that she and Emma share things in common, such as not liking their teacher, and at school they "band together". Faith likes the fact that they like to do the same things together, such as sports activities, hanging out after school, going to the mall and shopping, going trick or treating at Hallowe'en, and talking. She also reports that good friends last forever. Faith states that the majority of her close friendships occur within the context of school and that she and Emma have been close friends since Kindergarten (eight years). Faith characterizes her good friendships as "beautiful" and cherishes her friends as valuable. She reports that good friendships are associated with love and that secrets are never kept from a best friend. She reports that "miracles happen when your (sic) with the people you love", indicating friendship is a particularly nurturing environment, one that makes good things happen. Fun is a central aspect of her good friendships, indicating that it "makes everything more colorful".

Faith and Emma engaged in a sixteen-minute friendship conversation. Throughout the conversation the girls engage in humour-filled gossiping (discussing other people and situations about them), mostly for the purpose of increasing their own solidarity [creating an us-them picture when talking about teachers, the "Engies" (English speaking kids from their French immersion school), and other girls that they know], providing support to each other, and strengthening their friendship. At times gossip is used to indicate how similar they are to each other (demonstrated by agreement with each other or by opposing the way others are or behave). In this way gossip creates a forum for the girls to explore contrasts between how they see themselves as a unit and how they perceive others to be. An example of this contrast is implied through their gossip about a girl who behaves in a way within her friendships that the girls do not agree with (claiming she dislikes someone but still hangs around with her as though they are good friends). They appear to be having fun while gossiping and sometimes do so in order to speculate and attempt to make sense of situations involving others (to figure out others motivations, to discuss how a boy is able to make a beat boxing sound, to speculate about a boy's

Hallowe'en costume). At times the girls also share their desires and openly express their likes and dislikes when it comes to taste in clothes, shoes, video games and music, even when these opinions differ from their partner's. Together they enjoy practicing dance movements and singing from their chairs during their conversation, again demonstrating their similar tastes and connection through music. During interviews after the conversation, both girls reported difficulty in recalling internal processes (thoughts or feelings occurring during their friendship conversation) and revealed that they felt awkward and nervous because of the presence of the cameras.

During the friendship conversation Faith shares her perspectives and commiserates with her friend in a supportive way while gossiping about others (by agreeing and building on her friend's disclosures and opinions). Faith frequently sets and switches the topic of conversation, particularly after there is a lull in the conversation and her friend indicates that she feels "awkward". She gives her friend support by adamantly stating that another girl is copying Emma's style of dressing. Faith also receives support from her friend through the use of gossiping when her friend states that she will do well against her school debate opponent. Faith expresses humour throughout her friendship conversation, demonstrated by making jokes, laughing, and the use of expressive body language (hand and body movement, leaning in, and smiling). During the interview after the friendship conversation, she frequently indicates that she cannot remember what she was thinking or feeling, that she doesn't know, that she felt awkward about the cameras, or that she was not thinking or feeling anything beyond the actual content of their conversation.

Appendix O

Narrative for Gloria – Dyad 4

Gloria describes several values that are important to her in close friendships. According to Gloria a good friend will listen to what you have to say, will understand you, and will be there for you when you're having bad times or if you need her. Good friends are trustworthy, loyal, and understanding. She reports that there is easiness in her close friendships, in that she feels she can tell her best friend anything and she will "get her". She doesn't feel awkward to tell her good friend something personal in her life. She knows exactly what her best friend means. She sees friendship as fun and zany, and they have a good time together. Gloria also reports that boys come and go but girlfriends remain constant, despite the fact that they sometimes fight. Gloria and Heather have known each other for two years. They like to do many things together (go to the beach, experiment with cosmetics, shop and try on designer clothes, talk about boys, dress up, hang out together, and talk about girls they don't like). The central theme of their friendship is how they support, understand, and trust each other. They rely on each other to be there when they need them.

Gloria and Heather engaged in a sixteen-minute friendship conversation. They are actively supporting and affirming each other by taking turns disclosing their feelings and desires, and by gossiping negatively about girls who they perceive to be threatening to their respective love interests. They appear to enjoy having their friendship conversation, which is apparent in their body language of smiling, leaning in, laughing, and expressive hand movements. The reassure each other about relationship and body image concerns. Together they openly share their desires and disclose their feelings on a number of issues (what they'd like to do about boy situations, about their body shapes, about their complexions, their relationships with their fathers). They laugh and joke around together (banter, back and forth joking), possibly to relieve tension and nervousness. They ask for, give, and receive advice (whether to get a nose piercing, how to acknowledge a boy's last day at school, how to respond to a father's promise of good behaviour). They are able to move their light, joking conversation into a more serious and intimate topic (father relationships). They support each other as they express their feelings of sadness, worry, anger and disappointment about their respective father-daughter relationships. Understanding is demonstrated through a comforting hug. Throughout their friendship

conversation, the girls physically demonstrate their affection, comfort, and support of each other (putting hands on friend's lap, moving a strand of hair from her friend's face, hugging, inspecting each other's skin, and by sitting close to each other). They gossip throughout the conversation, frequently as an expression of their solidarity for each other (talking negatively about girls who have crushes on their boyfriends), but also as a method of comparing themselves to others and feeling better about themselves (by talking about a girl with a bad complexion, by name-calling of people who insinuate that one of the girls is anorexic, by gossiping about a girl who spent $42 on shorts).

Gloria openly and honestly communicates her feelings to her friend during their conversation (how she feels about her boyfriend, how she looks, who she likes, how she wishes she looked, how she feels about her dad, how she feels about her boyfriend moving away). She almost always sets the topics for discussion, typically leading the way by saying "We should talk about _____". She actively engages in gossiping with her friend. She seeks her friend's feedback, affirmation, and advice in order to make sense of situations and to solve dilemmas (about how she looks, to plan about a boy, what to say to her dad). She repeatedly reassures Heather when she is pressured to influence a connection between Heather and Josh, which would require her to utilize her own relationship with her boyfriend to do so. She accepts Heather's bids to make physical contact, allowing her to fix her hair, remove an eyelash from her cheek, and by engaging in a comforting hug with her. She frequently elicits the support of her friend by bringing up the topic of girls she dislikes because they are potential threats to her romantic interest. She jokes around and teases others with made up rhyming names, involving a back and forth type of banter between the two girls. Although her partner frequently makes silly joking statements about these girls ("Natasha is a pizza face"), Gloria prefers to state how she feels about these girls with direct statements ("She gets on my nerves", or "I hate Malack"). Gloria appears to genuinely enjoy and have fun during their friendship conversation, as evidenced by frequent laughter and animated body language.

Appendix P

Narrative for Heather – Dyad 4

Heather reports several values that are important in a close friendship. She values trust, in that a good friend is sincere and won't tell secrets, nor will they reveal your weaknesses to others. She feels "love" is an important aspect of close friendships. She likes that her friend is funny and they have fun together. She reports that she can be silly and is free to be herself, without any fear of being judged. She likes friends that are comfortable with her physical displays of affection. A good friend is one who loves and accepts you. Support is a central theme in her dialogue about friendship, characterized by being there for each other, especially if you've had a bad day or you are lonely. You can count on them to help you solve your problems and you can trust them to always be there. She can cry in front of her friend and she won't criticize her for it. She feels safe in the friendship. She indicates that she distinguishes a best friend from an acquaintance by anticipating how she would feel if she "lost" them. She reports that she would be really sad over a best friend but with an acquaintance she would feel sorry for the parents but it wouldn't really affect her much. She reports that she has an emotional bond with her best friend. Heather also likes to do things with her best friend (go to the mall and try on designer clothes, talk about boys, hang out, and spend lots of time together).

Heather and Gloria engaged in a sixteen-minute friendship conversation. They are actively supporting and affirming each other by taking turns disclosing their feelings and desires, and by gossiping negatively about girls who they perceive to be threatening to their respective love interests. They appear to enjoy having their friendship conversation, which is apparent in their body language of smiling, leaning in, laughing, and expressive hand movements. The reassure each other about relationship and body image concerns. Together they openly share their desires and disclose their feelings on a number of issues (what they'd like to do about boy situations, about their body shapes, about their complexions, their relationships with their fathers). They laugh and joke around together (banter, back and forth joking), possibly to relieve tension and nervousness. They ask for, give, and receive advice (whether to get a nose piercing, how to acknowledge a boy's last day at school, how to respond to a father's promise of good behaviour). They are able to move their light, joking conversation into a more serious and intimate topic (father relationships). They support each other as they express their feelings of

sadness, worry, anger and disappointment about their respective father-daughter relationships. Understanding is demonstrated through a comforting hug. Throughout their friendship conversation, the girls physically demonstrate their affection, comfort, and support of each other (putting hands on friend's lap, moving a strand of hair from her friend's face, hugging, inspecting each other's skin, and by sitting close to each other). They gossip throughout the conversation, frequently as an expression of their solidarity for each other (talking negatively about girls who have crushes on their boyfriends), but also as a method of comparing themselves to others and feeling better about themselves (by talking about a girl with a bad complexion, by name-calling of people who insinuate that one of the girls is anorexic, by gossiping about a girl who spent $42 on shorts).

Heather openly and honestly communicates her feelings to her friend during their conversation (how she feels about her boyfriend, how she looks, who she likes, how she wishes she looked, how she feels about her dad, how she will potentially feel if she is left out of a "couple" situation). She shares information that could be embarrassing if revealed to others (that she thinks her armpit hair is long, smells and touches her armpits during the conversation). Even though she allows her friend to set most of the subject matter of their talk, she is an energetic participant in the conversation. She actively engages in gossiping with her friend. She seeks her friend's feedback, affirmation, and advice in order to make sense of situations and to solve dilemmas (advice about nose piercing, feedback on how she looks, how to arrange a meeting with her and Josh). She repeatedly brings up her concerns about connecting with Josh and how Heather might utilize her relationship with Derwin to facilitate it. She also freely offers her opinions and suggestions for how her friend might handle her own situations (how to spend time with Derwin on his last day, how Gloria might respond to her dad's promises). She frequently makes bids for physical contact, attempting to fix her friend's hair, removing an eyelash from her cheek, and by giving her friend a comforting hug after she discloses sadness about a situation with her father. She sometimes elicits the support of her friend by bringing up the topic of girls she dislikes because they are potential threats to her romantic interest (girls who are interested in Josh). She jokes around and teases others with made up rhyming names, involving a back and forth type of banter between the two girls. Heather prefers to make silly joking statements about these girls ("Natasha is a pizza face"), whereas Gloria more frequently states how she feels about these girls with direct statements ("She gets on my nerves", or "I hate Malack"). Heather

appears to genuinely enjoy and have fun during their friendship conversation, as evidenced by frequent laughter and animated body language. At the very end of her interview following the friendship conversation, she announced to the researcher, "I love Gloria", demonstrating her comfort and ease in expressing her feelings of affection for her friend.

Appendix Q

Narrative for Isabel – Dyad 5

Isabel describes several values that are important to her within her best friendship with Jackie. Trust is necessary, in that confidences and secrets are strictly kept. Her friend must be a good listener and accept her without judgment. Related to this is the fact that Isabel appreciates that her best friend lets her be herself so that each of them does not need to pretend to be something they are not. A close friend will not force her to do things she doesn't want to do, and she will not pressure her to do things that might get her into trouble. Together, they don't feel pressured to "follow along with everyone". According to Isabel, neither she nor Jackie cares about being popular. Isabel values Jackie's sense of humour, stating, "she makes me smile every time". She likes her close friends to have the same interests as her so they can do a lot of the same things together. She also indicates that best friends mutually value the friendship (they both like each other). They provide support and are always there offering help if one is hurt, lonely, or needs someone to lean on. Although she states they are also strong as individuals, she reports that they can be bold together, and that as a unit they are more powerful than they can be individually. A large part of her friendship with Jackie is focused on their apparent similarities. They share a lot of the same tastes (clothes, shoes, fashion in general, accessories, celebrities, flowers and nature, favourite colors, pets) and interests or activities (sports, shopping, dancing, partying, dressing up, talking about anything, putting on make-up, pedicures, singing, buying each other gifts, traveling, accessorizing). Interestingly, they even share some unique things in common (birthday is on the same day of the month, mothers both called them Lou Lou as toddlers). Areas of commonality are sought out and celebrated, and it is Isabel's perception that they even think alike in many circumstances. They have known each other for seven years and share many memories and a history together. Although Isabel does not see this as a strict requirement for a close friendship, she does believe that it helps to contribute to the closeness of their relationship. She sees their particular friendship as very "unique" and "special", one that she doesn't see with "most people". Isabel's collage is full of symbolic images and words to portray her understanding of "best-friends". Some of the words that she associates with friendship are beauty, enchanting, magic, unique, mysterious, bold, heart, buds, strong, sidekicks, good clean fun, happy, play, sweet, love, and style. She sees conversation as a big

part of friendship and she reports that she can tell her friend anything, including her most embarrassing moments and deepest secrets, and her friend will understand and "get" her. Talking is something they do together, usually for hours at a time. They are comfortable both giving and receiving advice. They have guy friends and like to talk about them together. Love, "like sisters" is a central part of their relationship and she reports that they "put their heart into everything". They spend a lot of their time together, usually hanging out together at least five times a week. Despite having had minor disagreements, she reports that they have never had a fight where they have been mad at each other. Overall, her collage and her description of her best friend relationship speak to a broad, sweeping compatibility of interests and values. She reports that Jackie is a "perfect pal" and expects that their friendship will last forever.

Isabel and Jackie engaged in a sixteen-minute friendship conversation. Their friendship conversation centers on connecting to each other by finding common ground and being excited about their similarities and camaraderie. They focus their conversation on remembering what they have done together in the past and anticipate and plan for what they will do together in the future. They excitedly recall happy, fun memories together (sliding down the driveway, tricking a soccer coach, wearing similar clothing, making a promise in grade 2, getting the same grade on an exam). They actively celebrate their similarities (how they dress, taste in clothes, having the same teacher, how they feel about their coach, getting similar grades) and their conversation is punctuated by animated agreement. They see their similarities as demonstrating their closeness and connection to each other. When one girl reveals a desire or a preference, the other typically affirms her with responses of "I know" or "Me too". Dressing similarly is agreed to mean "connection" between them and they enjoy what they have in common. Planning for the future is also central in their conversation (going to the next dance, playing in the snow, Christmas morning, hanging out with David and Wyatt, organizing their costumes, hair and make-up for the Christmas song, renewing their grade 2 promise, what they will do together if soccer is cancelled). Both girls are comfortable revealing their concerns about school grades to each other. The girls laugh and smile throughout the conversation, demonstrating their enjoyment of each other and the fact that they are having fun together. They express their affection for each other by agreeing that they don't like going to soccer without the friend being present. Their speaking turns typically involve finishing each other's sentences with an easy, comfortable, and natural flow. They rarely gossip, but when they do it is to align themselves together and

demonstrate their similarities. This is achieved through commiseration (complaining about their coach), establishing solidarity (talking about their teachers, describing another girls boots that they don't want), to create excitement about their plans (tricking their soccer coach at practice), or to relieve them of responsibility for the situation they now find themselves in (gossiping about how their parents have made the soccer clinic decision for them so that one is registered and one is not).

Isabel has fun and actively and enthusiastically participates in their friendship conversation. She agrees with Jackie while they remember happy memories and plan future activities together. Isabel enjoys the fact that they have so many similarities, and during the interview with the researcher, frequently uses "we" to refer to her own processes (thoughts or feelings) as also encompassing those of her friend. She openly expresses her desires and feelings during her friendship conversation and supports and aligns herself with her friend by verbally agreeing and showing interest in the conversation (leaning in, smiling, laughing).   Isabel allows her friend to attempt to tell a funny story even though she is confused. She continues to listen and patiently waits for her friend to fully explain. Isabel reveals that although she feels safe and comfortable during the conversation, she believes they would have discussed the topic of boys in greater detail than they did if cameras had not been present. She also spares her friend an embarrassing moment by not pursuing a comment she has quietly made that her friend has not heard (telling her friend that she can see her sweaty armpits). During the interview with the researcher she indicated that normally, if cameras had not been present, there would have been no embarrassment between them to openly discuss either of these topics. Isabel reveals that she is conscious of the cameras being present and feels a pressure to ensure the conversation isn't "boring".

Appendix R

Narrative for Jackie – Dyad 5

Jackie reports that she and Isabel are "perfect for each other as friends". She sees her and Isabel as different but also a lot alike. Liking the same things, being a lot alike, and knowing each other for a long time contribute to the fact that they are close friends. According to Jackie, she and Isabel have the same taste in clothes and often end up choosing things to buy that are alike. She states that trust, love, and caring are important aspects of friendship. Laughter and fun are important and they enjoy many of the same interests and activities together (talking on the telephone, listening to music, going to the movies, playing sports, eating pizza, talking about boys, talking about celebrities, shopping, playing in the snow, talking about their cats, and sharing difficulties they have with schoolwork, other friends and their family members). As well, at the follow-up interview, she adds, that "they just like being together and hanging out" and that they do not necessarily have to be "doing" anything in particular in order to have fun. She reports that they have never had a bad time together. They have known each other for seven years and she believes this history together helps them to be close. She asserts that she knows her best friend better than anyone (how differently Isabel appears to others who do not know her as well), and feels it's special to know her so well. She describes some of Isabel's personality traits (peaceful, quiet, but also crazy, fun, hyperactive and outgoing) on her collage, demonstrating how well she knows her. She reports that they provide relief to each other from stressors in their lives (schoolwork, friendships with other people, family relationships) and that they tell each other everything. Jackie feels that she is "completely open" with her friend and she feels that this is mutual. Jackie reports that she can go to her friend and talk to her about things that she wouldn't necessarily want to talk with her parents about (especially boys). Jackie thinks about the future with her friend, planning and hoping that she and Isabel will someday go skiing together, even though this is an activity they have never done together before. Another future activity that Jackie looks forward to is shopping together for their grade seven graduation dresses, and at follow-up she reports that they have plans further into the future as well (where they will work together, celebrities they hope to meet, etc). She anticipates that she and Isabel will always be friends.

Jackie and Isabel engaged in a sixteen-minute friendship conversation. Their friendship conversation centers on connecting to each other by finding common ground and being excited about their similarities and camaraderie. They focus their conversation on remembering what they have done together in the past and anticipate and plan for what they will do together in the future. They excitedly recall happy, fun memories together (sliding down the driveway, tricking a soccer coach, wearing similar clothing, making a promise in grade 2, getting the same grade on an exam). They actively celebrate their similarities (how they dress, taste in clothes, having the same teacher, how they feel about their coach, getting similar grades) and their conversation is punctuated by animated agreement. They see their similarities as demonstrating their closeness and connection to each other. When one girl reveals a desire or a preference, the other typically affirms her with responses of "I know" or "Me too". Dressing similarly is agreed to mean "connection" between them and they enjoy what they have in common. Planning for the future is also central in their conversation (going to the next dance, playing in the snow, Christmas morning, hanging out with David and Wyatt, organizing their costumes, hair and make-up for the Christmas song, renewing their grade 2 promise, what they will do together if soccer is cancelled). Both girls are comfortable revealing their concerns about school grades to each other. The girls laugh and smile throughout the conversation, demonstrating their enjoyment of each other and the fact that they are having fun together. They express their affection for each other by agreeing that they don't like going to soccer without the friend being present. Their speaking turns typically involve finishing each other's sentences with an easy, comfortable, and natural flow. They rarely gossip, but when they do it is to align themselves together and demonstrate their similarities. This is achieved through commiseration (complaining about their coach), establishing solidarity (talking about their teachers, describing another girls boots that they don't want), to create excitement about their plans (tricking their soccer coach at practice), or to relieve them of responsibility for the situation they now find themselves in (gossiping about how their parents have made the soccer clinic decision for them so that one is registered and one is not).

Jackie has fun and actively and enthusiastically participates in their friendship conversation. She agrees with Isabel while they remember happy memories and plan future activities together. She openly expresses her desires and feelings during her friendship conversation and supports and aligns herself with her friend by verbally agreeing and showing

interest (leaning in, smiling, laughing).   She feels happy and excited throughout the friendship conversation. Jackie entertains her friend with a funny story (about the coffee grinder that is like a child). She also enjoys sharing and recalling what they have in common (taste in clothes, boots, teacher, perceptions of coach). When Isabel reveals that she is happy that she has Mr. Moore for a teacher, Jackie happily corrects her with, "We got him", which focuses their attention on yet another commonality. She indicates that their "telepathic connection" in terms of taste in clothing provides evidence that they "must be very close friends". During the interview with the researcher, Jackie reveals that she was conscious of the cameras being present more in the beginning of the conversation than at the end. As well, Jackie reflects on her internal processes (thoughts and feelings) during the friendship conversation, frequently responding with "I" statements about her experience.

Appendix S

Master Code List

Acknowledges
Advises
Agrees
Ambiguous response
Answers question
Apologizes
Approves
Asks for clarification
Asks for confirmation
Asks for information
Asks for justification or reasons
Asks for opinion or belief
Asks for speculation or hypothetical
    scenario
Clarifies
Complains
Confirms
Continues other's statement
Continues own statement
Dances
Demands (tells partner what to do)
Describes future event/situation
Describes another person
Describes speaking partner
Describes past event or situation
Describes physical sensation
Describes possibility or hypothetical
    situation
Describes self
Describes situation or event (current, present
    moment)
Disagrees (denies)
Disapprove
Dismissive or diminishing statement
Elaborates
Encourages
Evaluative or judging statement
Exaggerated or dramatic tone of voice or
    body movement

Expresses anger
Expresses awkwardness or discomfort
Expresses belief or disbelief
Expresses desire/wish/preference
Expresses disgust
Expresses dissatisfaction
Expresses doubt
Expresses fear
Expresses gratitude
Expresses humour
Expresses joy
Expresses love
Expresses perception/opinion/hunch
Expresses realization
Expresses sadness
Expresses surprise
Expresses uncertainty
Expresses understanding
Hits wall or furniture
Incomplete statement
Interrupts
Laughs
Invites or elicits a response
Paraphrasing
Partial agreement
Pause
Praises
Provides information
Reflects affect
Reflects cognition
Repeats partner's previous statement
Requests
Signals or talks to the camera/researchers
Sings or hums
States a plan
Suggests
Swears
Touches partner
Unintelligible response

Appendix T

Projects	Functional Steps Used by the Dyads	Elements used by the Dyads	
To have, maintain, and preserve the friendship	Keeping true thoughts and feelings to themselves. Letting controversial topics go. Acceptance without judgment.	Agrees Changes topic of conversation	Dismissive statements Minimizes
To explore and discover a sense of self	Learning about their friendship values. Directly asking for and sharing opinions about their selves. Sharing their thoughts, feelings, perceptions and opinions with each other, usually through telling stories but this is also done directly in conversation.	Asking questions Answering questions Describes past event Describes self	Describes partner Describes a feeling. States an opinion or perception
To have fun	Gossiping Reminiscing about the past (happy memories) and planning for the future Storytelling Teasing Telling jokes	Animated body language Dancing/singing Describing future events Describing hypothetical events Describing others Describing past events	Exaggerated tone of voice Expressions of happiness Laughing Leaning in/Nodding Rhyming banter Smiling
To support each other	Asking for and giving advice (problem solving) Avoiding embarrassing topics Celebrating similarities Commiserating Disclosing perceived flaws and embarrassing moments Gossip Sharing physical affection Use of humour/joking	Advises or suggests Affirming Agreeing Asks for opinion/perception Asks information Changes topic Describes another person Describes past event Describes self	Empathic/validating statements Name calling Nodding Providing information Reassuring statement Self-deprecating statement Touching (hug, removes an eyelash, moves partner's hair)
To connect with each other	Celebrating similarities and common ground Communicating understanding Disclosure of desires/preferences/feelings Gossip (increasing solidarity, creating us vs. them dichotomy) Keeping the other informed about social activities Physical affection Reminiscing about the past and planning for the future. Revealing embarrassing moments Sharing of a secret. Storytelling (fictional/factual)	Agreeing Compliments partner Describes future event Describes past event Describes self Empathic/validating statements Laughing Touching	

Summary of Findings – Self-Representations and Collage/Conversation Consistency

Projects	Self-representations in Conversation Advance/Do Not Advance the Projects	Collage Processes and Meanings Consistent or Inconsistent with Friendship Conversation Data
To have, maintain, and preserve the friendship	Yes. All dyads endeavored to preserve, maintain and nurture the friendship. Sometimes they falsely represented themselves in order to preserve the friendship or to enact other friendship projects.	Yes, very consistent. Intentions to maintain the friendship in the future.
To explore and discover aspects of the self	Rarely done in the conversations explicitly. Implicitly done through the sharing of feelings, thoughts, perceptions and opinions. Explicit examples include asking for opinions about body image concerns.	Implicitly consistent by collage statements of feeling comfortable to be themselves. All participants reported this comfort and freedom within their close friendships. Lack of judgment or reprisal during the conversations demonstrates acceptance of the other to be themselves.
To have fun	Yes. On self-confrontation several dyads explicitly state "I am happy", "I am joyful", "I'm having fun"	Very consistent, all dyads describe the importance of fun in close friendships. • "They have fun together" (Heather) • "Friends are fun and zany and they have a good time together:" (Gloria) • "Fun makes everything more colorful." "Being happy and having fun is important." (Faith) • "We enjoy gossiping together" (Emma) • "Laughter and fun are important" (Jackie) • A trait of a good friend is "fun-loving" (Amber) • "It's great if they are a bit crazy because then you have more fun together." (Candace) • Collage centered on happy, fun memories together (Candace/Debra) • "Having fun is the whole point of friendship" (Debra)

Projects	Self-representations in Conversation Advance/Do Not Advance the Projects	Collage Processes and Meanings Consistent or Inconsistent with Friendship Conversation Data
To support each other	Yes. Self-representations do advance this joint project. Self-deprecating remarks are reciprocated. Embarrassing moments about the self are shared and reciprocated. Self-representations of empathy or understanding are stated with "I know" or "Me too". Direct sharing of feelings are acknowledged and reciprocated.	Very consistent, all dyads report "supportiveness" as an important friendship theme, although they sometimes use other terminology to express it. • "Being there for each other" (Beth) • "Close friends are safe and understanding." "Problems diminish when I talk them over with my friend" (Emma) • "I feel safe. You can count on them to help you to solve your problems and you can trust them to always be there. I can cry in front of her and she won't criticize me" (Heather) • "A good friend will be there for you when you're having bad times or you need her." "You can rely on each other." (Gloria) • "A good friend provides support if one is hurt, lonely, or needs someone to lean on." (Isabel) • They provide relief to each other from the stressors in their lives (schoolwork, other friends, family). (Jackie) • "A good friend will not force you to do things you don't want to do, or things that will get you into trouble" (Isabel, Emma)
To connect with each other	Yes, indirect self-representations in the form of reciprocal revelation of feelings, desires, or embarrassing moments. Connecting physically (hugging, touching) also clearly indicates a desire to connect with each other.	Very consistent with collage data, although "connection" is not listed as a value on all collages. Sometimes referred to as "closeness", or "having a bond". Meanings of direct quotes are summarized below. • "We're emotionally connected" and we're able to have long, deep conversations" (Amber) • "Close friendship is like a bond that gets progressively closer over time." "Best friendships are close, tight and connected." (Beth) • "Closeness means being around them and having fun." (Candace) • "They each have a mutual desire to be in the friendship. You both really like each other." (Debra) • The use of love themes/symbols (Faith, Heather, Isabel) • "Has an emotional bond with her best friend." "A good friend loves and accepts you." ("I like a friend who is OK with my physical affection Heather) • "This friendship is unique and special." (Isabel, Jackie, Amber) • "We are more powerful as a unit." Both friends value the friendship (Isabel) • "I am completely open with my best friend." "I know her better than anyone." "We are perfect for each other as friends." (Jackie) • "We are connected because we know each other so well." (Gloria, Amber, Beth)

Appendix U

Brief Description of the Participant Dyads

Dyad #1 – Amber and Beth

At the time of study Amber and Beth were both 13 years of age and were in Grade 8. They both went to Mini Schools (academically challenging programs offered within the public school system), albeit different ones. They had known each other for nine years and their families were close friends. The girls each had older female siblings who were also best friends and their mothers had been best friends since before the girls were born. They both pointed out that they do not have much in common in terms of interests and activities, although this does not seem to hold much importance. They do, however, live close by each other and spend a lot of time together, simply by virtue of the fact that their families are so interconnected. Typically, they do not have to plan socially to get together as this happens naturally for them within the context of their mothers' friendship.

Dyad #2 – Candace and Debra

Candace, at the time of her friendship conversation, was just under 12 years old and her friend Debra was 12 years old. They were both in Grade 7, attending the same French Immersion elementary school. They had known each other for ten years and their families are good friends, to the point that joint family vacations have been annual events. They live close to each other and central to their view of friendship is the fact that they have a lot in common and like to do things together.

Dyad #3 – Emma and Faith

Emma and Faith were both 12 years old at the time of study and attended Grade 8 at the same French Immersion elementary school. They had known each other for eight years. They

stated they enjoyed doing many of the same things together, and described themselves as having the same taste in music. They indicated that they participate in team sports together. They both found it particularly difficult to self-reflect during the self-confrontation interview, often stating that they had "nothing else going on" or were only thinking and feeling exactly what they were talking about.

Dyad #4 – Gloria and Heather

Gloria and Heather were both 12 years old at the time of study and had been friends for two years. They attended Grade 7 at the same elementary school. They were both from single parent families (headed by mothers) and both reported conflicted relationships with absent fathers. Their mothers were friendly to each other but are not friends. Central themes identified in their friendship were how they support, understand, and trust each other. This pair often engaged in physical contact as a display of affection (hugging, touching, etc).

Dyad #5 – Isabel and Jackie

Isabel and Jackie were both 12 years old at the time of the study and had been friends for seven years. They attended Grade 7 at the same elementary school. They stated that they have a lot of the same interests and participate in sports teams together. They described themselves as very similar on many levels, an observation that they both equated with "connection". Their friendship conversation centered on their similarities and the fun they have had, not only reminiscing about the past, but excitedly planning for future times together.

UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Committee Certificate of Approval

The University of British Columbia
Office of Research Services and Administration
Behavioural Research Ethics Board

Certificate of Approval

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR	DEPARTMENT	NUMBER
Young, R.A.	Educ & Couns Psych & Spec Educ	B06-0581

INSTITUTION(S) WHERE RESEARCH WILL BE CARRIED OUT
UBC Campus ,

CO-INVESTIGATORS:
Haber, Carla Joanne, Educ & Couns Psych & Spec Educ

SPONSORING AGENCIES
Unfunded Research

TITLE :
Expression of Self-Description within Early Adolescent Friendship Conversations

APPROVAL DATE	TERM (YEARS)	DOCUMENTS INCLUDED IN THIS APPROVAL:
SEP 2 6 2006	1	Sept. 11, 2006, Consent form / Assent form / July 9, 2006, Advertisement / Contact letter

CERTIFICATION:

The application for ethical review of the above-named project has been reviewed and the procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

*Approved on behalf of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board
by one of the following:*
Dr. Peter Suedfeld, Chair,
Dr. Jim Rupert, Associate Chair
Dr. Arminee Kazanjian, Associate Chair
Dr. M. Judith Lynam, Associate Chair

This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the experimental procedures