
Sheila McGraw

Rhode Island College, sheilaruth24@verizon.net

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DEEP, DEEP, DEEP INSIDE WE’RE ALL FRIENDS:
A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF HOW YOUNG GIRLS
ENGAGE, DEVELOP, MAINTAIN, AND ASSESS RELATIONSHIPS WITH
PEERS

BY
SHEILA RUTH MCGRAW

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND
AND
RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE
2012
ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examines the manner in which second grade girls engage, develop, maintain, and assess relationships with peers. Grounded theory methodology was employed to collect and analyze data. The study makes three claims: the institutional structure of the school impacted the development of friendships between and among second grade girls, the behavior patterns and common characteristics shared by seven and eight year old girls during the development of friendships were deliberate, and seven and eight year old girls used their common interests to include and exclude members in their group. Discussion of the third claim explores parallels between the behaviors practiced by the second grade girls in non-threatening manners and those behaviors used by their adolescent counterparts during female bullying.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are several people I would like to acknowledge who provided support and guidance throughout my doctoral journey.

I would first like to thank Dr. Lesley Bogad who has spent countless hours coaching me to become a better thinker and qualitative writer. She invited me to sit at the table with the scholars I so admired and add to their literature with my voice. It was her encouragement that brought me back to the table many times. Throughout this process I have become fond of her son, Micha, who spent many hours with us. His smile is infectious. His spirit, like the girls in my dissertation, shines brightly.

I would also like to express gratitude to the members of my dissertation committee, Dr. Betty Young, Dr. Janet Johnson, Dr. Grant Willis, and Dr. Sandy Hicks. Their interest, support, guidance, and suggestions pushed me to expand my perspective and be open to where the data took me.

To Dr. Betty Young Lartigaud, thank you for your mentorship throughout these last ten years of my life. I admire your willingness to embrace new challenges with such aplomb.

I would like to also add a very special thank you to my parents, Phyllis and Gerry Bonenfant. They have supported me through many phases of my life, this one included. I am proud to be their daughter.

I would also like to express my most sincere gratitude to my fellow cohort 2005 members; Laura Falvey, Dr. Jenny Audette, Dr. Laura Chiaravolloti, and Dr. Janice Place. I have learned much from these amazing women about keeping life and the dissertation process in perspective.
DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the members of my family who have so patiently supported me through the doctoral program. Their loving ways have been appreciated more than I could ever capture on this page.

To Steve, my husband, who offered unwavering encouragement, sound advice, and cooked me the most fabulous meals. I thank you for having the gift of knowing what I needed even before I did. You are the sunshine of my life.

To Zach, my son, who, like me, has been in college for the past three years. Your dedication to your studies and strong work ethic kept me in line. I truly appreciate your amazing sense of humor and your ability to know just when to use it. Getting a hug from you brings delight to my day.

To Matthew, my son, who brought me his wife, Cyrena, and my granddaughters, Madison and Kailyn during the time I was working on my doctoral degree. I appreciate the overwhelming joy and happiness spending time with your family brings to my life. You helped to keep my nose to the grindstone knowing I would soon be sharing the pleasure of your company. I am proud to say we are family.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Statement of the Problem

Walking into Mrs. Z’s second grade classroom I was immediately captured by all of the energy that filled the room. There was a buzz in the air that I can only describe as a corralled frenzy. What I came to discover while talking with a select five girls of this classroom was how they used this energy and passion to develop friendships with each other. Their journey was not without mitigating factors. The very institution that was assisting them in developing their academic skills was also influencing their social interactions.

In this dissertation I examined female peer relationships between and among seven and eight year old girls in the second grade. Qualitative data I obtained through observations and interviews were analyzed to better understand the thinking processes young females underwent as they developed and assessed their relationships with other females. The voices of Annie, Ruth, Judy, Molly, and Karen were evidenced as they told their stories of their relationships with their peers. Examined, also, was the role the institutional structure played in shaping their behaviors.

Previous research has given voice to the views of adolescent females (Brown, 1998; Gilligan, 1992; Orenstein, 1994; Simmons, 2004). Missing from the dialogue was the voices of their younger counterpart. My dissertation seeks to bring the voices of one distinct group of seven and eight year old girls into the research on females.
Through observation, interview, and discussion I collected data relative to: the role of the institution in the development of friendships among and between second grade girls and the manners in which the young girls maneuver within an imposed institutional structure to develop their friendships.

According to Dewey (1916), education does not occur directly, but indirectly by means of the environment. Schools are environments which influence the moral and mental disposition of their constituents. The climate of a school is often associated with the development of a community where its members communicate their needs, purpose, and progress with each other toward a common end (Noddings, 2005). In the case of Ruth, Annie, Molly, Judy and Karen, the limitations their environment placed on their need to connect with each other forced them to maneuver within the system rather than act in harmony with it. It placed restrictions on them they needed to overcome in order to achieve what they wanted to accomplish.

Children develop progressively more refined models of peer interactions by successfully incorporating different and more abstract aspects of their interactions (Baldwin in Markovits, Beneson, & Dolenszky, 2001). The girls in my study constructed representational models of their social interactions that encoded patterns of behavior. They experienced each social interaction, internalized their experience, and then used that schema to anticipate how they and others would interact in subsequent situations. This study examined Molly, Annie, Karen, Judy, and Ruth as they experienced opportunities to interact in order to develop and practice effective friendship formation skills.
Relationships between and among the members of the school community have been documented through qualitative and quantitative data collected on older children, grades four through high school (Gover, Goupgh, & Cartwright, 2008; Markovits, Beneson, & Dolenszky, 2001; McNeely, Nonnemaker, Blum, 2002; Noddings, 2005; Salmivalli, 2002). This dissertation examined data gathered based on the actions and conversations of girls in the second grade. The findings add to the literature of the thinking of younger girls as they make sense of the factors which are incorporated into their internal models during friendship and relationship formation.

**Justification for and Significance of the Study**

In the first weeks of third grade, Alisa had approached and asked to be best friends. Delighted, Chloe said yes. At the time, she told me ‘I didn’t have the most friends in the third grade, and I was making as many friends as I could.’ Chloe and Alisa played and spent recess together every day, chatting, playing jacks, trading stickers, and – their favorite- having upside down contests on the monkey bars.

Some months later, Chloe found out that Alisa had been making up lies about her and telling her secrets to the popular girls. Chloe said she felt ‘really bad.’ When you’ve trusted someone that way, it hurts a lot. Chloe was afraid to say anything about it, she said, because ‘most of the friends I had came from her. If I lost her, I would lose the rest (Simmons, 2002, p. 169-170).

Scenarios such as ten-year-old Chloe’s suggest that girls’ friendships are a complicated terrain. Research has shown that girls demonstrate power and control in their relations through insidious, almost invisible methods (Gilligan, 1982; Orenstein,
Simmons, 2002). Secrets can become social currency when relational competitions transform them into gossip and rumors.

While recent studies addressed issues of the development of friendships in adolescent girls, the literature reveals an absence of work examining relationship formation in early elementary school girls. The behavior patterns of the girls in the earlier grades are absent in the literature. Through this dissertation I sought to begin to fill that void by examining the dimensions of the establishment of relationships through the perspective of the girls who are experiencing and displaying the behavior. I used the energy I captured from the second grade girls to bring to light the missing factors in the research of the influences affecting the friendship formations of young seven and eight year old females. These data add to the literature bringing definition to the interrelationship of the structure of a school and the children participating within the structure.

When I began this study, one of my research questions made reference to the characteristics of behavior exhibited by females in aggressive peer relations. I was prepared to hear more of the underpinnings of aggressive behavior as was described in the research of Brown and Gilligan (1992), Leckie (1998), Orenstein (1994), and Simmons (2002). The girls in my study were younger than the adolescent population of the aforementioned researchers, so I wondered how their patterns of aggression might manifest themselves.

I almost missed it. Like the teachers looking for overt acts of aggression, I had to consider the patterns of the behaviors of the girls to realize I was witnessing so many of the same behavior as my fellow researchers (Brown, 1998; Brown &
Through its organizational factors and institutional agenda, Lakeville Elementary School allowed the girls to develop and practice many of the same behaviors that were used by their older adolescent counterparts when they bullied each other. I did not witness what I would consider bullying in the time I shared with the girls. But there was something there. That something was the development and practicing of behaviors that are employed by older girls as they bully each other. At this point in their lives, the girls were honing the skills, not using them as direct weapons toward each other. I viewed the girls as having social agency. They met each situation they encountered and reacted in a manner so as to achieve what they needed. They were not boldly belligerent, but certainly resourceful in their actions.

I discovered that equal to their ability to describe the perceived positive aspects of the relationships in their lives, the second grade girls also brought light to some of the patterns of problems and aggressive behaviors they experienced. However, the majority of the observations and conversations between the girls and me yielded more data of the positive aspects of their relationships than aggressive behavior patterns. The term “bully” only presented itself once during the months I spent in the school. Molly, Karen, Annie, Ruth, and Judy clearly could identify problematic behaviors in relationships. They could also identify compensatory or problem solving strategies which they employed to seek resolution. The focus of my dissertation has little to do with the aggressive behaviors of second grade girls, but examines data relative to how the seven and eight year old girls maneuver within an institutional structure when developing friendships with their peers. However, at the ages of seven and eight, the
girls were exhibiting some of the very behaviors that have been identified in the literature of adolescent female bullying; subversive behaviors, whispering, secrets, exclusion of others, and gathering intimate facts about each other. I discovered that these behaviors could be used to connect girls in the early years, even though it is the currency of female bullying during adolescence.

The claims and grounded theory developed through analysis of the patterns of their behavior applied to these girls at this time and within this context of their lives. However, if I applied the perspective of a critical ethnographer and asked what my data could be, I found myself needing to acknowledge an awareness of the connection between my current data which revealed some of the girls’ budding behaviors and their similarities to the behaviors adopted by adolescent females as they seek to manipulate and bully their peers. I am not attempting to predict that the girls in this study will engage in bullying behaviors as adolescents. But, to acknowledge some of the manipulative, subversive behaviors the girls are displaying in order to be able to achieve their goals against the backdrop of the institutional structure of the school also warrants acknowledgement of the use of the same types of behaviors for a different purpose in their older peers.

This study adds to the body of literature on seven and eight year old girls behaviors as they are developing friendships. It also add to the literature on female bullying as it documents data that in order to develop their friendships within an institutional structure, the girls practiced many of the covert behaviors that become weapons of female bullying later in their lives.
The words of Peggy Orenstein (1994) resonate to my very core, “…..I still believe that as adults, taking the time to ask-and taking the time to listen-is the single most important thing we can do for our girls” (p. xiii). Orenstein entered into the world of adolescent females to do her listening. In conducting my work, I immersed myself into the world of second grade girls between the ages of seven and eight, listened to their words, and documented their thinking.

In what follows, I will bring you from my decisions about the proper methodology to select for this study, through the literature that guided my work, into the data I collected, and finally to my conclusions and discussion of the significance of my study. I will begin with Chapter Two which is a discussion of the literature that guided my dissertation. Chapter Three is a discussion of how I employed the Grounded Theory Methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to collect, sort, analyze and frame my theory relative to the formation of friendships of the five second grade girls at Lakeville Elementary School. In Chapter Four I will present a detailed analysis of my data. Section One of Chapter Four will examine the impact of the institution on the friendship formation of the second grade girls. Section Two of Chapter Four continues the analysis of my data with the documentation of the behaviors in which the girls engage and the characteristics of friendships established between second grade girls. Chapter Five provides discussion of theory derived from data analysis and the relevance of the study.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This dissertation will draw from three major bodies of literature as its theoretical foundation: friendship development, gender and education, and female relational aggression (also referred to bullying). The interrelationship of the three topics as they relate to the formation of relationships among young females will be explored. While not examined in depth, I begin this review of the literature with an overview of one of the basic assumptions of this dissertation: gender as a social construction.

Following that discussion, in the first section of the review of the literature I will present the social and psychological differences in gender as they relate to the formation of relationships among children. The finding and writings of four prominent qualitative writers that influenced my thinking; Lyn Mikel Brown, Carol Gilligan, Peggy Orenstein, and Rachel Simmons, will be included in this section. It is their insistence that the voices of the girls involved in their studies be heard that guided my approach to research. All four women consider the context of their investigations when presenting their data, another dimension that was incorporated into my analysis and discussion of data collected with the five girls involved in my study. Also included in this section is a discussion of several quantitative studies which guided my selection of research settings as well as gave me comparison data from which to examine the behavior patterns of the younger girls involved in my research.
In the second section, I will continue with a discussion of the literature on gender and education. The focus of this section is to present existing data on the manner in which girls negotiate school. I began this section with a brief discussion of Title IX, landmark legislation that brought gender equity to the negotiation of females and their educational and employment opportunities. Additionally, I include literature relative to some of the curricular decisions made and their gender implications.

Finally, in the third portion of the review of literature, I will present what current research brings to the topics of gender and relational aggression. This body of literature is included to frame the manner in which older girls engage in relational aggression. As such it presents the undercurrent of behaviors that become powerful as girls bully other girls. Indirect bullying is presented as information for the reader to use when comparing my research of seven year old girls in relationships to their older counterparts.

Previous studies (Baldwin in Markovits, Beneson, & Dolenszky, 2001; Ladd, Price, & Hart, 1988; Markovits, et al., 2001; Parker & Seal, 1996) suggest patterns in the preferences and maintenance of friendship formation have gender implications. Children attain power through the social construction of their relationships exerted along the lines of gender (Lorber, 1994; Orenstein, 1994; Orenstein, 2011; Simmons, 2002). This review of literature will bring support to the last two assertions.

The Social Construction of Gender

In this study, I begin with the assumption that gender is a social construction. Gender is not determined by biological factors, but rather through our choices and our
social interactions with our environment and society (Lorber, 1994). From birth,
babies are clothed in certain colors and styles of dress so that even virtual strangers
may easily distinguish their gender; feminine or masculine. These distinguishing
factors enable others to interact with the children in a manner that will establish the
code aiding the child in conforming to their gendered expectations. Boys and girls
transition through childhood, then adolescence and into adulthood, not in isolation, but
in a society that bombards them with images through print, media, and verbal
communication. They learn what and who are valued in their society. Gender is
constantly created and recreated through human interaction (Lorber, 1994). Gendered
norms and expectations shape the life patterns of individuals.

Social skills move through the same stages of learning as all other domains of
skill development according to Vygotsky (in Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). Thus,
children cannot escape the social constructions of the more capable individual who is
assisting them to develop their own schema. The learner moves from a stage of other-
assistance to self-assistance and is ready to enter into the stages of the recurrent cycle
where they enhance, improve, or maintain performance of an activity or skill. Children
are continuously influenced by the social constructions of the more capable others
during all stages of knowledge acquisition and social skill development. This is also
ture of the acquisition of gender norms.

It is the method of transfer of skills and cognitive development that has framed
the work of other researchers who have examined the peer relationships of children
(Boulton, 1999; Gilligan, 1982; Markovits, Beneson, & Dolensky, 2001; Parker &
Seal, 1996). Parker and Seal (1996) examined the friendship formation and loss
patterns of groups of children between the ages of eight to fifteen. Boulton (1999) brought his study to the playground where he examined the associations between playground behavior and the peer relationships of children. Markovits and his associates (2001) were interested in the encoding of children’s behavior based on representational models. Gilligan (1982) took a qualitative approach to talk with children about the role of relationships in their lives. All of the researchers, regardless of their methodology, setting, or sample participants explored the manner in which children construct relationships and the bearing friendship formation had on their lives. My qualitative research will add to the body of work as it formed theory relative to the friendship formations of younger girls.

**Friendship Development**

**Introduction**

Friendships offer children emotional support and promote social and cognitive skills (Parker & Seal, 1996). Researchers have examined many aspects of the social interactions of children. Some have studied representational models to investigate how young people learn interactional skills (Baldwin in Markovits, Beneson, & Dolenszky, 2001). Others have explored gender-differentiated representations in the preferences of group size in the formation of friendships (Markovits et al., 2001). The manner in which children develop progressively more refined internal models of peer friendships has also been examined (Markovits et al., 2001). Still others have investigated the qualities deemed valuable when children are determining and evaluating relationships among peers (Parker and Seal, 1996). That children are deliberate in their choice of
friends is a conclusion drawn through the aforementioned studies. The social and psychological differences in gender as they relate to the formation of relationships among children can best be addresses through an examination of behavior and friendship. The literature examines both qualitative and quantitative studies of these topics. The examination of the developmental and sociological differences in males and females has been influenced by many researchers (Gurian, 2001; Kohlberg, 1981; Markovits et al., 2001; Gilligan, 1982; Orenstein, 1994; Orenstein, 2011; Thorne, 1993). In this section, I will present a meta-analysis of both forms of research, beginning with the qualitative literature followed by the quantitative literature.

**Qualitative Researchers and Friendship Development**

Three predominant qualitative researchers influencing the work surrounding girls and the social and psychological aspects of their relationships are Barrie Thorne, Carol Gilligan, and Lyn Mikel Brown. The work of the three women grew from a need to conduct research on the behaviors of girls without measuring the females against scales previously developed with purely male samples.

To begin a discussion of the work of Brown, Gilligan and Thorne means to examine the work of researchers who came before these women. Early studies across many disciplines examined the moral behavior of male participants and made reference to the inferiority of female behavior when they did not fit the male mold (Freud, Kohlberg, & Piaget, in Gilligan, 1982). Freud considered the differences in the development of women responsible for what he viewed as women's developmental
failure. Piaget, who equated male moral development with child development, argued that children learned the respect for rules necessary for moral development by playing rule-bond games. In the research from which Kohlberg (1969) derived his theory, females were not included in the sample. The feminist research movement to study the behavior of girls brought female actions and interactions into a more accurate focus. Females were studied and understood through a lens sensitive to chronicling their development rather than judging them against a scale developed through the study of males.

Carol Gilligan was a research assistant for Lawrence Kohlberg in the early 1970’s. In her book, In a Different Voice (1993), Gilligan’s writings demonstrated respect for the research conducted by Kohlberg, yet held awareness that his theories were based on a patriarchal view of society. Gilligan suggested development in women was masked by a particular conception of human relationships based on observations of men. During the onset of her research, theory illuminated boys’ thought, but not that of girls. Gilligan’s contributions to the topic of gender and the formation of relationships were her interpretation of the thoughts of girls. Gilligan presented the same scenarios to males and females and documented their reactions to the moral dilemmas. Her writings rendered clarity to the developmental nature of females and considered differences in the understanding of their relationships without presenting them on a hierarchical scale.

Gilligan was also instrumental in her work with Lyn Mikel Brown (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). Their combined contribution was to bring forth what they termed “listening” to the voice of girls. After attempting to conduct research with young girls
in a more conventional qualitative manner, the pair discovered that the girls were in effect sabotaging their data collection by sharing the topics of conversations with each other after they had spoken with the interviewers. Gilligan and Brown developed a listening guide that enabled the sorting of interview data in a more reliable manner. Their work brought much to the dialog of how girls formed relationships from the second grade through middle school. Gilligan and Brown (1992) employed an analytical interpretation of the voices and actions of three girls over a four-year period; from the age seven through eleven, to document the transition in their expressing themselves in relationships. They found that societal expectations overlapped and influenced the behavior of the girls. Their research informed my study through bringing perspective and clarity to my data analysis with regard to the behaviors documented with the seven and eight year old girls they interviewed.

According to Gilligan and Brown, at seven and eight years old, girls articulated their need to put a stop to what they consider relational transgressions such as interrupting, ignoring, or hurting people’s feelings. They said what they felt about the relationships they hold and those of the people around them. The seven and eight year old second grade girls openly expressed anger and were disruptive and resistant in voicing their needs.

At the same time, instances of capitulation were present in their behavior. The girls were aware of other peoples’ reactions to their voice and actions. The social expectations of others, especially the adults in their lives, were ever present and of consideration when they acted. They recognized that “nice behavior” (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 45) elicited acceptance by others and they were willing to sacrifice
their own wants and needs in order to avoid conflict with others. Brown and Gilligan (1992) likened this behavior to something heard in a fairy tale; a “happy ending” where experiences of being left out, abandoned, and angry do not occur because a person suppressed and repressed their true feelings.

Seven and eight-year-old girls were aware of their feelings of friendship and how to maintain them. They already were aware of the landscape of relationships, and were honing their skills to negotiate the territory. While they might not have any recourse to what they felt were adult transgressions, they reacted to their peers by expressing strong feelings, by asking questions, or actively protesting. They used words, not acts of violence, to express their feelings as, according to the authors, it appeared that they found power in their words (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p.48). Girls at the ages of seven and eight were aware of the differences in a sincere and insincere response by observing and listening for clues.

Thought the actions of the older girls in their study were not influential in my thinking during this dissertation, their behavior is presented in brief to document the developmental changes noted in the research of Brown and Gilligan. By the ages of nine and ten, girls were aware of the consequences of reacting and responding to situations in different ways. The third grade girls had a desire to begin to balance and integrate the various components of a situation, which Gilligan and Brown refer to as the “voices they are taking in with their own thoughts and feelings” (Brown & Gilligan, p. 52). It was a crucial point in the lives of the girls, as they were at a point where they were making decisions about whether or not to suppress their feelings and
desires to the wishes of others. The need to maintain relationships, regardless of the cost, was becoming a grappling issue for girls as they reach this age.

Gilligan and Brown found that by age eleven, girls in fourth grade appeared to have an astute understanding of relationships and how they negotiated their voice and position within the relationships. Eleven-year-old girls anticipated what others would say and whether or not to respond. They had experienced the power of “perfect” and weighed what a “nice girl” meant in relationship to themselves and others. They were at a point of struggling to know the difference between strong and true relationships and those that were an illusion of such. They were questioning much that occurred in their relationships, sometimes resisting and sometimes giving in to the wishes of their peers as well as the adults in their lives. The telling of secrets and the spreading of rumors, a behavior that emerged at age seven, now seemed to be a more viable and prevalent option for girls. The directness of the responses and actions of girls at eight years old had become more entangled in how the response affected relationships. The voice that emerged or was silenced had changed over the years from second to fourth grade. It had been influenced by the expectations brought to bear on the girls through their interactions with others in their environment.

I also found great value in the work and writings of another feminist qualitative researcher, Barrie Thorne, who presented research relative to the friendship development of females in her influential work, *Gender Play* (1993). “Children act, resist, rework and create; they influence adults as well as being influenced by them” (Thorne, 1993, p.3). Thorne’s study of fourth and fifth grade students presented a balanced, integrated theory of the interactions of children. She contended that boys
and girls often do separate in daily interactions, especially when they created more lasting groups and friendships. Through her observation of the “native informants,” boys and girls, she stated that children used different rhetoric to describe their same gender relationships. Most of what was observed about boys and girls could be fitted into the model “different worlds or cultures.” In this model, the actions and world of boys and girls were studied in isolation of each other. There were, however, many exceptions and qualifications to question the model’s basic assumption. The different-cultures framework gained much of its appeal from stereotypes and ideologies that should be questioned rather than built on and perpetuated as social fact.

Using a different cultures model, Thorne presented the behaviors of boys and girls in a contrasting manner. Thorne’s observations on the playground suggested that within the culture of girls, they organized themselves into smaller, and more intimate groups, and friendship pairs. Girls participated in two or more pairs at one time, resulting in quite complex social networks. They carried out the activity of constructing and breaking dyads and maneuvered alliances through talk with third parties. Girls shared secrets and become mutually vulnerable through self-disclosure. Girls stressed the construction of intimacy, connection, and collaboration in their relationships. They were observed engaging in small-scale, turn-taking, cooperative kinds of play. Girls often criticized girls who act conceited and seemed to place themselves above others. They talked about the offenses of other girls in their absence, and used more indirect forms of conflict, like protracted disputes carried out through reports to and by third parties.
In contrast, boys were represented as often playing outdoors with their activities taking up much more space. They formed flocks, gangs, teams, or groups of buddies. Boys pressed the ambiguous line between play and real fighting in their talk, and as well as their actions. Their play frequently revolved around themes of physical strength and force. Boy’s social relations tended to be overtly hierarchical and competitive. They were perceived as liking to make and argue about rules and then collectively break them. Boys bonded through the risk of rule-breaking and through aggressing against other boys who were perceived to be weaker or aggressing against girls.

I found Thorne’s work was also insightful in her discussion of some of the limitations that any researcher would bring into a research project such as hers. Her thoughts reflected the voice of a person offering wisdom to the novice and seasoned female researcher alike. Thorne (1993) cautioned observers of the need to sort out the playful from serious intent and be alert to the nuances of the actions of children. She also cautioned the researcher against applying meanings to the actions of the children based on a personal readiness to look for trouble. She presented the need for the researcher to lessen the social distance between the observer and the children through avoiding positions of authority and intervening in a managerial way. Her presentation of these limitations informed my behavior as a participant observer at Lakeville Elementary School.

Thorne also introduces the term “borderwork” (Thorne, 1993, p.64) into her analysis of the interactions between children. In her interpretation of the term, she discusses evidences of the manners in which groups interact with one another so as to
establish and strengthen borders. When gender borders are activated boys and girls as viewed as a dichotomy with opposite and even sometimes antagonistic sides. Thorne described many stylized movements that reinforced gender boundaries, but the one most specific to my research was that of chasing.

Thorne presented chasing among girls as less physical aggressive than that of boys. She described the chasing of younger children as mixed with fantasy scenarios. She coined the term “troupes” (p.72) for the groups of children, primarily girls, who would roam the playground in search of opportunities to become involved in chasing both girls and boys. Cross-gender chasing also provided the opportunity for strengthening the borders between girls and boys. Thorne presented the chasing scenarios that occurred between girls and between genders as an aspect of play in her research. Much like Thorne, I, too, found chasing an integral part of the activity the girls in my study. The playful activity of chasing was a part of their establishment of relationships with each other which I will discuss in the chapters that follow.

Thorne, Gilligan and Brown’s work support the more global findings of Selman (1989) who framed the term friendship around the establishment of intimacy: an emotional connection between two persons that arose as a result of interpersonal behaviors such as sharing, play, and self-disclosure (p. 412). Selman identified intimacy as an important factor in peer relations. Selman established that while positive feelings that occurred as a result of friendships may be the same across different age groups, behaviors that led to friendships changed as children matured. Female friendships were thought to be more intimate than boys because intimacy was confused with self-disclosure.
Quantitative Research on Friendship Development

The literature on friendship development looked at many different spaces as sites for investigation. As with the work of Thorne (1993), the playground was often chosen as a setting for the study of children’s behavior (Boulton, 1999; Glover et al, 2008; Ladd, Price, & Hart, 1988). It provided a place where children were free to interact without the limitations of directed adult activity. Children had to use their information about the social situation in order to interact. I learned much through my data collection conducted on the playground. It provided a setting for my initial observational data and continued to be a site for robust data collection throughout the study.

Ladd, et al (1988) conducted an investigation of the relations between preschool children’s peer behavior and status through playground observation and subsequent sociometric assessment. Their work yielded strong support for children’s behavior contributing to their social status. Further, their analysis suggested that the effects of peer status appear to persist even when children changed their behavior during the course of the school year. Children were socialized to seek positions of power, regardless of their age.

Boulton (1999) examined the concurrent and longitudinal associations between children's playground behavior and their peer relationships with gender as one of the variables. Previous findings had indicated that low accepted children had been found to engage in more aggressive and disruptive behavior and/or more solitary behavior. Highly accepted children were found to participate in more pro-social activities and group games. Boulton’s study included 89 children from primarily working-class
backgrounds. Data were collected by three observers who recorded and coded children's behavior on the playground. The observers examined both group size and network. Group size was the measure of how many children the target was with at the end of the scan. Network was the measure of how many different children the target interacted with in nonaggressive ways. The possibility that socio-metric judgments of bullying and victimization may differ by gender were also examined in Boulton’s research (1999).

Boulton’s (1999) results gave credence to three important views. First, what children did on the playground during recess, and their patterns of peer contacts, were related systematically to certain aspects of their current peer relationships. Second, nonaggressive behavior was salient in that respect. Third, the same playground behavior had different social consequences for girls and boys. More specifically, spending a lot of time alone seemed to be a risk factor for participation in bullying and victimization, but in a divergent manner for boys and girls. For girls, it was predictive of increased bullying. For boys, it was predictive of increased victimization. Boulton’s work brought influence to my selection of settings for the study to include the playground and other spots where there was limited adult structure to the activities that affected Karen, Molly, Ruth, Annie, and Judy.

The current literature also documented acceptance and rejection in friendship. The research of Parker and Seal (1996) indicated that children who began their study with many friends had more friends than other children at every point of data collection. Friendship success and group acceptance rested on different sets of social skills. Their data reveal some social skills may contribute to the extent of children's
involvement in friendship and to children's acceptance by their peer group. Other social skills dictate the course of the friendship involvement more specifically. Having friends in many “social circles,” rather than simply having many friends, contributes to high acceptance by peers. Parker and Seal influenced my study in that their work led me to consider cataloging the social skills leading to acceptance in younger females as a component of my research.

Friendlessness during childhood may be a temporary situation. However, chronic or continuous friendlessness is an extremely unpleasant and lonely state (Parker & Seal, 1996). According to Parker and Seal, chronically friendless children are perceived by other children as shy, timid, preferring to play alone, not being able to take teasing, and easily angered. These children are perceived as saying more nonsensical things than other children and being less assertive during conflict. They were also reported as being less caring, honest, and less likely to share than other children. Their friendlessness and loneliness can make them easy targets for victimization from their peers.

In yet another examination of friendship formation, Berndt and Hoyle (1985) examined changes from fall to spring in the friendship involvement of boys and girls in the first, fourth, and eighth grade. Their study revealed the tendency of girls to replace friendships with children in other classrooms with friendships with classmates. This pattern is not the same behavior for boys. The temporal (i.e. formation, dissolution, renewal, and replacement) parameters of girls’ friendship involvement, unlike that of boys, are closely tied to the objective of limiting the overall size of their friendship network (Berndt & Hoyle, 1985; Parker & Seal, 1996). Results from this
study suggest that there is a pattern of behavior that may set boundaries on the number of girls that are involved in friendship formations.

Research has a void in the area of examining peer relationships among children in the primary grades (i.e. first through third grade students). Often, the younger age group was referenced in existing studies; however the studies were reported in terms of the children in the upper grades (Markovits et al., 2001; Parker & Seal, 1996). This void in the literature left individuals, such as myself, interested in working with younger children with limited resources as they considered the patterns of friendship formation of their sample. This dissertation added analysis of the friendship formation behavior patterns of the five young girls involved in my study to the literature.

**Gender and Education**

To examine the role and influences of education in the lives of females, one must first consider the dichotomy of education designed for those of privilege and that designed for those with lesser financial resources. Gender is but a layer in the larger field of inequality and education as it relates to race, class, and other differences. Finn (1999) lays out the inequalities of the structure of education through an examination of the end result. He talks of two kinds of education, one that empowers its students and one that seeks to domesticate them. “Empowering education”, experienced by the affluent of society, provides an education leading individuals to acquire positions of power and authority (p. ix). “Domesticating education”, experience by lower and working class members of society, yield individuals with a functional literacy that allows them to be productive and dependable, but not troublesome (p.x). It is an
educational system that proliferates on class and culture as it establishes the parameters of opportunity available to its recipients. Gender is yet another layer to be added.

Nature or nurture, are they separate entities, or an intertwined phenomenon that affect the manner in which children negotiate learning? This section of the review of literature examines the relationships that exist between and among children as learners. Gender equity in education has sought to establish equal educational opportunities for girls and boys. The question remains: just because females are equal to males, does that mean they are the same as males? Or, is there more variety within gender groups than differences between them? This review will examine; the history of gender issues in education, female identity in relation to learning, girls negotiation of the classroom, and gender equity in the curriculum.

Societal influences have affected the historical and legislative events that have come to shape education and the place in which students experience their schooling. Researchers have studied the cognitive ability, attitude, and cognitive behavior in females. The question of the boundaries between what is biological, what is socially constructed, and what is a combination of the two in the realm of gender and education vary depending on the interpretation of data by the researcher.

As was cited in the previous section of the review of the literature, when a group of children coexist in a school setting, much has been negotiated between and among them. Acceptance and rejection, consideration of the numbers of members in their group, and even what it might be like to be friendless is all part of a carefully thought out process. The importance of their relationships and social interaction is as
much a developmental process as it is a social one. Much research has come together to examine the formation of relationships among children and how they approach learning.

“Research on gender and education – whether it focuses on boys or girls – should ultimately benefit all students “(AAUW, 2001, p. vii). With the aforementioned statement as a guiding principle, the AAUW (2001) convened a symposium of scholars who studied both girls' and boys' experiences in and out of school to offers key insights about gender identity and difference, challenge popular views of girls' and boys' behavior, and explore the meaning of equitable education for the 21st century. One of the conclusions reached was that “the differences between boys and girls as groups are in many ways less dramatic and interesting than the differences among boys and girls and of course differences between individuals - within-group differences are greater than the between-group differences” (p.6). A second noteworthy conclusion was the fact that the interaction of gender, race, and ethnicity shaped girls and boys attitudes towards academic achievement (AAUW, 2001). In considering the literature reviewed in this section, I used the frame established by the AAUW as a guiding principle.

The History of Gender Issues in Education

“Too strong for a woman”, five words that kindled a process which led to the passage of Title IX (Sandler, 2000). In 1969, Bernice R. Sandler was passed over for a teaching position at the University of Maryland where she was a part-time instructor while getting her doctorate degree. Through her tenacious efforts, modeled in part
after the methods used by the pioneers of the Civil Rights movement, she convinced a nation to reconsider its position on the inclusion of women throughout K-12 and higher education. Sandler’s efforts spearheaded legislators and organizations to examine discrimination against women in the academic community in the areas of: admission quotas to undergraduate and graduate schools, financial assistance, hiring practice, promotions, and salary differentials. Their combined efforts lead to the passage of Title IX legislation that sought to end sexual discrimination in the realm of any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance as well as sports.

While Bernice Sandler’s actions brought legislation to the issue of gender equity, she was not the first woman to bring the issue to light. Feminists in the second decade of the 20th century envisioned a world where traditional gender distinctions would disappear as a result of truly identical coeducation. Henrietta Rodman, a feminist pioneer, believed that true coeducation would lead to a world in which women and men would have equal opportunity in all aspects of life (Tyack & Hansot, 1992). Crystal Eastman, an activist in the 1920’s, viewed the 19th Amendment granting women the vote as the beginning of women’s liberation. Women, as well as men, would earn their own living and stand on their own feet. Rodman and Eastman did not have many followers; however a half-century later, their vision of coeducation would be reborn.

During the decades between the 1930’s to the early 1960’s educators did not believe there was a serious problem of sex bias in coeducational classrooms.
Educational researchers and policy advocates usually focused on boys if they did
detect the gap between ideal and the reality of gender blind schooling.

In the 1960’s and 1970’s, feminists fought to reform coeducational schools. The unequal station and opportunities of women in the economic, political, and social life of the nation was became associated with the role schools played in the subordination of women. Schools perpetuated male dominance and female subordination, largely because boys and girls did not learn the same things in co-educational schools.

The task of the educational activists and the women's movement became convincing the nation of the disparate opportunities for females and males. The women's movement was a massive educational agency and intellectual forum. It sought to change minds through documenting gender discrimination; devising legal and political remedies; following up on implementation; and raising the consciousness of educators about bias in everyday activities which teachers took for granted.

Feminism was part of a broader social movement that swept the United States in the 1960’s. Women were seeking careers commensurate with their male counterparts, but found themselves blocked by males holding the jobs. Many educators regarded sex stereotyping as a non-issue in schools. “Institutional sexism”, sexism in public schools, was not nearly as visible as racism (Tyack & Hansot, 1992).

The work of the activists became exposing the school's hidden curriculum to convince educators and parents that sexual bias in the realm of education was a reality. Textbooks contained more male than female characters, generally with women
portrayed in sex-stereotyped roles. History books ignored, distorted, or trivialize the role of women. Teachers paid more attention to boys in classroom interactions. Counselors held sex stereotype ideas of all courses or careers appropriate for boys and girls. Sports activities reinforce images of boys as active, aggressive and girls as passive or seeking personal relationships rather than public activity. Girls start ahead of boys in academic performance, but by the end of high school boys have caught up or surpass the girls and subjects like math and science. Their educational experience taught them that men run things, because of the overwhelmingly high rates of male administration (Tyack & Hansot, 1992).

Women educated and socialized to find comfort and satisfaction in supporting roles, became the driving force behind identifying inequities in educational settings and locating equal opportunities.

Gilligan and Gurian

To examine the literature on gender and education, I return to the writings of Carol Gilligan (1993), a strong proponent of societal influence and gender difference. Gilligan wrote about her research concluding that girls’ points of view on relationships created differences in the manner in which they approach problems.

Carol Gilligan (1993) framed her work on the premise that theory can blind observation. She suggested development in women was masked by a particular conception of human relationships based on observations of men. Her research provided interpretation of girl’s thoughts in order to make it possible to see development where previously not discerned.
Gilligan’s influential writings were based on her conversations with girls and boys as they responded to the same simulated moral dilemmas. Her data revealed that males and females reacted and responded differently to like situations. To judge the actions of one gender against the other was of no value as one method was not superior to the other, simply divergent. An example of such divergence was seen when boys and girls responded to a situation which posed the question of making choices when responsibility to oneself and responsibility to others conflicted. Girls responded contextually rather than categorically. They proceeded from a premise of connection, seeking solutions most inclusive to everyone’s needs. Females viewed their responsibility as “doing what others are counting on them to do” (Gilligan, 1993). Boys constructed dilemmas as a mathematical equation; ¼ to others and ¾ to themselves. Males sought rules to limit interference and minimize hurt. Gilligan’s analysis and documentation of the differences in responses of younger females and males can be translated into the manner in which girls approached solving both academic and social problems.

Brain research has shown that during fetal development, when brain and nervous system are being organized, the female brain develops advanced of the male brain (Gurian, 1996). In males, the left half of the brain, which controls thinking, is developed later than the right, the part that controls spatial relationships. When the right side of the brain is ready to connect to with the left side, by sending over connecting nerve fibers in the male, the appropriate cells don't yet exist on the left portion of the brain. This results in extremely enriched connections within the right side of the male brain, yielding increased focus on spatial relationships and activity.
The female brain, which develops faster and in a more balanced manner than its male counterpart, draws on both sides of the brain at once (Gurian, 1996).

Gur, a researcher cited in the work of Gurian (1996), related the structural differences of the brain to the manner in which boys and girls use the left and right hemispheres of the brain. According to Gur, the female brain is at work in more sections than the male brain all of the time. He cites the male brain as intensely spatial, while the female brain is not. Due to its structure, the male brain is much less set up to be verbal than the female brain. Girls do better with verbal skills, because verbal skills originate in the left hemisphere. Boys come into their verbal skills up to a year later than girls and have three times more reading difficulties than girls. Boys test better in math because it is an abstract, spatial construct of the right hemisphere. These neurological differences might influence the manner in which a child negotiates an educational setting.

The literature is often ambiguous. Findings of differences between genders are much more often reported and published than findings of no difference. Discourse brings different meanings to what is sometimes similar behavior. In statistically-based research on gender differences, within-gender variation (the variation in a group of girls or a group of boys) was greater than the difference between boys and girls taken as groups. The behavior of children and their relationships with each other should be carefully considered in the actions of the child, not the gender of the child.
Girls’ Negotiation of the Classroom

While many researchers and authors focus on the compliance of girls in educational settings, Lyn Mikel Brown (1998) writes about girls who, irrespective of class, express a good deal of anger, annoyance, and frustration with school. Through interviews with groups of girls, Brown uncovered the truth that females often focus on teachers who they feel ignore them or attend to unruly students, especially boys who abuse their authority in the classroom. Girls, aware of their anger, made choices about whether or not to speak or act on their own behalf. They often chose silence because they had little evidence that speaking would change the situation. What they did have was ample evidence that speaking would invite trouble or unwanted attention. Given the opportunity for privacy, girls candidly expressed strong feelings about their educational experiences.

Additionally, Brown disclosed that the females in her research associated with the upper class described themselves as feeling invisible and their teachers as simply being taken in by the surface of things. The working-class girls expressed their anger in full view of their teacher. Both sets of girls report that how they present themselves to be is not who they feel they really are. They use anger as a source of knowledge and motivation. Anger becomes a tool for negotiation of their education.

Continuing along the lines of acknowledging the relationship between culture and negotiation of the classroom, a cohort of researchers, Research for Action (1996), conducted and presented data to determine how the needs of girls become visible and how schools can change to address the learning needs of all girls. They examined the behavioral strategies of adolescent girls who were described as “successful” in school.
“Successful” was defined by conventional indicators such as academic achievement measured by grades and test scores. The definition of success also included the perspectives of adults and peers in the school who identified girls achieving success in a range of ways: academically, athletically, creatively, and as school/peer leaders. Their work revealed the importance of context. The match between a girl’s own race/ethnicity and class and the dominant culture of her school made a particular strategy feel more available to some girls than to others.

Girls are engaged in a continuous cycle of action and reaction with their environment as they undertake the process of identity-making with conscious effort, pain, uncertainty, and creativity (Research for Action, 1996). Among their findings was that young adolescent girls were engaged in a developmental process, which left them with an emergent self that was new, fragile, and vulnerable to assault. No single negotiating approach benefited all girls in all settings. Females needed to shift strategies in order to help them cope with particular situations and learning environments.

Of additional value to the work presented in the Research for Action report (1996) were the recommendations for educators to assist girls in their negotiation of the classroom. Adults needed to notice the different ways that girls negotiated school through observation, questioning, and attending to the girls’ voices. Successful girls engaged in a complex, dynamic relationship that is neither linear nor completely cumulative. Females needed to develop a repertoire of strategies and behaviors that worked for them as individuals. Their teachers and surrounding adults needed to guide them in that process.
Gender Equity in the Curriculum

In an effort to achieve gender equity into the curriculum, educators must examine the building blocks of the educational experience. Course enrollment disparities, performance differences, and topics shortchanged or ignored are three topics in need of consideration for their impact on education.

One organization, the American Association of University Women (1998) reported data on the course taking patterns of adolescent boys and girls at the high school level. Overall enrollments are being seen as improving in some areas where they previously lagged. However, girls are less well represented in some higher-level courses in math, science, and computer science. Boys’ participation is lower in some of the humanities including English language, sociology, psychology, and the fine arts.

In mathematics, the gap in the average numbers of math courses taken appears to be diminishing but, gender differences remain in the kinds of courses taken. Girls are more likely than boys to end their high school math careers with Algebra II. The gender breakdown in the science courses finds the number of female high school graduates taking science classes on the rise. However, a higher proportion of males are more likely than females to have taken all three of the core science courses; biology, chemistry, and physics by graduation.

Computer application courses, such as those in computer-aided design and graphic arts attract very few girls. Females are likely to enroll in data entry classes, the 1990s version of typing.

Literacy denotes reading comprehension, English literature, spoken language, technological communication, and knowledge of written, spoken and visual text, as
well as knowledge of the process involved in creating, interpreting, and critiquing such texts. Girls outnumber boys in all English classes except remedial English. Boys, as a population, score lower than girls on verbal skills on most standardized tests. Hayes and Hopkins (1995) conducted a study of gender in literacy. They concluded that boys do not perform at girl’s levels in reading. There is a widespread cultural belief that language arts is a female domain. Girls are perceived as uniquely suited for language arts. This perception appears to intensify after the fourth grade and is more dramatic in the last years of high school.

In the social studies, more girls than boys tend to enroll in sociology and psychology. Foreign Language studies finds the percentages of students who took Spanish increased while the percentage of both male and female students who took French declined slightly. Female high school graduates are significantly more likely than male high school graduates to take French or Spanish language studies, music, drama, and dance. However, despite the fact that research links physical activity for girls to higher self-esteem, positive body image, and lifelong health, young girls are twice as likely to be inactive as young males.

Remedial and Special Education courses become the site for learning for non-white and non-affluent students, boys and girls alike. Tracking students into lower-level classes results in less actual learning for both boys and girls. Ratings of academic talents and skills are mediated by race, gender, and socioeconomic status.

At the other end of the spectrum, advanced placement, gifted, and honors program enrollment favors girls. Carolyn Read (in American Institute for Research, 1998) reports that despite the early identification of special talented girls, there is an
abrupt reversal of this pattern around tenth grade. In early elementary grades, girls are more likely to be identified for gifted and talented programs because they meet sex-role expectations. As girls reach adolescence, their focus shifts from being the good girl to fitting in, which often involves playing dumb, hiding their intelligence, and being quiet.

Another set of researchers, Sally Reese and M. Katherine Gavin (in American Institute for Research, 1998) present data that suggests that teachers stereotype their best students in the areas of mathematics, attributing characteristics such as volunteering answers, enjoying mathematics and working independently to males. Teachers rate females higher than males on the effort they put into schoolwork. American culture, however, often equates higher expenditure of effort with lower ability.

Overall, the American Association of University Women’s findings (1995) reveal that girls are closing the gap in math and science in the numbers of courses they are taking. There are still important differences in the specific courses taken. Girls are still more likely than boys to have their abilities overlooked in math and science. The organization makes several recommendations relative to the course-taking patterns of both genders. In part they purport that algebra one and geometry should be mandatory for all students; there should be an increase in the percentage of girls who take physics, biology, and chemistry; equalize enrollment in computer science technology; develop curriculum and incentives to encourage boys to enroll in fine arts, foreign language, advanced English electives, and AP languages and humanities; and
discourage tracking. They further recommend that state and federal data on participation in gifted and special education programs be disaggregated by sex.

In an answer to the concern about the lack of female interest in the field of computer science, Honey, Moeller, Brunner, Bennett, Clements, and Hawkins (1991) conducted research which speculated that the activity of design was a promising way to support alternative pathways for girls into the world of technology. They hypothesized that women viewed technological instruments as people connectors, communication, and collaboration devices. They also hypothesized that girls would consider technology when placed in a setting that was conducive to such thought.

The research findings of Honey et al. (1991) support Gilligan’s premise that girls and women approach, interpret, and understand various fact sets of life differently from men. The mainstream scientific community enterprise represents an attempt to dominate nature, penetrated secrets, and wrestle knowledge from it. This is counter to the ways in which women think about scientific enterprises. In the technological domain, girls have a more relational, artistic style. They identify with computation objects through a desire to play with them as though they were physical objects.

The computer program used in the study of Honey et al. (1991) forced girls to facilitate a process of mental and graphic tinkering. It led the researchers to speculate about a method which engaged girls in the field of computer technology. Girls needed to be provided with a well-defined and rigorous design curriculum that legitimimized the psychological experience of thinking of oneself as an inventor. This approach
legitimized and affirmed girls’ technological imagination and encouraged them to engage in computer science technology and design.

Statistical data compiled by the American Association of University Women (2000) revealed that teachers surveyed indicated they had not noticed gender bias in software developed for classrooms. However, software designed to appeal to girls contained more art activities. Girls’ focus groups talked about games that allow role-play, identity experiments, and simulations to work through real-life problems. This preference indicated an emphasis should be placed on making software that students are able to customize rather than attempt to develop a set of characters that are appropriate to all. Criteria should be developed that considered learning styles and students attitudes towards computers to ensure that software does not appeal to a narrow audience. Since female students were more willing to participate in computer activities when they remained anonymous, peer-anonymous discussions could open the world of computer technology to a more gender equitable population. Computer games, however, are not the only games that influence gender roles in children.

Glasberg, D., Maatita, F., Nangle, B., Schauer, T. (1998) conducted research to examine the roles that games children play, in this case board games, as agents of socialization. The authors of the study identified the main socialization agents of development of identity as family, peers, schools, media, work, and religion. Less acknowledged was the contribution children's toys and games played in representing and reinforcing dominant conceptions of appropriate social identities. The study suggested that there is a “hidden agenda” conveyed to students while they are presumably just having fun playing a variety of board games. Toys not only
entertained children, but taught them particular skills and encouraged them to explore, through play, a variety of roles they may one day occupy as adults. The games children played become part of the total socialization environment in which consistent themes and metaphors occur: “it seems reasonable to expect that, if boys and girls play with different kind of toys, these different experiences will, in conjunction with the rest of the socialization experience, contribute to the development of different cognitive and social skills” (Miller in Glasberg et al., 130).

Conversations with students about many aspects of the games played led researchers to conclude that playing pieces and board constructions often reinforced gendered stereotypes. Boys were dressed for activity and action while girls were more “dressed up”. Most often, boys lead the girls into the action of the game. Students depicted as class leaders were white males. Career aspirations for females often involved caring for others and beauty. When girls were depicted as leaders, there was an emphasized attachment to someone else as being desirable in helping in increasing status. The children are pink and blue in the board game, denoting their gender through stereotypical color identification. Girls used pink cards to instruct the players as to what truths they should tell or what they should carry out. Games reinforced the ways in which girls are frequently taught to act to support a particular image. Adults who assist children in selection of games and share “game time” with their children should be conscious of the hidden messages conveyed to children. Games are an integral part of the developmental years of children. The lessons learned should not reinforce stereotypical thought.
Relational Aggression and Bullying

School Climate

Although violence in schools is statistically on the decline, the number and severity of incidents of school violence, students bringing weapons to school and killing and injuring classmates and teachers, have increased. Educators have often responded to this crisis by installing metal detectors or more sophisticated surveillance cameras, hiring more resource officers, adopting and enforcing stricter harassment policies, and suspending and expelling more students. The situation, however, demands that educators in schools begin to identify the underlying causes of school violence and develop prevention programs that address the root problems. Such intervention options are intended to directly or indirectly affect the climate of a school.

School climate can be defined as the feelings that students and staff have about the school environment over a period of time (Peterson & Skiba, 2000). These feelings have to do with how comfortable each individual feels within the environment, whether that person perceives that the environment as safe, supportive of learning, and appropriately organized. The climate of a school, referred to by some researchers as the social ecological context (Atlas & Pepler, 1998), can affect peer relationships. Bullying behavior is an interaction that occurs between an individual bully and victim and unfolds within a social ecological context.

There are several prominent approaches to improving school climate. These approaches seek to address school violence or at least to minimize student behavioral conflicts. These include: bullying prevention, parent and community involvement, character education, violence prevention and conflict-resolution curricula, peer
mediation, and service learning.

Data compiled through research and surveys have identified the three components of a comprehensive approach to bullying prevention in schools as being; prevention, identification and intervention for students at risk for having difficulty, and effective responses once inappropriate behavior has occurred (Peterson & Skiba, 2001). All three components must be implemented simultaneously and effectively in a truly comprehensive approach.

Effective programs designed to prevent bullying replace; “disparagement with respect, exclusion with inclusion, and lonely isolation with collaborative community” (Kagan, 2001). Intervention options that are intended to prevent violence in schools, including bullying behaviors, cite the best way to prevent school violence is for the school community to practice; responsibility, fairness, tolerance, teamwork, understanding, and respect for different points of view. Positive school climate is experienced when students; learn to help one another, work in cooperative groups so the “us” and “them” become “we”, and belong to a classroom that is a respectful, inclusive community (Kessler, 2000). Classroom environments that acknowledge and invite students to share their voices and experiences help students break down stereotypes, improve discipline, increase academic motivation, and foster creativity.

National Data in Relation to Bullying

School shootings receive a lot of media attention, but they are just one symptom of a larger problem: the breakdown of community, mutual caring, and moral orientation. Other alarming and widespread symptoms (in Kagan, 2001):
- 90% of students felt being bullied caused social, emotional, or academic problems. (Studies show, both bullies & victims have problems later in life because of bullying).
- 69% of students believe schools respond poorly to reports of bullying.
- Three out of four students report that they have been bullied.
- Each month over 250,000 students report being physically attacked.
- In a national survey of 15,000 middle and high school students, 75% of boys and 60% of girls reported hitting someone out of anger in the last 12 months (Josephson Institute of Ethics, 2001).
- 1 in 15 students is threatened or injured with a weapon each school year (Snyder & Sickmund, 1999).
- More than 1 in 3 students report that they do not feel safe at school (Josephson Institute of Ethics, 2001).
- 160,000 students skip school each day because they fear bullies (Bowles, 2001).
- Two-thirds of all attackers felt persecuted, harassed, or bullied. Their motive for violence was to get revenge or simply to end the harassment. (Vossekuiil et al., 2000, p.7).
- In more than three-fourths of the incidents of extreme school violence, the attack was planned 2 or more days before the shooting (Vossekuiil et al., 2000).
- 37% of violent victimization of youth between 12 and 15 years of age occurred at school (Pereira & Rodriguez, 1997).
Bullying Behavior Defined

A student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed repeatedly and over time to negative actions on the part of one or more other students (Olweus, 1993). This definition of bullying specifies three components; negative actions, repeated over time, and carried out by a single individual or group. Negative actions denote the intentional infliction, or attempted infliction of injury or discomfort upon another. Olweus (1993) earliest work in the 1970’s did not fully recognize the extent of indirect bullying. Indirect bullying involves the manipulation of the social status of an individual within his or her own peer group by changing the way others perceive and respond to that individual (Atlas & Pepler, 1998). Girls were largely ignored in Olweus’ early bullying research as their behaviors did not equate with traditional view of bullying which was overt, direct, physically aggressive behaviors. The more subtle and less overt forms of negative, aggressive behavior were not adequately recognized, identified, or explored in Olweus’ early studies. Negative aggressive interactions that occur between girls reflect more subtle, invisible acts of aggression (Leckie, 1998).

In 1999, Olweus refined his definition, stating bullying as being characterized by the following three criteria; 1. intentional aggressive behavior, 2. carried out repeatedly, over time, 3. an interpersonal relationship characterized by an imbalance of power. In order to be termed as bullying, an imbalance in power, an asymmetric power relationship, must always occur. Not all aggression is bullying, but bullying is always aggression defined as hurtful and hostile behavior (Gengreau & Archer, in Berger, 2006). It is a systematic abuse of power. The presence of a power imbalance distinguishes bullying from other forms of aggression. The imbalance of power may
not be limited to physical size, but can be manifested in the tone of voice, physical
stance of the bully, the number of individuals engaged in bullying behavior, or support
of peers within the social context. The odd fight or quarrel between two young people
of the same strength is not considered bullying.

Modes of Attack

From his earliest writings, Olweus (1993) distinguished between direct
bullying as relatively open attacks on a victim and indirect bullying which manifests
itself in the forms of social isolation and intentional exclusion from a group. When
direct bullying is occurring, the victim witnesses the bully. Indirect bullying occurs
behind a person’s back making attacks easy, detection difficult, and self-defense
nearly impossible (Berger, 2006). Adults rarely intervene on indirect bullying because
of the insidiousness of the attacks. Teachers are more likely to address direct physical
bullying than indirect relational remarks even though the latter have been shown to be
more harmful over time (Bauman & Del Rio in Berger, 2006).

“It is easier to stop the physical because it’s visual, and if you come across it, if
you see one child stick his foot out, or see somebody hit somebody,…that’s very easy
to confront because it’s right there. The innuendo or slight – you have to be present,
and you have to be right on top of it.” (Simmons, 2002, p.227). It is the invisibility of
indirect bullying that makes it more difficult for adults and teachers to address. The
children, victims of the attacks, experience the pain. They need to experience a school
setting where the teacher establishes a classroom culture that understands the range of
aggression likely to occur, refuses to tolerate it, invites public and private discussions of the behaviors, and seeks solutions.

Gender and Age Differences in Bullying

Males are more often involved in physical forms of bullying, whereas, females are more often involved in indirect forms of bullying (Mouttapa, Valente, Gallagher, Rohrbach, & Unger, 2004). Girls are aggressive, but are more likely to use subtle and covert means (Leckie, 1998). Sixty-five percent of both boy and girl respondents responded that bullying typically involved physical abuse. Sixty-four percent of girls were more likely than fifty-four percent of boys and male and female teachers to invoke the notion that bullying involved verbal abuse. Girls are twice as likely as boys to assign blame when social exclusion is the root of the bullying behavior (Naylor, Cowie, deBettencourt, Lemme, 2006). Both male and female pupils and teachers define bullying in terms of the bully’s behavior. Girls were more likely to mention the effects of bullying on the target. Male students tend to focus on externalized or visible bullying whereas female students are more likely to consider the internalized or unseen effects of bullying on the target (Naylor et al., 2006).

Research indicates boys bully more than girls and that both sexes are cruel to those of the same sex more often than of the other sex (Ladd, 2005). Physical bullying declines with age while other forms increase. Data indicate sizable increase in the occurrence of bullying between the ages eight and 11 when children experience puberty and change schools. In general, most children avoid bullying, especially as their social and cognitive skills improve (Berger, 2006 & Naylor et al., 2006).
Forms of Bullying

The negative actions associated with bullying behavior can be carried out verbally, physically, socially, psychologically, or in cyberspace. Physical bullying manifests itself as hitting, kicking, beatings, and the like. It is obvious occurrence, easily recognized by adults and children of all ages. Verbal bullying is repeated derogatory remarks or name calling. It is more common than physical bullying, especially as children mature. Verbal attacks are directed at other children twice as often as physical aggression. Physical bullying decreased with maturation much more than verbal bullying (Berger, 2006). Relational bullying occurs when there is a disruption of the social relationship between victims and their peers. It becomes more prevalent and hurtful at puberty because children become more socially skilled and peer approval is paramount. Cyberbullying is bullying that occurs through electronic means.

An Expanded Look at Bullying Among Girls

“In the first weeks of third grade, Alisa had approached and asked to be best friends. Delighted, Chloe said yes. At the time, she told me ‘I didn’t have the most friends in the third grade, and I was making as many friends as I could.’ Chloe and Alisa played and spent recess together every day, chatting, playing jacks, trading stickers, and – their favorite- having upside down contests on the monkey bars.

Some months later, Chloe found out that Alisa had been making up lies about her and telling her secrets to the popular girls. Chloe said she felt ‘really bad.’ When you’ve trusted someone that way, it hurts a lot. Chloe was afraid to say anything about
it, she said, because ‘most of the friends I had came from her. If I lost her, I would lose
the rest.’” (Simmons, 2002, 169-170).

In friendship, girls share secrets to grow closer. Secrets can become social
currency when relational competitions transform them into gossip and rumors. This
example of indirect bullying allows the bully to control her victim by controlling her
version of events. It is not uncommon for girls to find themselves bullied by their best
or close friends (Simmons, 2002). Girls are generally socialized to avoid overt
physical behavior. To elude social disapproval, girls retreat beneath the surface of
sweetness to hurt each other in secret. When faced with conflict, it is common for two
people to use their language or their fists to settle their dispute. The relationship
between the people is secondary to the issue in dispute. When a female is unable to
voice her anger, and she has been socialized to avoid physical confrontation, the skills
to handle the conflict are absent; the specific problem cannot be addressed. When
there are no other tools to use in conflict, the relationship itself may become a weapon.
The prospect of solitude can become the most pointed weapon in the hidden culture of
girl’s aggression (Simmons, 2002).

Rachel Simmons (2002), in her examination of the hidden culture of
aggression in girls, further refines indirect bullying into three subcategories of
aggressive behavior: relational, indirect, and social aggression. Relational aggression
includes acts that “harm others through damage (or the threat of damage) to
relationships or feelings of acceptance, friendship, or group inclusion” (p.21).
Relationally aggressive behavior would include ignoring, exclusion, negative body
language or facial expressions, sabotaging relationships, or threatening to end a
relationship unless a friend agrees to request. The perpetrator uses her relationship with the victim as a weapon.

Indirect aggression allows the perpetrator to avoid confronting her target. Covert behavior is used to make it seem as though there was no intent to hurt at all. Social aggression is intended to damage self-esteem or social status within a group. It may include some indirect aggression like rumor spreading or social exclusion.

In the book, *Odd Girl Out*, Simmons (2002) uses real-life stories to illuminate the ways in which adolescent girls express anger. She looks to the work of Carol Gilligan, Lyn Mikel Brown, Peggy Orenstein, and Ann Campbell to inform her research and ground her work. Most girls can’t erase the natural impulses towards anger that every human being knows. Through Simmons’s writings on the girls’ interactions, the reader views the ways in which girls’ subtle, manipulative, and indirect use of language constitutes a social process which either binds friendships or rejects them.

“When I suggested to Natalie that she confront Rose, Natalie retorted, ‘When you talk to her, she’ll tell you a different story, and she’s going to have all of these explanations that make sense to you!’” For these girls, it feels easier to believe someone else’s story rather than their own. If they can know themselves as at fault and in need of forgiveness, they can continue to believe in the relationship rather than feel that they have been cast out of the circle of friendship” (p. 21).

Young children often act in a manner that resembles bully behavior. According to Berger (2006), physical aggression peaks at approximately age two. To be bullied, harmful actions are repeated and victims are defenseless, which is unlikely if normal
attacks are discouraged (Berger, 2006). Research confirms that parents and teachers discourage the emergence of physical and direct aggression in girls from very early on. Such behavior in boys is either encouraged or shrugged off. By the time they are of school age, peers enter the playgrounds creating social groups that value niceness in girls and toughness in boys (Simmons, 2002). Girls spend their childhood practicing caretaking and nurturing. They develop friendships where they discover intimacy and human connection. Socialized away from aggression, expected to be nice girls who have "perfect relationships," many girls are unprepared to negotiate conflict. As a result, a minor agreement can call an entire relationship into question.

Effects of Bullying

Although often overlooked in schools, a large number of students report having been bullied. In the United States, 20% of all students are bullied. Most bullying is reported as having taken place in areas with little or no adult supervision, such as hallways and playgrounds. It is entirely possible that neither peers nor teachers are aware of all bullying going on in their classes. This conclusion is reflected by the finding that the number of students who were nominated as victims by peers or teachers was lower in all grades than the number of children who report themselves as being victimized (Salmivalli, 2002).

Researchers have developed a personality framework to understand how bullying occurs (Craig & Pepler in Beran & Shapiro, 2005). Students target peers who have difficulty coping with aggressive overtures. Targeted children may lack coping
and problem-solving strategies that increase the likelihood of another attack and lead
to long-term negative developmental outcomes.

Bullying has serious consequences for the perpetrators, victims, and the school. The victims report feelings of vengefulness, anger, and self-pity after an incident (Borg, 1998). Depression, passivity and shyness have been identified as individual characteristics of children who are bullied (Beran & Shapiro, 2005). According to a meta-analysis conducted by Hawker and Bolton (2000), children who are bullied are likely to feel lonely and depressed, and have low self-esteem.

A victim is someone who is defenseless and repeatedly suffers, not someone who is occasionally hurt. Almost every child is hurt on occasion; most will shrug off insults, reciprocate, or find protective friends or tactics. Victims generally are considered as passive victims who are defenseless and submissive, turning their anger inward, developing internalized problems (Prinstein, Cheah, & Guyer, in Berger, 2006) or bully-victims who attack other children as well as being attacked by them. Bully-victims express their aggression outwardly either proactively or reactively (Dodge & Coie, Salmivalli & Nieminen; Vitaro & Brendgen in Berger, 2006). Unlike socially competent bullies who switch to less direct, and less physical modes as they mature, bully-victims stay with physical aggression, both as perpetrators and as targets, throughout childhood.

Students who engage in bullying and other aggressive behaviors during their school years very often continue their behavior well after adolescence. Children who bully others also exhibit negative characteristics such as high levels of anger and depression, and are at risk for engaging in criminal behavior as adults (Olweus 1993;
Slee, in Beran & Shapiro, 2005). Although aggressive young children are often rejected, early adolescent bullies may be respected, feared, and even liked (Estell, Cairns, Farmer, & Cairns in Berger, 2006). They may enjoy “high social status” with friends who encourage them as onlookers at a fight and peers who pass on rumors of their exploits (Boulton, 1999; Juvonen, Graham, & Schuster, 2003). Bullies pick on targets that are rejected and whom they can bully with impunity. They value aggression as a means of obtaining a goal and may rely on this tactic more often than non-aggressors because experience has proven it to be successful (Veenstra, R., Lindenberg, S., Zijlstra, B., Winter, A., Verhulst, F., Ormel, J., 2007).

Bullying and victimization are thought to be reciprocal not opposing behaviors. They are social interactions supported by the social context. Bullies do not act alone; they seek victims and an audience (Saunders in Berger, 2006). The audience, more commonly identified in the literature as the bystander, remains uninvolved in the actions of the bully, although their behavior as an observer is rarely neutral. Smith (in Berger, 2006) identifies bullying as a social interaction, part of peer culture. The strategy of turning bystanders into defenders is an effort that seems successful prior to puberty. Schools that report high levels of bullying in classrooms also demonstrate a high level of students reporting feeling unsafe and less than satisfied with their school life (Olweus & Limber, 1999).

Responses to Bullying

In school settings, bullying is often tolerated and ignored. Craig and Pepler (1997) estimate that teachers rarely detect bullying and only intervene in four percent
of all incidents. Once beyond staff supervision, there is a higher level of bullying activity (Glover, Gough, & Cartwright, 2008). It is also reported that students tend to believe that bullied students are at least partly to blame for their victimization, that bullying makes the victim tougher, and that teasing is simply done for fun (Oliver, Hoover, & Hazler, 1997).

Effective bullying prevention programs consist of a number of components designed to reduce and prevent bullying problems. They consist of two key prerequisites, awareness and adult intervention. To create a school climate that discourages bullying, school staff and parents must become aware of the extent to which bully-victim problems exist in their schools. In addition, effective prevention also requires a commitment on the part of all adults to eliminate or reduce bullying. The overall effectiveness of programs designed to break the cycle of bullying within the school is only as effective as the degree of staff supervision which enables pupils to report incidents and to be supported.

For the most part, programs are a whole school effort designed to send a message that bullying will not be accepted in the school. They are designed to create an overall climate that educates student to recognize instances of bullying. Through increased supervision, classroom rules against bullying, positive and negative consequences for following and violating rules, and serious talks with bullies and victims, bullying prevention programs strive to develop a school environment where the message is clear that such behavior is not acceptable and will not be tolerated.
Involving Students in the Resolution

There is an extensive research base that bullying prevention programs can reduce, eliminate, and prevent bullying-victim problems as well as improve overall school climate significantly (Peterson & Skiba, 2000). Students, as the perpetrators and victims of the bullying behaviors, hold the key to the entire baseline data needed in developing an effective prevention program. Several studies have solicited information from students prior to making recommendations relative to the creation and implementation of bullying prevention policies and programming (Beran & Shapiro; 2005; Berger, 2006; Boulton, 1999; Glover et al., 2008; Ma & Heubner, 2008; Salmivalli, 2002; Veenestra et al., 2007).

The main focus of involving students in anti-bullying policies has been to encourage pupils to report the incident to someone in authority so that action can be taken to suppress antisocial behavior. Of students interviewed, their immediate response is to stand up to the aggressor (54%) followed by telling somebody (37%). Response styles vary according to gender, with boys more ready to respond with aggression and girls more ready to tell a member of the staff. Sixteen percent of the students would suffer and remain quiet about the incident and 24% would simply avoid the location where trouble occurs (Glover et al., 2008).

Teachers are perceived by students to be more likely to intervene in resolving physical bullying or property loss than incidents of verbal bullying. Fifty-seven percent of pupils believe their teachers understand them and that they would always help in a difficult situation. When queried about their interpretation of effective interventions, 50% of students interviewed spoke of the importance of teachers talking
and watching. Others noted the need for frequent reminders of policy. Eighteen percent identified the inclusion of a variety of extramural activities to foster social cohesion. Once again there were gender differences, with girls favoring counseling and anti-bullying policies and boys favoring greater dependence on sanctions (Glover et al., 2008).

It is critical, that developers of anti-bullying problems programs be aware of students’ understanding and perceptions of bullying before implementing programs. Self-report and peer-nomination is often chosen as a viable method of data collection (Berger, 2006). This information should guide the development of the program. Program developers can use the data to clarify the type of behavior and its context that is the focus for intervention. Although not sufficient alone, a skills training approach is often included as one component of a school wide anti-bullying program. Simply providing information about bullying behavior may not be sufficient to increase student's abilities to deal with it.

Information and skill building programs may be more beneficial for bystanders than for victimized children who may need more direct support. For victims to gain courage and confidence to manage bullying, they need ongoing monitoring and active support from teachers and students when the bullying actually occurs rather than simply talking about bullying (Beran & Shapiro, 2005). Teachers and adults should be aware that pupils, depending on the age and gender, will probably have less sophisticated definitions of bullying from their own and may not always realize that they are being bullied. Adults working with child targets of bullying should listen not
only to the child's allegations of the bully's behavior but also to the effects it has on the child.

**Considering the Context**

Through the examination of several intervention programs, overarching conclusions can be drawn. Historical, social, and cultural factors impact significantly on the understanding and awareness of the issue of school bullying. Intervention programs should be contextualized and not simply replicated from one school to another (Slee & Mohya, 2007). Bullying is a social interaction, part of peer culture. The students experience the problem and should be an integral part of the resolution, honoring their expertise as the purveyors of primary source data.

The challenges of detecting bullying in the school environment suggest that raising teachers’ awareness about bullying is an important component in soliciting their assistance in interventions of bullying interactions. Research supports the notion that classroom structure provides the opportunity for individual children to engage in bullying behavior. Students are influenced by their teacher’s instructional and management style (Mooj, 1993, in Atlas and Pepler, 1998). Teachers need to develop knowledge of the complexity of the problem of bullying in order to identify its occurrence. This would enable the teacher to be more vigilant and responsive to incidents of bullying which, in turn, might give students more confidence to approach their teachers for assistance when bullying occurs.

If students hold the key to much of the information of incidents relative to bullying, school leaders must provide them with the opportunity to unlock the
solution. This will allow them to open themselves up to establishing healthy relationships with their peers. A proactive stance which looks at the underlying roots of bullying and provides children the tools to effectively communicate and relate instead of manipulate is vital to establishing a school climate conducive to learning and reduced occurrences of bullying.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

The basis for the work of my study was qualitative in nature. As such, I sought to understand not only the existence of a pattern or patterns to the relationships among second grade females, but more importantly to examine the topic from the perspective of the participants in the context of an educational setting. What were the girls doing? What were these girls thinking? Was there a pattern to their thinking?

My interest in examining the behavior patterns of young girls evolved as a result of a change in school assignments. I had taught for many years at a middle school as an inclusion resource teacher for the sixth and eighth grade and then as a sixth grade teacher on a middle school team. While I was teaching sixth grade, I became interested in the writing and work of Jonathan Cohen (2001) and Maurice Elias (2010) around student voice and the tenets of social-emotional literacy. Both men profess the value of student engagement and the creation of a school culture and climate where students have a forum to express their views and feel listened to and understood. I brought their research into the daily practices of my classroom and found my students willing to take risks that broadened their knowledge and strengthened their ability to express their needs. They were empowered and involved in the success of their learning and our classroom community.

Another aspect of my time at the middle level was as an advisor to a “Peer Leadership Council”. The drama/dance teacher (my co-advisor) and I brought together
a group of sixth through eighth grade students from a cross-section of the school population charged with becoming knowledgeable about the various aspects of bullying and bringing that knowledge to their peers. They were on the ground level bringing what the research had to say about bullying (Olweus, 1993; Orenstein 1994, Simmons, 2001; Simmons, 2004) to fit the needs of their school. While our work never was analyzed in a formal manner, students were witnessed using their newly acquired information to develop viable strategies to interrupt the cycle of bullying when they experienced it or witnessed it. The members of the Peer Leadership Council were invested in the success of their program because they had ownership of how their knowledge was going to be delivered to their peers. I learned much from the students.

When I left the middle school, I naively thought I was leaving the bullying behind. I was moving to an elementary school as a curriculum specialist. Maybe it would occur in the upper grades, but certainly not in the younger grades. I turned this expectation into a curiosity about how the younger girls engaged each other in friendships. When I turned to the literature as a means of satisfying my curiosity, I found it lacking. My insatiable desire turned into a topic for this dissertation. Now, all I needed was a frame through which to gather and analyze data. I employed grounded theory as my principle methodology. I was not a strict grounded theorist as I also ventured into the territory of critical ethnography in my data analysis.

Grounded theory, a qualitative methodology, is used when a qualitative researcher wants to concentrate on a general social process that appears in one social setting (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). Grounded theory is inductively generated from fieldwork. It is the systematic generation of theory from systematic research. Theory
emerges from the researcher’s observations and interviews in the real world rather than in a laboratory (Patton, 2002). Grounded theory focuses on the process of generating theory rather than theoretical content. It emphasizes steps and procedures for connecting induction and deduction through the constant comparative method, comparing research sites, theoretical sampling, and testing emergent concepts with additional fieldwork (Patton, 2002). Grounded theory methodology fit my research topic; I was studying the social process of friendship formation in the social setting of a school. I did not want to quantify the behaviors of Annie, Ruth, Judy, Molly, and Karen (pseudonyms given to the girls for purposes of this dissertation), but rather use a constant comparative method of inductive reasoning and deductive reasoning to generate theory surrounding their friendship formation behavior.

Glaser (2004) emphasized that all research conducted using grounded theory methodology must follow the stages of the process in order to generate a conceptual theory that accounts for the “patterns of relevant behavior”. Stages are generally sequential, but once the research process begins they are often conducted simultaneously, as the particular research requires. The stages, as outlined in the seminal text on grounded theory *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) are: preparation, data collection, analysis, memoing, sorting and theoretical outline, and writing. As a grounded theorist, I found moving through the stages of the methodology in a sequential manner to be nearly impossible. I was only able to maintain a sequential movement through the stages of the methodology when I was making preparations to do my work and early on into the data collection. After the third observation, I began the simultaneous
inclusion of data collection, analysis, memoing, and sorting. As I compiled data within the site, I repeated the mantra, “what do you see, what do you hear?” It was not until I left the setting that I was able to memo my reasoning as an additional layer to the data. As I applied the memos to the raw data, I began to analyze and look for patterns: returning to and rereading what I had observed on previous sessions.

Induction leading to deduction definitely occurred when I was finally able to articulate a nagging feeling. The girls spent a good portion of their day being directed by an adult or expected to conform within an imposed structure. I wondered how they ever had the time to develop friendships. I began to consider the impact of the institutional structures on the friendship formations of the girls. Considering my data through this lens led to my theory that there were the limitations placed on the friendship formations of girls by the institutional structure.

Throughout all of the stages of data analysis, I returned to the existing literature to inform my thinking. I was able to articulate the themes of 1. Institutional limitations, 2. Deliberateness of the behaviors of the girls during their formation of friendship, and 3. Inclusive and exclusive behavior patterns by referring to the writings of the researchers identified in the literature review. I employed a constant comparative method of looking at every day’s observations in comparison to those that had occurred on previous visits to the school. I would then, again, refer to the literature to ascertain how a fellow researcher organized their data or presented their findings. Glaser (1967) recommended returning to the literature once a theory has emerged from the data. I reread many pieces of literature and research studies as I was analyzing my data. I looked to the writings of Thorne (1993) and Brown and Gilligan.
(1992) to consider my data from their reference points. Were their similar or divergent behaviors being exhibited by my sample in reference to theirs. I also looked to the writings of authors that described the communities of schools as a framework for delivery of instruction. Such authors as Kessler (2000), Meier (1991), Kagan (2001), and Kohn (1996) presented strong evidence as to the power of weaving the tenets of social-emotional literacy and community into the fabric of a school. The works of these authors reminded me of why some of the competitive, controlling manners of behavior management I was witnessing at Lakeville Elementary School might foster the behaviors the girls were exhibiting in their efforts to access time and communication with each other.

**Description of the Setting**

Lakeville Elementary School (a pseudonym given to the research site for the purposes of this dissertation) was a public school in a small town in a northeastern state. Lakeville Elementary School was one of five schools in the school district that consisted of three elementary schools, one middle school and one high school. The elementary school I chose as the research site contained grades two through five, with a total enrollment of 361 students and a teaching staff of 32 teachers. There were four second grade classes at Lakeville Elementary School. The specific group of second grade students I chose as the research sample was determined by the specific interest in the research topic expressed by Mrs. Z (the pseudonym given to the classroom teacher for the purposes of this dissertation) and her willingness to participate in the study.
Analysis of the demographic data of the research site reveal 91% of the students in the school were white, 4% Hispanic, 3% African American, and 1% Asian. This elementary school with a predominantly white student population had a reported 93% stability rate, with an 8% mobility rate. Lakeville Elementary School was a targeted assistance school, receiving federally subsidized Title I programming with 46% of the children in the school eligible for subsidized lunch, a figure exceeding the statewide percentage. Within the student population of the school, 16% received Special Education Services and 1% received ESL or Bilingual Education Services. Overall, the research site had a predominately white student population where almost one-half of the students were below the poverty level. All of the students attending the school had access to receive Title I services if determined eligible based on their academic achievement, Special Education services if determined through testing, and ESL/Bilingual Education services if English was not their primary language. Based on the formula developed by the Department of Education of the northeastern state, Lakeville Elementary school met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for the 2009-2010 academic year.

**Preparation for the study**

In preparation for my research, it was critical for me to minimize preconceptions. In qualitative research, the problem and core variables must emerge through the data. A general research topic was established, but no predetermined research “problem”, no *a priori* data or theory, was developed.
The collection procedures were approved by Rhode Island College’s Institutional Review Board and included an informed consent and informed assent procedure. Permission to observe students, interview students, and record conversations was obtained through the informed consent process. I also met individually with each student whose family had granted consent and shared an IRB approved assent statement to gain the approval of the student prior to their inclusion in the study sample.

I was familiar with a portion of the students and faculty of Lakeville Elementary School due to previous consulting work I had completed in the school district. I arranged an informational meeting with Mr. Smyth (a pseudonym for the principal of the school for the purposes of this dissertation) to discuss my research proposal and gain his support to move forward with scheduling a formal meeting with the Superintendent of Schools to obtain his consent to conduct my research. Dr. Ponella (a pseudonym for the Superintendent of Schools for the purposes of this dissertation) was supportive of my proposal. His support allowed me to return to Lakeville Elementary School and reaffirm Mr. Smyth’s approval through obtaining his signature on a letter of approval of the site. I then made arrangements for an informational meeting with the four teachers of the second grade. Mrs. Z expressed strong support of my dissertation proposal topic. I chose her specific classroom because of her support and the equal combination of boys and girls assigned to her as a teacher. At this point in my preparation to begin my research, accessibility to the specific second grade sample was granted by the Superintendent of Schools for the district, the principal of the school, and the second grade teacher.
Moving forward, the families of each of the students in the second grade classroom received informed consent documents (see Appendix I). The informed consent forms were transported home by the students in the classroom via their homework folders. I arrived at this process of securing informed consent after discussion with Mrs. Z about her most successful method of having signed forms returned from families. The consent document outlined the purpose of the study, the methods of data collection, protection of the identity of the students, and my intention to keep the findings confidential from the school personnel. Signed consent was secured from thirteen families of children in the second grade classroom under study. One family declined their child’s participation. Eight families did not respond to the request for participation in the study.

I met individually with each of the thirteen children whose family had granted consent. During the meeting, I read the second grade child the IRB approved assent paragraph (see Appendix II), discussed what it meant in terms of their participation, and gained their permission to become part of the study sample. All thirteen children granted approval to participate in the program.

The children from the nine families either rejecting their participation in the study or not responding to the request were not part of the observation or interview phase. Having met individually with the children who were members of the study sample to gain their assent, I was also able to identify the children in the classroom who were not members of the group through a process of elimination. In my beginning observations, I also had the assistance of name tags on all of the children’s desks to refresh my memory of the identity of the study participants. As with all of the work I
have done in classrooms over the years, I challenged myself to learn the names and faces of all of the children within two visits to the site. I kept a seating chart in my notes with the desk locations of the students who were part of the study. I included little side notes of the physical features of the participants in my raw data; “glasses”, “braids”, “blue shirt with rock star on it”, and “pj bottoms” littered the pages. I quickly became able to following and note the motions and voices of the members of the study and ignore the actions of the other nine children.

My data collection occurred entirely at Lakeville Elementary School. While my time spent in the setting provided rich, robust data from which to develop theory, I omitted a layer of data by not expanding my interview and observations to settings outside of the school environment. I did not witness the behaviors of the girls in their homes or recreational settings. Nor did I interview their parents or siblings to solicit their perspective of Judy, Ruth, Annie, Molly, or Karen. The dynamic of their culture and class was not represented in my data collection or analysis. How these influences affected their friendship formations was not addressed in this study.

Data Collection

Table 1 is a graphic framework and compilation of the dates and frequency of visits to Lakeville Elementary School discussed in this chapter. Included are data indicating the locations visited within the school and the data collection method.
Table 1: Framework for Access to Data Collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Classroom</th>
<th>Hallway</th>
<th>Playground</th>
<th>Cafeteria</th>
<th>Multipurpose Room</th>
<th>Before School</th>
<th>Morning</th>
<th>Afternoon</th>
<th>Lunch in Cafeteria</th>
<th>Lunch with Group</th>
<th>Type of Activity</th>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>Conversation</th>
<th>Interview</th>
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<td>Before School</td>
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<td>Before School</td>
<td>w/superintendent</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Afternoon</td>
<td>w/second grade teachers</td>
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<td>10/5</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Afternoon</td>
<td>Parent consent forms sent home</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Afternoon</td>
<td>Assent statement w/students of parental consent</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/12</td>
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<td>Afternoon</td>
<td>Assent statement w/students of parental consent</td>
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Data Collection: Observation

My data collection involved gathering “slices of data” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.65). When using the methodology of grounded theory, the most common form of data collection is participant observation often combined with intensive interviews. Each slice of data gave me different views or vantage points from which to understand a category and develop its properties. Theoretical sampling, a term coined by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in 1967, was used in the context of my social research. Theoretical sampling was the process of choosing new research sites or research cases to compare with one that has already been studied. Initial analysis aided me in determining where to go and what to examine in subsequent data collection. Analysis and data collection continually informed one another.

Lakeville Elementary School provided the setting for all data gathered. While I had already spoken to the children who were members of the sample set, I wanted to gather my preliminary impressions through observations of their interactions throughout the school setting at different points of the day. Documentation of the girls’ personal interactions and activities were recorded through transcribing raw notes of what was done and said by the girls. Throughout the three months of the observational phase, I looked for patterns and themes of the children's actions and behaviors throughout their school day. Five girls Molly, Karen, Judy, Annie, and Ruth, became the second grade girls of interest in my observations. I began to formulate hypothesis about their relationships and wanted to test my emerging theory through more focused observation and eventually interviews. I recorded the personal interactions and activities of the five second grade girls through written
documentation. Observational data were gathered on the playground, in the
lunchroom, in the hallway, during an assembly, and in the classroom.

Participant observation, key to qualitative research, was conducted as a vehicle
to gather data for analysis. As a participant observer, I entered the girls’ school
environment, began to establish a trusting relationship, and systematically keep a
written record of their conversations and interactions. Maintaining the delicate balance
as an observer and a participant was achieved as I developed focus (Bogdan & Biklen,
1982). Molly, Judy, Ruth, Karen, and Annie went from one of many in the research
setting of Lakeville Elementary School, to the five girls of interest to me. Recorded
data indicated the frequency of their time together as indicative of potential
friendships. Observational data revealed the emergence of two dyads, Karen and Judy
along with Ruth and Annie. This was particularly so when the girls were given choice
as to their partners or mates during a designated period of time such as lunch, recess,
walking to and from activities in the hallway, before school in the multipurpose room,
or during unstructured time in the classroom. Molly became of interest as she moved
in and out of groups of children, including the Karen/Judy and Ruth/Annie dyads. I
revisited observational data constantly examining for emerging patterns of behavior. I
reentered Lakeville Elementary School each time with a keen sense of sight and
hearing and a new set of questions to explore my hypotheses.

Analysis and Memoing

I arrived at the decision to hone the original thirteen participants of the study to
focus on Molly, Annie, Ruth, Karen, and Judy through a deliberate process employed
by researchers of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). My data analysis occurred in an inductive manner, beginning with specific observations and building toward general patterns (Patton, 2002). I analyzed my data through a constant competitive method whereby data were continuously related to ideas and then to other ideas. It was the reexamination of the observational behavior patterns of Karen and Judy that led me to posit their relationship. Observational data of their interactions within the school day evidenced the frequency of them being together as a dyad whenever given the opportunity. Judy, a youngster with peanut allergies, ate her lunch at a lunch table set aside exclusively for children with nut allergies. She was able to invite someone to join her for lunch. She was always observed eating lunch with Karen, her choice as a lunch mate. Confirmation from a teacher assistant supervising the cafeteria validated the fact Judy was the child required to eat at the separate lunch table and Karen was her choice to share the time. The pattern of their interactions in the lunchroom, at recess, and in the classroom led me to the conclusion they might possess valuable data concerning second grade female friendships.

Annie and Ruth were the second dyad of consideration for data collection. They, too, highlighted themselves for inclusion by analysis of the patterns of their interactions. Data began to indicate they were frequently together at recess and unstructured classroom times. They were the first pair of the five girls to acknowledge my presence in their environment. I witnessed Annie and Ruth spending time together on a consistent basis, so I was willing to consider the pattern of their proximity as a starting point for more focused data collection. They were spending time together
without being asked to do so by anyone else. It was their free choice. Friendship? Maybe.

Molly was what I came to identify as my “floater”. She floated within and among various groups of second grade girls and boys. Her ability to move among the girls of the second grade intrigued me. Observational data placed her in the company of Annie, Ruth, Karen, and Judy. I wondered what she had to say about friendships and relationships, if anything.

Previous studies examining children’s interactions often used a coding of behaviors based on predetermined, hypothesized categories (Ladd, Price, & Hart, 1988; Mouttapa, Valente, Gallagher, Rohrbach, and Unger, 2004). My intention was to ground categories of behavior in the patterns that emerged throughout the observation periods. Entering Lakeville Elementary School without a predetermined observational checklist was consistent with the methodology of grounded theory. Employing this methodology required that I recorded detailed notes of the occurring interactions during the periods of observation. I moved throughout the setting, positioning myself in close proximity to the second grade girls, taking written notes of what they did and to a lesser degree, what they said. I embraced the role of participant observer by joining them at their tables in the lunch room, joining them in activities on the playground, acknowledging their smiles and offerings of conversation, and interacting with them in their academic endeavors. My efforts were to both collect data and establish a rapport of trust with the five girls.

Consistent with the memoing stage of grounded theory, I entered a record of my impressions aside the raw data after each observation. This interpretive process of
memoing (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) was an extremely important aspect of grounded theory. Memos are the theorizing write-up of ideas about codes and their relationships. Data collection, analysis and memoing are ongoing, and overlap. I wrote memos after all visits into Lakeville Elementary School to provide focus while the information, ideas, and impressions were still fresh in my mind. Most of the time I sat in the parking lot after I had left the school and wrote my impressions or recorded them at the end of an interview tape. I even found myself coming home and keeping a diary of my thoughts that I entered into a computer journal through a voice activated dictation system, Dragon Naturally Speaking 11.5.

Analytical review of my data combined with memoing led me to recognize there were patterns in the behaviors of Annie, Molly, Ruth, Judy, and Karen. They tried to sit near each other when they were asked by Mrs. Z to come to the rug in the classroom during group instruction. They were together in the lunchroom and at recess. Molly was forever cleaning up in the lunchroom and earning Horseshoe Tickets for her class. The memos provided the questions I considered as I reentered the setting during future visits. Was any of these data important to the friendship formation of second grade girls? I invested in a set of colored markers to track the movements of the participants in the initial stages of my memoing. Molly became the “floater”, circled in orange ink with arrows indicating with whom I had observer her on any given day. As I started to circle Annie at recess or in the lunchroom, I noticed the markings around her name quite often converging with Ruth’s. The same overlapping occurred with Karen and Judy. The patterns were a visual offering as well as an intellectual consideration. I found memoing instrumental in assisting me to
transform observational raw data into the patterns of behavior of the students.
Emergent categories proved to be the most relevant and the best fitted to the data, as was described in the writings of Glaser and Strauss (1967).

Through an inductive analysis of data, I began to develop theory through the interconnection of disparate pieces of evidence (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Vital to the research was discovering how the girls made meaning of their relationships. I was anxious to explore my theory that Annie and Ruth had a friendship and what exactly the term friend meant to them. I saw Judy and Karen eating lunch together each day, but what did this arrangement mean? Observational data lead me to consider them as friends. Was my thought accurate, and what did friendship mean to these two girls? Was there a pattern between the four girls in terms of friendships, or was it different for the four girls? What could Molly add to the discussion? I saw her as moving in and out of the groups of children. She was the teacher’s helper, the playground supervisor’s informer, the one whose individual actions were always completed within the view of an adult. She spent time by herself, but also interacted with Judy, Karen, Ruth, and Annie when she was placed in their company. I moved forward to add another slice to the data; interviews with Molly, Annie, Karen, Ruth, and Judy.

Data Collection: Interviewing

Throughout the observational phase of data collection, I was constantly comparing data through memoing and analysis. Those data led me to formulate emerging hypotheses about what was happening in the social context for the girls. I then moved into the second phase of the research; interviewing the girls to assess the
validity of my thinking. The interview protocol was a vehicle to uncover the second grade girls’ thinking processes from their perspective. It brought their voice to the data collection and clarity to my postulating.

Previous researchers have used sociometric tools to collect data after observation (Ladd, 1990; Ladd, Price, & Hart, 1988; Markovits et al., 2001; Parker & Seal, 1996). A predetermined set of questions was the vehicle of data collection. In this study, the interview questions were developed as patterns in Judy, Karen, Molly, Annie, and Ruth’s behavior with peers emerged. I was constantly seeking to test my hypotheses about the relationships of the second grade girls through open ended as well as more in-depth questioning techniques. Through the use of open-ended questions, questions designed to probe into the girls’ thought behind observable actions, and responses to hypothetical situations, it was my desire to uncover the motivation and thinking processes involved in the peer relationships of the second grade girls. Bogden & Biklen (1982) suggest the use of open-ended questioning techniques as a tenet of qualitative research to allow the informants to respond from their own frame of reference rather than that of the interviewer. Data derived from the conversations with Annie, Judy, Ruth, Karen, and Molly were analyzed to develop theory of the actions of the girls surrounding the formation of friendships. It should be noted I did not shift from solely observing the second grade girls to talking with them, but transitioned to a place where the interviews were a portion of the days I spent at Lakeville Elementary School. Both conversations and observation occurred during my visits to the school. I continued to look for observable data supporting emerging theory.
I began having conversations with all five of the girls when I was observing them during the day. I would comment on the situation we found ourselves in as an open ended question rather than during a pre-arranged interview session. Interview sessions were held at pre-determined times during the various days of the week so as to not interfere with any instructional time. Most often, I found myself together in conversation with combinations of the girls during their lunch time. Sometimes we would eat in their classroom and at other times we would use a shared space on the third floor which the principal identified as a free space during the lunch periods. Both settings provided a suitable, private space. Often times, children were invited to share lunch with the adults in the building in a small group setting. We were no different; a group of students and an adult enjoying a noon time meal in conversation. Molly, Karen, Ruth, Annie, and Judy were sometimes specifically invited by me to share lunch, or sometimes invited in small groups to come together. We ranged in size from me with two girls to me with four girls. We were never all together during the same lunch period, nor did I ever interview any of the girls alone. I always invited whatever girl I wanted to interview to lunch and gave her the option of inviting any other of the girls in the group to join us. In doing this, I felt I was able to both listen to the voices of the girls and observe their interactions on a smaller scale than the larger venues of the classroom, lunch room, or at recess.

As noted above, along with Molly, Karen, Annie, Ruth, and Judy, the interviews conducted in this study occurred strictly with the members of Lakeville Elementary School community and district administration. I did not branch out to include members of the girls’ families or friends they might have referred to during
data collection. The context of the school setting was the only mitigating factor during the analysis of the data. The class or culture factors available through a more extensive observation and interview process were not presented in this study.

The school playground at Lakeville Elementary School had three picnic tables as part of its design. There was also a huge playing field, used by the older students for recess, across the street from the school. Either venue was an option for Ruth, Annie, Judy, Molly, Karen, and I as an outside lunch spot. Weather permitting; I gave the girls the option to meet outside or inside when we talked. Other than two occasions when lunch was not part of the time spent together, the girls decided that they really would like to eat inside so that “we can talk without interruption”. Regardless of their choice, I always acknowledged the girls’ selection by replying, “okay, that works for me”. Once our venue was established the conversation flowed.

Interview sessions were audio recorded so as to increase the likelihood of accurate transcription of information. I did not transcribe each of the audiotapes immediately after the occurrence of an interview session, but continued to memo my impressions at the conclusion of each visit. Transcription of the interviews was conducted using the voice activated recognition dictation system, Dragon Naturally Speaking 11.5. Through repeated listening to the interviews and my speaking the words of Molly, Karen, Judy, Annie, and Ruth into the voice recognition program, I was afforded another layer of familiarity with the data. I heard their voices, repeated their words, and saw the conversations translated into written word on the computer screen. I revisited our time together. At the conclusion of the transcription of a tape, I added all of the memoing that I had done at the end of each session to the script of the
conversations. I was constantly comparing data throughout all of the observations and interview sessions. Data analyses reveal patterns of behaviors of the five girls that necessitated sorting into more refined categories and theoretical hypothesis.

**Sorting and Theoretical Outline**

Inductive reasoning based on data collection occurred throughout all stages of my research. I began with specific observations and built toward general patterns (Patton, 2002). Data were continuously analyzed and related to ideas and then to other ideas through the use of a constant comparative method. Coding data was a crucial element to the constant comparative & method (Glaser Strauss, 1967).

I continued to move toward the construction of theory rooted in analysis of my data through the implementation of a coding process that became more refined and directed as data were collected. The coding of data began with a coding for all that was seen and heard through observation and interviews; transitioning to delimiting coding of the variables that related to the core variable in a significant way. When I initially sought to organize my data, I thought I was going to be able to code all of the data into categories reflective of my initial research questions; valuable characteristics, exclusion characteristics, patterns of problems, characteristics of aggressive behavior, conflict resolution, and size of group and power manipulation. It was like trying to fit a round peg into a square hole. My data were not about exclusions, problems, and aggression. Throughout the initial coding stage, I found myself constantly asking the question, given the limitations placed on these five girls to interact with each other, how do they develop friendships? Once I was able to articulate that question, I gave
myself the freedom to analyze the data for what it had to offer. Molly, Karen, Annie, Ruth, and Judy’s voices and their actions were all filtered by the influence and effect the institution placed on their development of relationships. The question was nagging me all along, I just did not realize it was the core variable in looking at my data.

I then was able to progress from data analysis through coding to closed coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) which involved limiting the coding to items related to the core variable. Through a more in-depth analysis of my data, I discovered my core variable needed to shift. I could no longer examine my data to identify isolated categories of characteristics and behavior patterns identified by the girls as having significance in their friendship formation. I took the slices of data and layered them in a different manner. Now, I considered the effect of the institutional structures on the voices and actions of the five girls and their relationships. I moved toward organization of data analyzing the role and influence of the institution of “school” in the friendship formations of Molly, Judy, Ruth, Annie, and Karen and how the five girls maneuvered within the imposed structure to build relationships. Finally, theoretical coding occurred as a method to conceptualize how the substantive codes related to each.

Theorizing was an emergent process, the “continuous cycling of the integrated process of collecting, coding, and conceptual analysis” (Glaser, 2004, p.18). Observation and interview data were added as slices providing layer upon layer to the emerging themes. Questions posed during the interviews were formulated to clarify situations previously observed or flowed from the responses provided by five girls. I returned often to the tapes of our conversations to listen to the voices of Molly, Karen,
Ruth, Annie, and Judy. I trusted their voices to add powerful insight to the emerging themes I hypothesized during data analysis. The specific slices of data gathered from the interview portion of data collection combined with the observational data brought the emerging themes into theory grounded in those data. These data helped me to see that the institution played a central role in the manner in which the second grade girls formed their friendships. In addition, the institutional structure placed limitations on the opportunities the girls had to interact with each other and employ the skills necessary to develop friendships. The behavioral management system enacted by the school provided little opportunity for the girls to build community.

I theorize my data reveal second grade girls engaged in very definitive patterns of behavior when engaged in friendship formation. They shared commonalities and valued kindness, helpfulness, and a sense of humor. At the core, I learned that girls’ friendships are directly impacted by the role of the institution in the school. Three established structures within the school affected the ability of the students to develop relationships; the structure of the students’ day placed limits on their opportunities to interact with their peers; the disciplinary structure adopted and implemented by the school rewarded individual accomplishments and competitiveness among the students rather than a sense of community; and the authority figures in the school interacted with the students to set parameters to their relationship opportunities. These three external factors became the center of my analysis, as the data revealed that even as the girls asserted agency and choice in their friendship development, all of their interactions were greatly influenced by the structures around them.
As is consistent with Glaser and Strauss’s grounded theory methodology, I continued to seek clarification of my thinking through examination of the literature during all phases of data collection and analysis. I sought to constantly compare existing theory to those data collected through observation, interview, and analysis of the behavior patterns of the second grade girls. The reference to existing theory served as a frame leading to a theory of patterns that younger females used when developing their peer relationships. The existing void relative to the peer interactions and relationships of younger females can now be replaced with theory grounded in the data collected during this study.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

SECTION ONE

AN EXAMINATION OF THE IMPACT OF THE INSTITUTION IN THE FORMATION OF YOUNG GIRL’S FRIENDSHIPS

Introduction

My teaching endeavors have found me in a variety of levels of institutions; elementary school, charter school, middle school, adult education, and higher education. With each experience, I have learned that establishing a community of students was a priority in order to create the structure of the learning environment. Respect for others mitigated misunderstandings and fostered social and intellectual growth (Kagan, 2001). My students were a small entity within the larger structure of an ever-expanding institutional structure. There were elements within my control and elements left to others to administer (Spillane, Reiser, & Gomez, 2006; Weatherley, & Lipsky, 1977).

In this chapter I show how the institutional structures of Lakeville Elementary School impact the friendship formations of second grade girls. In this case, the institutional structures are the policies and procedures of the school district, Lakeville Elementary School, and the specific second grade classroom of Molly, Ruth, Annie, Karen, and Judy. The five second girls worked within the structure to establish their relationships. Many of the patterns of the girls’ behavior reoccurred in different contexts, each mitigated by the imposed structure of the district, school, or classroom. In this chapter, I will present an examination of the manner in which the actions of a school
district filter into the larger student population of a particular school and eventually funnel down to the individual students, specifically the five girls in my study.

Well into my work with Molly, Karen, Annie, Ruth and Judy, I was analyzing data relative to the qualities and characteristics identified by the girls as being of value in their friendships. “I thought she was funny”, “she was kind to me”, “we liked the same kind of books”, “I met her in my old school”, “I was glad when I saw her here in September, she’s smart” became the kind of phrases recurring over and over as they used their voices to tell their story. Karen, in response to my question about what she does if she wants to befriend another person, replied, “I just go up to them and say, can I please be your friend?” What was the common denominator in all of their responses? In order for the girls to establish and maintain a friendship, they need to have the opportunity to spend time with a person of their choosing. They can be partnered for assignments in school, but accomplishing work with another person does not necessitate the development of a friendship (Kessler, 2000). If group experiences are to be effective, school leaders must support the autonomy of the individual students while fostering a sense of belonging and union with the group. Kessler’s work with adolescents talked of building a community where children felt safe to reveal fundamental differences of opinion, values and beliefs. I was examining the actions of seven and eight –year-old girls. What was their experience like when they came to Lakeville Elementary School each day?

I argue that three established structures within the school affect the ability of the second grade girls to develop relationships: the structure of the students’ day places limits on their opportunities to interact with their peers; the disciplinary structure adopted and implemented by the school rewarded individual accomplishments and competitiveness
among the students rather than a sense of community; and the authority figures in the school interact with the students to set parameters to their relationship opportunities.

Admittedly, the institutional structures presented in this chapter affected all of the children who attend Lakeville Elementary School in some manner. Data reflect the manner in which the second grade girls maneuver within the imposed structures as they initiate and mitigate friendships.

**Role of the Institution in Relationship Development**

When Deborah Meier (1995) wrote about Central Park East, she delineated the importance of the investment of the constituents coming together to reach consensus. She described the physical structure of the schools not as containers to house large groups of students based on their geographic location, but rather buildings meant to serve multiple smaller schools based on the mission of the school and needs of the children in attendance. Bureaucracy and geography gave way to choice and commitment. The setting for this dissertation, Lakeville Elementary School, is one of three elementary schools in the district whose population is dictated geographically by the bureaucracy of the town. Lakeville Elementary School is not located in an urban setting (as was Central Park East), but none the less, the need to make the students fit in the physical school structures does not necessarily make the school structure the best fit for the students.

This chapter will present theory grounded in data analysis supporting the interrelationship of the external structures of a school system and their influence on the friendship formations of second grade girls. Data include school district policy, school
building level practices, and the actions of individuals having authority over the manner in which the second grade girls interact.

**Beginning at the District Level - Setting the Parameters for Interaction**

The school district in which I conducted my research had three elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. Children in the second grade at the Lakeville Elementary School very likely found themselves experiencing a new group of classmates from their previous two years of school because of the district level organization of geographic boundaries and student configurations. All of the kindergarten and first grade students in the town attended one elementary school. The children were bussed from all parts of the community into one building. At the conclusion of first grade, the school committee realigned the geographic boundaries from one school for all of the children into two schools for the upper elementary grades. The new geographic boundaries effected where the children would continue their education. There were two elementary schools housing grades two through five. Where a child lived in the town now determined which of the two elementary schools they attended for the next four years. Consequently, some of the girls who had developed friendships during kindergarten and first grade must now, once again, begin the friendship formation process in a new school with new children. At the tender age of seven, the girls must board a bus and be transported to a new school with only some of the students with whom they have developed friendships. District imposed school boundaries were dictating whether existing friendships can be easily maintained by proximity or need to be replaced. The children lost control of the frequency of seeing their friends and practicing the skills needed to
maintain a relationship when they no longer attend school with the same children as in the past two years. They needed to acclimate themselves to a new setting with new rules and new players. This was in addition to meeting the academic expectations of a new school year in a higher grade.

I bring forward the change in schools as a variable of interference in the friendship formation of the second grade girls because data reveal their comfort zone as being compromised. As cited in the literature review, the research of Gilligan (in Simmons, 2002) presents the unusually important role relationships play in girls’ social development. In her work with girls, Gilligan found that girls perceived isolation in their lives as danger. This factor, Gilligan argues, demonstrates that females’ development of human attachment stresses continuity and change instead of replacement and separation. Girls view a world comprised of relationships rather than people standing alone, a world that coheres through human connection rather than through systems of rules (Gilligan, 1982). Upon entry into the second grade, the seven and eight year old girls at Lakeville Elementary School were sorted twice, once geographically and then again to fulfill the structure of the four second grade classrooms in the building. Their need for continuity was sidelined by the needs of the district as a whole. Karen, Judy, Annie, Ruth, and Molly experienced separation from their previous friendships and the need to make decisions about potential new friendships.

Previous research (Berndt and Hoyle, 1985) revealed the tendency of girls to replace friendships with children in previous year’s classrooms with friendships with current year classmates. Their data supported the parameters of girls’ friendship
involvement were closely tied to the objective of limiting the overall size of their friendship network (Berndt & Hoyle, 1985; Parker & Seal, 1996). Results from these studies suggested there is a pattern of behavior that may set boundaries on the number of girls that are involved in friendship formations. If these data were the case, moving to a new setting to begin second grade should have limited effect on Molly, Ruth, Karen, Judy, and Annie. I argue my data reveal the second grade girls might have formed relationships in their new setting, but they were not interested in forsaking their friendships made in previous school years.

All five girls in my study recounted friendships that included children in different classrooms and schools. Data supported the importance of maintaining contact with girls considered “friends”. Longevity of friendships, made more difficult with the district policy of realigning students’ home school from the first to second grade, remained an important consideration for second grade girls. In more than one instance, the girls disclosed the importance of their relationships with students from “last year in first grade at my other school.” They described situations where they were able to reconnect with friends from first grade or maintain friendships developed over a period of a few years. When you are beginning second grade, friendships established in preschool adopt the descriptor, as Judy said, “old friends”. The pattern of mention of friendships formed in previous years leads me to propose my data support the importance of continuity of friendships of other researchers (Gilligan, 1982; Simmons 2002).

For example, during a lunchtime interview with Karen, Judy, Annie, and Ruth, the subject of the conversation was the choice of playmates during recess. The four girls began their friendship at Mason Street School (the school where all of the children in the
town attended kindergarten and first grade) and maintained the relationship into the second grade. I had witnessed Karen and Judy together often on the playground as well as the lunchroom. Karen was Judy’s choice for a lunchtime companion at the segregated table where she sat each day due to her nut allergy. My data documented Annie and Ruth shared time together in the classroom whenever they could as well as out on the playground and at lunch.

On this particular lunch period, one of the girls, Judy, eagerly elaborated on who she considered her “best friends”. She proceeded by naming two girls, Karen, who was in the room and adding Sarah, (a pseudonym given to a girl who was not a member of the study). But then Judy went on to say: “well, it’s mostly Karen. We've been friends since preschool. We play a lot with each other and are old friends. And my other friend is Sarah because me and Karen play with her because we are at this school now. We like her. When people are chasing us we both run and stuff.” Judy was clear to mention she and Karen were “old friends” and had included Sarah into their group when they come to Lakeville School. The “old friends” from preschool have experienced the option to continue their friendship while they attend the same school for second grade. They had expanded their relationship to include a third, Sarah because she shared a common interest of a method of play on the playground.

Another method to maintain established friendships was described by Molly. Despite the new school configuration, she maintained limited contact with her former classmate because her mother had developed a friendship with her “friend’s” mother. In a subsequent interview, Molly described a memorable birthday party and the guests invited. She discussed whom she chose to invite to the celebration: friends she had made in first
grade, neither of whom she saw on a daily basis anymore. “Well, I invited Josie. She's a friend from first grade, you know, at the other school” (referring to Mason Street School where they all had attended first grade). “I invited my best friend, Lisa. She used to go to that school, too. Her mom and my mom are best friends.” Molly clearly was holding on to the relationships she had established during first grade. The term “best friend” was a descriptor Molly used when referencing Lisa. The bureaucracy of the external structures of the district limited her access to her former classmates. They were now members of the elementary school on the other side of town. Her need for continuity superseded imposed barriers. She was able to maintain her friendships from first grade through the connection between her mother and the mother of her friend. Collective data of her behavior patterns reveal her style of joining other children socially was through tentative actions. Her transition to a new school based on where she lived negatively influenced her ability to explore expanding established friendships.

My data support there is a pattern of behavior that sets boundaries on the number of girls that are involved in friendship formations. The second grade girls included as participants in this dissertation sample interact with small groups of children as did those in the Berndt & Hoyle (1985) research, but do not exhibit a tendency to replace friendships through proximity as was described in the previous study. While the girls may include a new member into a friendship dyad, as did Karen and Judy, they still seek out their “old friends” when given the opportunity to select girls for inclusion in their life experiences.
Switching to the Building Level – the Parameters of Interaction

Moving beyond the parameters of interaction placed on the students by the district’s geographic division of the population into one of two new school settings for the second grade, schedules and policies instituted by the school level administration also placed restrictions on student interaction. These are the mitigating factors that most directly affect the girls on a daily basis.

One of the opportunities for children to interact without adults orchestrating their actions is on the playground. Researchers often study friendship formation during children’s time spent on the playground (Boulton, 1999; Glover, Gough, & Cartwright, 2008; Ladd, Price, & Hart, 1988; Orenstein, 2002). As consistent with previous researchers, data for this dissertation were partially acquired through observation on the playground during recess. Selection of recess as a venue for collection of data afforded me the opportunity to move through all the children, focusing on the five female members of the study, while experiencing the actions of the second grade as a whole. I wanted to observe the girls during an unstructured time period of self-selected activity. Recess for the second grade occurred daily from 10:45 – 11:08. Weather permitting, it was held outdoors. The structure of recess was such that only the four second grade classes were together on the playground for the 23 minute time span. This, again, limited the scope of their accessibility to establish friendships to students at their grade level.

Routine and imposed structure, supervised by a teacher assistant in the school, dominated the transition from academic endeavors in the classroom to social exchanges on the playground. After a stop at their locker, the students lined up
according to gender to make their way from their classroom, through the cafeteria, where some deposited their lunches at assigned tables, up a ramp, and out to the playground. As I witnessed this daily transition, I could not help but reflect on the writing of fellow feminist researchers (Gilligan, 1982; Simmons, 2002; and Thorne, 1993) on the wisdom of having the girls and boys form lines based on gender rather than proceed from location to location based on personal, daily preference of walking mates. Such separation based on gender fosters competitiveness and highlights differences between girls and boys rather than a communal relationship. Community of choice in establishing relationships rather than competition to see which gender is the best at an arbitrary category might better suit the movement from the classroom to the playground. However, this orderly gender based transition routine occurred each day.

The area for recess at Lakeville School was a fenced-in side yard fit between two parking lots, the main road, and the school building. Children chose between a blacktop area containing basketball hoops, a dirt area with jungle gym equipment and swings, and a small grassy, treed area with three picnic tables. There were also three benches located along the perimeter of the playground and one by the entrance to the cafeteria. Each day, the children walked up the ramp in the cafeteria and burst out onto the playground. Twenty three minutes of unstructured time with limited equipment made for lines to use the play gym and swings.

The five second grade girls spent their time outside during recess in different activities. Most of the days, the dyads of Annie and Ruth and Karen and Judy were observed as twosomes engaged in varying activities. The range of their expeditions on
the playground ranged from sedentary time spent sitting on one of the benches talking, laughing and looking at magazines or books, playing school, drawing, and walking around the perimeter of the playground talking and giggling, to more active endeavors such as swinging on the parallel bars, swinging on the swings, chasing each other, playing chasing games with the boys, and climbing on the jungle gym equipment and slides. Annie and Ruth spent at least part of every recess time waiting their turn on the parallel swinging bars. While they waited, they talked to each other until enough space became available on the parallel bars for them to swing side-by-side. On one of the occasions when I was outside with Ruth, she asked to show me some of the gymnastic skills she had learned from Karen.

Both pairs of girls Karen and Judy, who I labeled the “dynamic duo” early on in my observations, and Annie and Ruth often spent a portion of their recess time involved in chasing games. The cross-gender chasing games described by Thorne (1993) were observed by me and described by the girls. The seven and eight year old girls devised imaginary games based on Harry Potter and Star Wars that always involved chasing of some sort and often included a boy or boys. Annie, a voracious reader, felt she was more knowledgeable about the Harry Potter text which was why she was invited to participate in the boys’ game of chase. If you saw Annie involved in an activity on the playground you would usually find Ruth in close proximity.

Observations of Molly on the playground found her most often making forays into the activities of others. She, like me, was an observer of what was happening on the playground during recess. She traded her silly bands, swung, climbed on the jungle gym, wandered, sat on the bench, and attempted to engage the adults in conversation.
Many of Molly’s actions and words support her desire for adult connections. She approached adults with more confidence than she did her peers. She never turned down an invitation to join in play or conversation with the other girls, but was rarely the initiator of the action. She viewed herself as the keeper of the information the teacher assistants might want. In her own words, she “liked to help.” It was Molly who approached Mrs. Z, her classroom teacher, when she was supervising the playground to tell her something while pointing to a group of students on the jungle gym. When I moved closer to hear their conversation, “OK, I will keep my eyes on them” was Mrs. Z’s reply to Molly. Mrs. Z then proceeded to walk away from Molly and out of range of seeing the students Molly had pointed out to her. Molly’s information was acknowledged, but Mrs. Z’s actions did not suggest she was going to make use of it.

If Karen, Annie, Judy, and Ruth were playing school or sitting on a bench talking during recess, Molly would join their group by slowly approaching them and positioning herself on the edge of whatever the other girls were doing. Sometimes she waited to interject herself into the activity and on other occasions she was acknowledged by the group. The pattern was more the consistency of her entry strategy into a group rather than her engagement of the members of the group.

Five second grade girls; Molly who waited until she was on the playground to make her choice of where to engage in activity, Annie and Ruth who tended to spend their 23 minutes together regardless of the activity, and Karen and Judy who might share the latest teen magazine on a bench or chase each other around the playground for “good exercise.” They all engaged in conversation during their time on the playground, practicing their social communication skills and evaluating their
relationships with their peers. They each made the most of the limited amount of time the structure of their school recess session had to offer.

**Recess Serving a Different Role**

As my time spent on the playground progressed, I began to consider the value of recess in the reward and punishment structure of Lakeville Elementary School. I argue recess was both a breeding ground for children to exercise their friendship formation or experience exclusion as punishment for lack of following the expectations of their teacher. Each day, the playground was supervised by two adults, one who was a second grade teacher. Children who did not complete their homework or morning work often remained inside, in their classroom, during recess. However, if their teacher had to supervise recess, the student would come outside carrying a clipboard and sit at a designated picnic table completing whatever assigned work needed completion or more attention. This relegation to the picnic table with a clipboard and papers was not set up for students to receive additional assistance with an assignment. Kohn (1996) talks of such repackaging of punishment as “logical consequences.” The students were prevented from doing something desirable. They experienced isolation. The teachers did not approach the picnic tables during recess time, but rather stayed primarily near the playground equipment. Every outdoor recess found at least one student with a clipboard sitting at the picnic table. Not once, during any observation, did a teacher approach a table to check on the progress of the students. The students, including Judy, Karen, Molly, Ruth, and Annie, were witnessing exclusion as an accepted behavior. On a daily basis, they observed
exclusion as a form of punishment and it was happening in the institution that was supposed to help shape their behavior. As was revealed in the literature review, exclusion is a very prominent behavior used by girls as a method of female bullying (Simmons, 2002; Simmons 2004). The girls, as well as all of the other second grade children, were being given the opportunity to witness exclusion as an acceptable behavior at an early age.

I thought of Molly as I made note of the children seated day after day at the picnic table during recess. Molly never sat with a clipboard at a picnic table during recess, but she was as often missing from the outside activities as she was inside during recess. Molly was in her classroom, with an adult, completing what she had neglected to finish during the morning or previous night’s work. Her “logical consequence” was to reinforce what the pattern of her behavior would suggest she actually wanted; time with an adult. Perhaps her punishment was, in actuality, a reward. But, it still kept her from the opportunity to develop friendships on the playground.

My curiosity brought me to sit at the table during an observation. I watched the three children, two girls and one boy, making a feeble attempt at completion of what I was told by one of the children, Mary, was, “not finished homework……..subtraction tables.” The paper was not finished at the end of recess, either. But, the three students had been witnessed by the entire second grade as delinquent in completing an assignment either due to neglect or difficulty with the concept. The students missed an opportunity to engage in activities to foster the development of friendships and received no assistance in developing the skill of
memorizing their subtraction facts, either. The structure of the school day allowed the students 23 minutes of uninterrupted time to engage in relationship development in their new school environment. The structure was ripe for children to hone their friendship skills or witness that exclusion was an acceptable practice if a child did not meet the expectations of their teacher. This is another manner in which the structure of the school day either limits or facilitates friendship development.

Transitioning to the Lunch Room

As the 23 minutes of recess time drew to a close, the children needed to be brought to order to enter the cafeteria. This act of transition, too, had a structure reinforcing the behavioral expectations of the institution itself and the individuals supervising the recess time period. A hand-held school bell harkening back in appearance to the bells seen in representations of one-room schoolhouses was rung, always by a girl during my data collection, signaling the students’ need to form lines on the blacktop area of the playground. Students scurried into four lines, one for each classroom, to be deemed the “quietest and most respectful,” rendering them first to enter the cafeteria. The two adults supervising the playground judged which classroom of students entered first by using a variety of actions designed with the intention of quieting the children and bringing order to the group. They included: a.) count backwards from 10, b.) adults do a clapping pattern and the students followed by repeating the pattern, c.) silent applause because of good behavior on playground (hands in air and pretending to clap), or d.) pat yourself on the back (hands in air pretending to pat their back). These call-to-silence activities were routines used
regularly by the teachers. The students knew the actions and followed them when initiated by the teachers. This quasi-competition was high-stakes as it yielded the winning classroom first in line for entering the cafeteria and lunchtime.

The intended freedom of recess was affected by external structures. The amount of actual time spent on the playground varied based on the amount of time consumed by transitions to and from the playground. Their choice of playmates was limited to the students in their grade who had not committed an infraction that rendered them unable to participate in recess. Choices of activities were left to the five girls and their personal access to the equipment needed to play their games of choice. Valuable currency on the playground varied by gender: a basketball was valuable currency for the boys, the popular teen magazine or silly band was favorable for girls. Each brought other children of the same gender to gather and share in the activity during recess.

Transition to the Lunch Room – Selection of Seats

With the bell rung signaling the end of recess by the selected female student of the day, and the children categorized for entry back into the building, the next stop for the students was the cafeteria. This daily setting for lunch was not without its own influencing, overarching physical structure. I argue that the physical lay-out of the cafeteria, coupled with the procedures established to maintain order during the lunch period, once again placed parameters on the children’s opportunities to develop relationships with other students.
Figure 1. Cafeteria of Lakeville Elementary School. This figure illustrates the positions of the items in the cafeteria where Mrs. Z’s class ate each day.

Long rectangular tables, lined end to end in a distinctive pattern, helped to establish the flow of student traffic throughout the lunch period. Students were
assigned to tables based on their classrooms. Figure 1 diagrams the arrangement of the
tables in the cafeteria. Each of the * placed within a rectangle represents the assigned
lunch table for one of the other four second grade classes. Handmade signs, hung on
the wall at the end of each line of tables, indicated the name of the teacher whose
students were assigned to the table. The second grade children did not have a section
of the cafeteria, but rather each class was assigned to a row of tables at least two rows
away from other second grade classes. This distinct separation of the children by
classes within their grades established artificial boundaries and limitations to the
children with whom they were able to continue conversations and share interests
during the lunch period. The 20 or so precious minutes of supervised yet unstructured
time which occurred on the playground transitioned back to assigned seating with the
group of children who shared the same classroom space.

Seating at the assigned lunch tables was intended to be open to the discretion
of the children. This supposed freedom of seat choice was not without its own
hierarchical structure. Children first to get to choose their places at the tables were
those who brought their lunches from home. They were the privileged, whom, not
having to leave the table to get milk or a hot lunch, experienced the opportunity for
prime lunch table real estate. Their dietary needs were already met and now they had
first choice of location, location, location. They also controlled the power of the
seating of a portion of the class as possession of a spot at the table was indeed nine
tenths of the law as to who would surround them for the next 19 minutes.

Forty-six percent of the students at Lakeville Elementary School were eligible
for subsidized lunch. Molly, Annie and Ruth were a part of the 46% of second grade
students who fit into this category that required them to go through the lunch line and then return to the table. The three girls were not members of the aforementioned privileged group of children who selected their seats for lunch and saved seats for the students with whom they wished to dine. “Save me a seat” could be heard exchanged between the privileged few and those seeking to sit with them.

Most often, Annie would be the first of the three girls to return with her lunch thinking she had secured her spot at the table prior to moving to the lunch line to get her food. She had saved a space suitable for her and Ruth by placing an item on the table. “I leave something to save my spot” or she asked someone already seated to “save us a spot” were her responses when asked how she got her choice of seats during lunch. Sometime her designated place holder was successful in warding off other students. Sometimes, “I thought you were going to save me a seat?” or “where did my stuff go?” prompted her to move her intended, preferred spot to have lunch to another location at the line of tables.

Students who received a free or reduced lunch were given a ticket by their classroom teacher to give to the woman collecting money for lunches. If an observer wanted to determine the financial status of a child from their flow through the lunch line, careful concentration on the transaction between student and the clerk needed to occur. Molly, Annie, and Ruth made their way through the lunch line each day handing the clerk their ticket for their lunch selection. However, while the three were not singled out as a student receiving a free or reduced lunch, their movement around the lunch table after many of the places had already been taken seemed to reinforce the notion that those in need of assistance to purchase their lunch also had a difficult time
finding a free choice of a place at the table. Their choice of seats was as often whom they did not want to sit next to as who they did. Molly, one of the girls in need of exchanging a ticket for a hot lunch each day, moved at least twice per lunch period before she settled on a place to eat.

One final table had its own reserved clientele during the lunch period, the table designated for the students in need of a peanut-free eating environment. This table was positioned at the farthest end of the cafeteria, closest to the door used to go outside. Judy, a student with peanut allergies, spent her lunch period at this table. Teachers walked by the table without remark, lunch aides rarely approached it, and the school’s janitor was the only person witnessed talking with the students over the course of the months of observation at the school. While this table was placed in an isolated section of the cafeteria, the occupants had made a conscious choice to join Judy who was assigned to this table for medical reasons. Judy, whose allergy to nuts necessitated her sitting at this table during the lunch period, was allowed to choose which of the second grade children she wanted to join her for lunch. While Judy was not limited to having lunch with only the children from her class, she always invited Karen to share her lunch time. Judy had freedom to choose her lunch companions while observing the same cafeteria rules as the rest of their grade-mates. By virtue of their assigned table due to Judy’s medical restriction, she and Karen never jockeyed for position or spent lunch time in a spot they had not chosen. They carried on quiet conversation, giggled, and shared reading material well under the radar of the cafeteria supervisory staff.

On six occasions, Judy was joined by two boys, Ralph and Christian, during the lunch period. During one of the lunch periods, when I moved to the table to talk
with the students, Christian made sure to tell me that, “We are sitting here because we want to. Not because we have to.” Judy added she had, “asked them to eat with me because Karen isn’t here.”

During the lunch period, Judy and Karen shared their interest in pop-culture, when, on more than one occasion they stole glances at teen magazines brought to school by Karen. They were seldom approached by any of the supervisory staff, so they were able to; “….look at the magazines during lunch even though they we know we are only supposed to look at them when we are on the playground and not in the cafeteria.” Karen and Judy experienced more opportunity to communicate and explore their relationship simply because they were apart from the mainstream of the dining room. Their location allowed them to continue to converse when the rest of the cafeteria was cloaked in silence. They too, like their counterparts that brought their lunches from home, had location, location, location. Their spot in the cafeteria required no competition for seating and lunch mates of Judy’s choosing. Although, ‘sometimes Karen asks” was revealed when we discussed Judy’s choice of companions.

Overall, data analyses of the time spent by the second grade children in the cafeteria between 11:08 and 11:31 presented a fragmentation of the students into specific sections of the room. Two of the girls in the study, Judy and Karen, experienced the privilege of sharing lunch together each day in a designated spot with a lack of competition as to seating. Judy’s peanut allergy along with her friendship with Karen allowed the two girls to sit together each day in an area away from peanut allergens. Their designated lunch spot was in contrast to the seats available to Molly,
Annie and Ruth during the same lunch period. These three girls, who received a federally subsidized lunch each day, also had a designated table for their lunchtime. The difference was they needed to share the space with the rest of Mrs. Z’s second grade class. For Annie and Ruth it meant attempting to “save a spot” at the table by placing an item on the table at their selected place. Annie most often had that job. She was vying for seating for both her and Ruth. It did not always pan out as planned, although their substitute plan was to move around the table and attempt to squeeze together into another spot. There were fewer times they ended up sitting separately than eventually finding seating together. If it so happened they were the last class to enter the cafeteria in the recess competition for the “best behaved line”, they were further back in the lunch line and less likely to find seating next to each other. Molly approached the lunch seating much like she did her entre’ into groups on the playground. She wandered up to and around the table carrying her lunch tray until she spied a spot of her choosing. This was never her last stop, as each day she moved her seat at least once and more often twice in her effort to not sit next to someone. She came willingly and joined in conversation when she shared lunch with me and the other girls, but struggled with seat choice and conversation in the larger cafeteria setting.

From my first analysis of data from observation in the lunch room, I struggled with the lack of time the students had in which to experience an opportunity to share ideas and conversation with each other. The frenzy of the playground left behind, I was not prepared for a lunchroom routine where children were separated by their classroom away from their fellow second grade students. Where the girls who needed
to go through the lunch line to get their food could not rely on a spot of their choice to share their lunch period with a person of their choice. This was a large space with a fire code sign stating the allowed capacity of the room was 189 persons. The seven and eight year old second grade children were little persons. The opportunity to explore friendships and build relationships required communication (Thorne, 1993). Equal opportunity (Meier, 1995) and equal access was not had by all of the children during their lunch period. My struggles continued as data were analyzed.

Silence in the Cafeteria during Lunch Time

With 23 precious minutes to get a lunch, select a seat, engage in conversation, eat the lunch, and clean up the area around their seat, the children faced another friendship limiting condition: silence in the lunch room. During my first observation in the cafeteria, I experienced what I came to call “the clap”; a rhythmic succession of hand-claps done by one of the teacher assistants, repeated by the children, intended to signal the beginning of silence in the cafeteria. This was the same “clap” used by the teachers at recess to quiet the children prior to bringing them to the cafeteria for lunch. I would find it used in other situations where quiet was needed; a universal signal used throughout the school with a distinct purpose; gaining the silent attention of the children. For its purpose in the lunchroom, “the clap” signaled the beginning of a period of silence that extended until roughly three minutes prior to the children needing to clean up and exit the cafeteria.

Observational data indicate “the clap” signaling the beginning of the silence occurred between six to eight minutes after the children entered the cafeteria. Indeed
there were occasions when the students had not all gotten their lunches and returned to their seats prior to the imposed silence. I began to see the outward, intended purpose of the silence early in the collection of data. “No talking now, it is your Quiet Time – finish your lunch,” was the expression stated by one of the teacher assistants supervising the lunch room, which closely followed “the clap”.

“… be sure to eat your lunch”, “Thumbs up if you understand!” and “Sit on your bottom and eat your lunch” were three expressions sprinkled into my data during each observation in the lunchroom. The rule of silence was serious business. One student raised his hand for the attention of a teacher assistant only to lower it five minutes later when no one had acknowledged his question. Was he experiencing a hierarchical rule confusion where raising your hand to ask permission was superseded by silence during lunch?

To reinforce the importance of the quiet time, the teacher assistant often held up a ticket that students could earn for their class for good behavior in the cafeteria. A ticket was deposited into a clear plastic jar located at the end of the lunch table when the entire class table was quiet during the silent period. The tickets distributed during the lunch period were a component of the school-wide behavior program, PBIS. The class earning the most tickets during the week received a prize, awarded by the principal, and announced to the entire school. I propose this competition of silence during the lunch period might have achieved its goal of more children eating lunch, but more importantly it certainly stifled the conversations conducive to friendship formation. I further propose the silence was more an instrument to control the children in the cafeteria than to have them consume a suitable amount of food. Rather than
managing the children’s behavior with compliance, involving the children in devising and justifying ethical expectations might meet the needs for consumption of food and increased conversation (Kohn, 1996).

But, did the imposed silence mean a lack of communication between the children in the cafeteria? Data suggest otherwise. The ratio of supervisory staff to the number of children in the cafeteria made the area ripe for the use of some subversive techniques, finely honed so as to not jeopardize the accumulation of tickets.

From my various perches around the cafeteria I might not have heard a great deal of conversation between the second grade students, but I was witness to their communication in myriad ways. They resorted to covert actions to subvert the imposed silence. James Bond had nothing on these second grade girls. The silence that began soon into the lunch period was a time for Annie and Ruth to lower their talking to whispers. I must admit, I rooted for them every day to succeed with their lowered voice endeavors. They placed their hands to their mouths or tilted their heads downward and toward each other. Their heads bobbed, and sometimes they giggled. On occasion they would both turn at the same time and look at another student and whisper to each other. Sometimes in their efforts to sit together during the lunch period, Annie and Ruth found themselves across the table from each other rather than sitting next to each other. During the silent part of the lunch period, this forced them to be even more creative in their whispers to each other. Whichever of the two had her back to the teacher assistant was able to whisper more freely than the girl facing in the direction of the teacher aide. Their words came through exaggerated lips and finger pointing and head nods became more prominent in their patterns of communication.
"You are not being respectful and following the rules" was aimed at Mrs. Z’s table on more than one occasion, with Annie and Ruth being the guilty party.

When Ruth and Annie sat next to each other, the bench of the lunch table became a method for them to engage in another activity aimed at manipulating the silence; they slid items to one another along the bench. On any given day, one of the girls would have a small item in her pocket she wanted to share with her friend. The item would be revealed from the pocket, inspected, whispered about, giggled about, and then returned to the pocket without ever leaving the bench level of sight. Annie and Ruth became masters of cleverness and deception, quietly disclosing the item so as to intrigue each other. Sometimes they were observed crossing fingers and linking them with each other. Giggling followed. The two girls added sneakiness to silence, a byproduct created as a result of conditions that suited the needs of adults in the room, but not the children. Importantly, this is part of the repertoire of covert behavior that adolescents exercise when they bully others. Clearly Ruth and Annie were not engaged in bullying behavior in the cafeteria. They were, however learning how to use covert actions.

Data support that students were able to get items they needed or had forgotten at the lunch counter during the silent period. They did not need to seek permission to move about the cafeteria, as long as they abided by the no conversation rule. Molly would often get up during the silent portion of lunch and look at the posters or drawings on the wall. Her forays were to suit her own purposes and did not affect other second grade students. Such was not the intention of all of the children in the lunchroom. The seating arrangement separated the children into classes, but data
support Karen’s conquest in subverting the arrangement. She walked to the lunch counter via a circuitous route so as to poke or tap someone along the way. She didn’t speak to anyone with her voice, but her actions spoke to the intended party. Communication occurred despite the silence.

The silence during lunch also fostered another behavior; students were able to grab an item from another student knowing any outburst would result in a reprimand for breaking the silence. Jake took Ruth’s book while she was signing a banner for Red Ribbon Week. Any item that intrigued Annie was fair game during the silent portion of the lunch period. Kyle, the boy the five girls identified as thinking he was the leader of the class, would poke at the food of others. They were exerting their power over students who did not respond because the institution was not supportive of them doing so. Repeated exercises of power over another individual are part of the landscape of bullying (Olweus, 1993). Again, the landscape allowed girls to hone and practice these skills.

When Judy was in school, Karen always ate lunch with her at the peanut-free table. As was mentioned earlier, their dining table was located away from the main groupings of tables. They whispered throughout the entire silent portion of lunch. They positioned themselves on the benches with their backs to the rest of the room, and periodically checked over their shoulders to gauge the location of the teacher assistant supervising the lunchroom. Their need to avoid detection was lessened by their location. Judy was observed trying to stifle a laugh and spitting out her food when it became unbearable to hold it in any longer. When I asked the teacher assistant about the table at the end of the cafeteria where Judy ate each day, she replied, “That’s
the peanut-free zone. They’re so good. We don’t have to worry about them.” Karen and Judy won the approval of the person designated to supervise their lunch time despite their noncompliance to the edict of silence. These two girls ate their lunch even though they were talking. Might this suggest that the imposed silence is totally unnecessary?

Lunches were being consumed during the silence, but to what end? Data support behaviors such as whispering, the implication of secrets being told about another student, taking items from others against their will, sneaking, confusion about how to get attention when needed, and false accusations of disruptive behavior were displayed during the moments of silence in the cafeteria. I propose these to be behaviors one would seek to diminish in the students of the school, not reinforce. These are the same behaviors replete in the literature as methods used by adolescents when they bully others (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Olweus, 1993; Orenstein, 1994; Simmons, 2001). The nature of female bullying is that is difficult to detect because of its covert nature. Does the agenda of the institution impact the children to develop behaviors that could be used as weapons in later life? My data would suggest the affirmative.

Respect for others and their property is espoused in the writings of fellow researchers as a key element in fostering a school climate conducive to learning (Kessler, 2000; Kohn, 1995; Meier, 1995; Noddings, 1984; Thorne, 1993). In fact, being respectable was a guiding rule for the students of Lakeville School. The actions of the Annie, Ruth, Karen, and Judy during the silent portion of the lunch period were
intended to subvert the imposed silence. In fact, Judy and Karen were complemented for their behavior in the cafeteria.

I argue, in order to aid the children in developing respectable behaviors, or even more globally, ethical principles, the adults in their day must guide them to work together to establish what respectable behavior looks like for them and how they should act to fulfill that expectation (Kohn, 1995). By approaching it in this manner, the girls would be architects in the plan and have an investment in the formation of the guiding behavioral principles. That investment would empower them to feel a connection to the successful implementation of the behavioral expectations. Subversive behavior, such as was displayed by Karen, Ruth, and Annie, would lessen in importance if their goal was to fulfill expectations they helped to create.

The imposed silence in the lunchroom varied on a daily basis. It was never fewer than eight minutes and rarely longer than twelve minutes. After the passage of roughly eight to nine minutes, the rhythmic “clap” was once again sounded by a teacher assistant indicating the end of the imposed silence. For roughly three minutes, the children were free to talk with the students in close proximity. The undercurrent and whispering that had occurred during the middle of the lunch period was abandoned for open communication between the students. Then, the ritualized cleaning up of the space around where the student had consumed their lunch, the disposal of recyclable items and trash, and the return of the lunch trays signaled the end of the lunch period.

This routine that signaled the end to the lunch period was always preceded by a choral activity, initiated by a teacher assistant and responded to by the students as a
whole. Each day, the children were always questioned as a group, “what do we do?” to which they would answer, “hand it to the nice lady,” indicating their next step in the lunch ritual; passing their lunch tray to the woman behind the counter waiting to receive it. The collective response was in a mumbled, monotone voice. The woman behind the counter accepting their lunch trays did not have a name, but was referred to as the “nice lady” on a daily basis. This behavior pattern was important to note as it was meant to establish a transitional behavior, but did so by dehumanizing the woman accepting their trays. The development of relationships requires honoring the individuals with whom you share space (Noddings, 2003). Acknowledgement of linking a name to a person is a simple place to start.

Each day, the 46 minutes from 10:45 – 11:08 offered the potential for children to practice their skills of friendship development in what might be referred to as a supervised, unstructured environment; recess and lunch. In reality, the time period dwindled in length due to an imposed silence for anywhere from ten to twelve minutes during the middle of the lunch period. Molly, Karen, Ruth, Annie, and Judy experienced the opportunity to interact with any of the second grade students who come to the playground free to socialize. Students who had not met the expectations of their classroom teacher found location restrictions placed on them making it impossible to practice their social skills during free-play. Molly was the only member of the five girls included in the group allowed to miss the playground experience entirely when she had not completed her required classwork prior to recess. Talking, while restricted during certain portions of the lunch period, flowed between Karen, Annie, Ruth, and Judy for the few minutes while they were in line to get their lunch or
dispose of their trash. Conversations, along with other forms of communication, occurred between the girls at their segregated lunch tables. As data in this study show, recess and lunch time provided the five second grade girls limited opportunities to practice the social skills of friendship formation. It also afforded them the opportunity to engage in subversive behaviors during their relationship building experiences. The girls continuously found a way to socialize and build friendships with their self-documented friends, but not with others in the second grade. Could the social skills of bullying actually be the skills of friendship formation in younger girls? My analysis of data begs the question.

**Behavioral Management System: Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS)**

A seasoned educator can enter the halls of a school and sense the climate of the building. The climate of a school can be defined as the feelings that students and staff have about the school environment over a period of time (Peterson & Skiba, 2000). These feelings reflect how comfortable each individual feels within the environment and whether that person feels that the environment is supportive of learning, is appropriately organized, and is safe. The climate of a school is often associated with the development of a community where its members communicate their needs, purpose, and progress with each other toward a common end (Noddings, 2003). The development of a community of learners is not an arbitrary process, but more a mindset on the part of a school’s administration, staff, and students. It is a collaborative endeavor based on respect and consensus.
According to Dewey (1916), education does not occur directly, but indirectly by means of the environment. Schools are environments that influence the moral and mental disposition of their constituents. There is little doubt that teaching academic skills has been a function of schools throughout the generations. The school, as a social setting needs to create an environment that will provide the support and safety inherent to children’s intellectual growth.

The answer to the need to develop a safe, supportive environment at Lakeville Elementary School was the adoption of the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) at the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year. While it was adopted with contrary intentions, I argue the disciplinary structure adopted and implemented by the administration and staff of the school fosters competitiveness among the students rather than a sense of community. They became part of Finn’s (1999) domesticating education system as they were being taught to follow the rules and procedures established by others and not be troublesome. They were being conditioned to be the productive workers of the future. The children sought the extrinsic rewards for appropriate behavior rather than experiencing the intrinsic reward associated with working as a member of a community toward a common goal. Building a community requires the development of relationships among its members. The five girls in this study learned how to bring an individual accomplishment to the whole rather than learning to work in a communal manner to achieve a goal. This is yet another manner in which the institution plays a role in structuring the friendships at Lakeville School.

To understand the core of the behavioral system, I have included an excerpt from the PBIS web site:
Positive behavior support is an application of a behaviorally-based systems approach to enhance the capacity of schools, families, and communities to design effective environments that improve the link between research-validated practices and the environments in which teaching and learning occurs. Attention is focused on creating and sustaining primary (school-wide), secondary (classroom), and tertiary (individual) systems of support that improve lifestyle results (personal, health, social, family, work, recreation) for all children and youth by making targeted behaviors less effective, efficient, and relevant, and desired behavior more functional.

Research has shown that the implementation of punishment, especially when it is used inconsistently and in the absence of other positive strategies, is ineffective. Introducing, modeling, and reinforcing positive social behavior is an important step of a student's educational experience. Teaching behavioral expectations and rewarding students for following them is a much more positive approach than waiting for misbehavior to occur before responding.

The purpose of school-wide PBIS is to establish a climate in which appropriate behavior is the norm.

Reading the information presented on the PBIS web site, I became interested in how the terms used as descriptors of the program: “making desired behavior more functional”; “research-validated practices”; “introducing, modeling, and reinforcing positive social behavior”, and “rewarding students” were manifested in the school. What did the data I collected in the fall semester of 2010 reflect as the practices of the faculty and staff of the school? I propose the implementation of the PBIS system of
rewarding students for exhibiting taught behaviors fostered more of a competitive environment than a climate of community. The extrinsic rewards superseded the intrinsic behaviors that need to be internalized and implemented during the development of relationships.

An essential element during the implementation of PBIS was the establishment of a set of basic rules representing the three or four primary behaviors all students strove to achieve. At Lakeville Elementary School, the school rules were; “Be Respectful, Be Responsible, and Be Ready to Work”. The set of rules was coined and adopted by a committee comprised of adult members of the school and found itself represented in written form throughout the halls of the school, included as common vocabulary when discussing appropriate behaviors with students, and chanted in choral form when large groups of children are called to attention. All members of the school staff sprinkled the expression liberally throughout the day. The five second grade girls that brought their voice to this study could recite the rules without skipping a beat. But, they were not part of the creation of the rules or determining the goals. They were told how to behave rather than internalizing the value of their behavior (Kohn, 1991). Their investment was to please others: a behavior typical for seven and eight-year-old girls (Orenstein, 2011), but not indicative of the acquisition of skill at an intrinsic level.

A second element of the program was the establishment of a token system to reward children “caught being good.” The tokens in the economy took on two forms: a ticket containing a picture of a horseshoe (a representation of the mascot of the school) used in the lunch room and a “caught you” slip of paper distributed school-wide to
acknowledge acts of appropriate behavior. Both types of tickets, acquired by the individual students, were accumulated by the classroom members to be hopefully exchanged for a larger weekly school-wide prize. All members of the school staff were armed with “caught you” tickets to reward a student witnessed being respectful, responsible, and ready to work. As data confirm, charts were located in the classrooms indicating the number of tickets every individual student earned each week. A larger school-wide recording of classroom totals was located in the lobby of the school. Acquisition of tickets held value when prizes were awarded, sometimes randomly through a drawing done over the intercom from the office, or intentionally for the most tickets accumulated during a particular segment of time.

There was no hiding the link between the PBIS behavior-based approach to discipline and the extrinsic motivators used as rewards for compliance. The goal was to design an effective environment in which teaching and learning occurred. Do rewards motivate children? I would echo Kohn (1991): they motivate children to get rewards (p.6). Molly, Karen, Judy, Annie, and Ruth spoke of the importance of kindness, helpfulness, and sharing common experiences when they identified qualities of friendship. They did not receive a ticket to behave in that manner. They were beginning to experience the intrinsic reward of each other’s company. But were they motivated to earn rewards in school? You bet. Molly would clean up in the cafeteria to get a horseshoe ticket. Any of the five could be seen checking the tally chart of “caught you” in their classroom. They squealed with delight when they heard the principal announce at an assembly that their classroom was the prize winner of the cafeteria competition. Karen stood and pumped her arm as her name was called
several times when Mrs. Z was distributing tickets she had collected for safe keeping for the students. Research has shown extrinsic motivators undermine creativity and achievement (Sternberg in Kohn, 1991). The argument is made that extrinsic motivators encourage “ego involvement” to the exclusion of task involvement that is more predictive of achievement. Mrs. Z’s students were not working together to create a winning environment. Students like Karen were competing for an individual prize that could be added to the individual tickets of others in the classroom. If the number of individual rewards added up to the highest number in the second grade, all of the children in Mrs. Z’s class reaped the cumulative reward. Data provide strong evidence of the competitive nature of the acquisition of the tickets as currency toward whatever the prize of the week might be. Ticket acquisition and distribution permeated the culture of the school. The girls were not working together toward a common goal as will be evidenced as necessary in the friendship formation of the girls. They were meeting the behavioral expectations of the institution through their individual efforts. The establishment of friendships involved communion with another, rather than a personal victory.

What follows are four specific examples of the extent to which the PBIS behavioral management system permeated the culture of Lakeville Elementary School. Specific to these examples are the personal involvement of Molly, Karen, Ruth, Judy, and Annie.
Tickets as Currency in the Lunchroom

The “caught being good” ticket distribution in the lunchroom was replete with visual and verbal reminders of the PBIS behavioral management program. At the beginning of the second grade lunch period, the teacher assistant placed a clear plastic bucket at the end of each of the lunch tables. The bucket for Molly, Karen, Annie, Judy, and Ruth’s class had Mrs. Z’s name printed in bold black letters across the center. Tickets were visible in the container. The students always had access to a visual representation of the class with the greatest number of tickets. Data reveal Molly, Karen, and Judy each earned tickets to reward their behavior during the lunch period.

At the end of the lunch period, Molly could always be seen picking up pieces of food on the floor and the tables. The teacher assistant told the students to “police your areas to be responsible” in order to earn a horseshoe ticket to be added into the classroom bucket. On this day as well as many others, Molly’s actions earned her a Horseshoe. Molly always walked past a teacher assistant on her way to the trash can or recycle receptacle. Her pro-social responsible behavior was rewarded and also noted by Annie, “Molly always does it.” The teacher assistant held the ticket in the air in dramatic fashion prior to depositing it into the bucket. Molly’s behavior did not exclude any of the other members of her class working together to clean-up their table and floor, but at least one member of the class felt she did not need to pitch in and help because someone else, Molly, always did the deed. Molly won the competition for cleanest eating area quite often. Her individual effort was rewarded. Again, an admirable act and achievement, but Molly was observed completing the task by
herself, not in the company of the other girls. More than once Molly said, “I like to help”, which leads me to argue that she was doing it more to please the teacher assistants than to foster friendships with the other girls in the cafeteria or her class. Friendships were formed by the interaction of people, not the solitary act of one. Friendship was in itself a prize, not a momentary Horseshoe Ticket added to a bucket.

Judy and Karen also contributed Horseshoe Tickets to the bucket for, “Sitting quietly and being ready to learn.” Again, the individual acknowledgement of their actions was noted to the students in the lunch room prior to the placement of the ticket into the bucket by the teacher assistant. No one else had to contribute a thing in order for the class to reap the benefit.

On another occasion, when the noise level elevated during clean-up in the cafeteria, one of the teacher assistants did “the clap” for silence. She thrust her hand up in the air. Clearly she expected the students to be silent and also put their hands in the air because when they do not she says, “I’ll wait – again Mrs. Z’s class! Let’s see how we did today… I can give out only two horseshoes! Who will win the Colts award tomorrow for the most tickets in their bucket?” During the entire melee with the teacher assistants calling for silence, Molly had done her part to make the area around Mrs. Z’s class’s lunch table as clean as a whistle. But, on this occasion her individual efforts did not outweigh the behavior of the other members of her class. She did not receive a ticket in the bucket for her actions. There was no reward on the part of the teacher assistants for her individual efforts at adding to the accumulation of horseshoes on this day. In addition, the students had lost some of the precious few
minutes they could have experienced at the end of the lunch period talking with each other and exercising relationship strategies.

On another lunch period during the month of November, the students were “clapped” to be quiet from 11:14 – 11:21 and then again at 11:28. The teacher assistant addressed the children, “everyone bottom on the bench with your feet in front of you…..not one more sound”…“keep still – keep your hands still”…“who’s flinging food at this table?” No horseshoes were discussed or awarded on this day. I propose the extrinsic motivation of the horseshoe reward was not translating to the development of intrinsic behaviors and internalization of the values underlying the desired behavior. Today brought neither rewards for competition nor community. Even Molly stayed in her seat rather than trolling the floor for trash. She acknowledged, “They told us not to get out of our seats.” Kohn (1991) described a behavior system with its roots based in extrinsic motivation lacking the long-term objective of helping students to act responsible because they understand “it was the right thing to do” (p.8). I argue the distribution of the horseshoe tickets in the lunchroom did not lead to the development of this intrinsic quality in the individual behavior of Molly, Judy, Ruth, Annie, and Karen. Judy and Karen earned horseshoe tickets for their proficiency at exercising subversive tactics in the lunchroom. They developed their skill of undetected talking during the silent period to a level where they earned horseshoe tickets for their class bucket. Molly made sure her actions were observed by a teacher assistant. Annie and Ruth were never individually or collectively acknowledged as displaying behavior in the cafeteria worthy of a horseshoe. The five girls were not members of a community of children making
behavioral choices in the lunchroom because it was “the right thing to do.” Thus their strategies served to further isolate them from the larger friendship potential of the whole class.

“Caught you” Slips Causing an Interruption to a Reading Lesson

In addition to the horseshoe tickets given daily in the cafeteria, children also earned “caught you” slips for appropriate behavior during the rest of the day. Every member of the staff had “caught you” slips to distribute to the children. The students were supposed to bring the slips acquired throughout the school and turn them in to Mrs. Z. At the end of each week, Mrs. Z entered the number of slips earned by each student onto a chart. In Molly, Karen, Ruth, Annie, and Karen’s classroom, the chart was located on the closet door closest to the classroom door, a highly visible location. A total of all of the “caught you slips” for all of the students in the classroom was entered at the bottom of each weekly column.

On this particular week in December, Mrs. Z had not entered the individual “caught you” tally for each student on the composite chart for the class. She was conducting the morning reading lesson with the class on the rug in the front of the classroom. During the middle of the reading lesson, a teacher assistant came into the room to retrieve the “caught you” tally to report it to the office. Academics were halted so as to accommodate this task.

The teacher assistant waited while the individual slips were collected, the tallies recorded, and then added to determine a class total. In order to accomplish this very important task, the reading instruction was interrupted for fifteen minutes. Mrs. Z
sent Molly over to the reading table to retrieve the plastic container in which her classmates have put their “caught you” slips. Karen and Ruth said they needed to go to their lockers to get some slips they had neglected to place in Mrs. Z’s bucket. Kyle informed the teacher, “You owe me a “caught you” slip from the other day, remember?” Annie also reminded Mrs. Z, “the sub yesterday told me I earned a slip, but she never gave it to me. Can you count it anyway?” Having received the container that held the slips, Mrs. Z reached into the bucket, pulled out each individual slip, called each student’s name and had the students pass them to each other. That accomplished, she moved to the chart and called the name of each of the members of the class. She told the students to hold the “caught you” slips up and pass them over to her if they had any. Not all of the students had slips. There was a cacophony of movement as the children continued to search their desks, backpacks, lockers, and even make trips to other teachers who owed them “caught you” slips. Having the slip in hand added to the individual tally and in turn boosted the classroom total. Of the five members of the study, only Ruth did not have a slip. Once the cumulative tally had been derived and given to the teacher assistant, the students were directed to return to their assigned places on the carpet. The importance of the continuity of a reading lesson was superseded by the competitive tally of Mrs. Z’s “caught you” slips. Ruth returned to the reading lesson on the carpet distracted by her inability to locate her slip, “it wasn’t in my locker, someone must have taken from my desk.” She lagged behind others in her individual total and perseverated on what “happened to her slip” through to the end of the lesson. In this instance, an academic endeavor lagged in importance to the class tally for the school-wide PBIS competition. Students
interrupted other teachers and classroom instruction to retrieve their owed “caught you” slips. Fifteen precious minutes of reading instruction was lost and for one student, Ruth, the reading lesson never resumed.

The intrinsic acquisition of the value of appropriate behavioral actions was overshadowed by the competitive nature of the program. The individually earned “caught you” slips, which foster competition among the students rather than the relationship skills necessary for friendship formation, needed to be tallied so as to have the students of Mrs. Z’s class ranked in comparison to the rest of the classrooms of students in the school. On this day, collaboration took the form of a tally of the individual efforts of the students rather than a collective community effort.

Relationships are built on communal efforts, not individual victories.

**PBIS Assembly**

While the tenets of the PBIS program were counterintuitive to the formation of friendships, there were many examples of how it was embraced by Lakeville Elementary School. Yet another interruption into the instructional portion of the students’ day by the PBIS program occurred when the second and third grade students were brought to the gymnasium by their teachers. The students filed into the gymnasium and sat by class under the direction of one of the teacher assistants in attendance. Awaiting their arrival was Mr. Smyth, the principal of the school and their speaker for the next half hour. Mrs. Z, along with all of the teachers, left the assembly as soon as their group of students was seated on the floor of the gymnasium. Later in the day, I sought out the leader of Lakeville Elementary School’s PBIS leadership
team and inquired as to why the teachers did not remain with the children. She replied, “This was the first opportunity for all of the teachers to meet together and discuss some of the PBIS strategies the leadership team was recommending for use with the students.” The second and third grade teachers heard the expectations of their participation from one source while the students listened to the principal’s version of their behavioral expectations. I remained with the students.

Mr. Smyth began by reviewing the rules for respectable behavior during a group assembly: “sit on your bottom, face the speaker, and raise your hand if you want to say something.” The principal disclosed Ms. H’s class had the won the Golden Horseshoe Award from the previous week’s “cafeteria challenge” and had earned some additional recess for their efforts. He asked everyone to clap for the winning group of students. Modeling desired behavior, a cornerstone of a behavior-based approach to discipline, occurred when Mr. Smyth referred to the award resulting from a challenge rather than a community effort. He was clear in his language that competition rather than the efforts of a community relationship yielded the prize. This hindered students’ desires to create friendships across classrooms.

The topic of the PBIS assembly was a review of appropriate behavior in the lavatory (a topic discussed in a previous assembly) and a discussion of acceptable behavior during dismissal. Throughout the 30 minute presentation, the Principal talked to the students in terms of safety issues and what it “Looks like, Feels like, and Sounds like” to behave acceptably in the lavatory (yes, this did bring forth giggles from Ruth, Annie, Molly, Karen, and Judy). Students were informed their lack of appropriate behavior in the lavatories had necessitated the school to institute a sign-out system so
the principal would know who was out of their classroom during any time of the day. During a lunch time conversation with Annie and Karen after the assembly, we spoke of the newly disclosed policy of signing out of the classroom to use the lavatory. “It wasn’t us, I don’t know why we have to do it,” was Karen’s opinion on the new policy. Annie agreed, “Dumb rule.” The two second grade girls saw the flawed logic of being affected punitively by someone else’s actions and expressed their dissatisfaction. Their actions were much the same as those Brown and Gilligan (1992) reveal in their data of seven and eight-year-old girls.

Mr. Smyth moved on to the new topic of the assembly. He reviewed the dismissal procedure and then called for audience participation to experience what dismissal “Looks like, Feels like, and Sounds like.” The students practiced forming dismissal lines and went to the appropriate part of the gymnasium where they stood at dismissal. Molly and Judy attention to the dismissal procedure was long gone by this point. They had spent the last few minutes time checking out each other’s outfits. Their socks won approval, garnering a thumbs-up and a giggle.

Data I collected during the assembly demonstrate that while the girls were obviously interested in the competitive part of the acquisition of extrinsic rewards, they were not internalizing the value of the behaviors. Karen and Annie’s view of what it “looks like” to leave their classroom to go to the lavatory did not match the newly imposed regulation. They voiced the disconnect in terms of how it affected them. Mr. Smyth was modeling a lack of trust in the children to meet the expectations of the girls being responsible students. Annie and Karen may not have articulated it in those words, but they knew what it “felt like.” The power of a group of students
coming together to affect change has been successfully documented (Kessler, 2000; Kohn, 1999; and Meier, 2002). Karen and Annie are but two members of a group of second grade children with the social agency necessary to work as a community to enact appropriate behavior in all parts of the school, not just the lavatory. The punitive actions of the principal do not foster community, as Karen and Annie recognized. The leader of the institution where they were learning to internalize behaviors preferred to limit the actions of the whole rather than seek improvement of the few select perpetrators. He brought question to the establishment of trust, a valued quality in the formation of friendships.

PBIS and the Challenge of Possessions

At Lakewood Elementary School, specific classroom rules have been established. The rules flowed from the tenets of the PBIS program to bring practical, smaller scale applications to the school-wide effort. Silly bands, a hugely popular fashion accessory among the second grade girls, were also a source of angst among the friends. The bands were not to be traded in Mrs. Z’s classroom. Karen, Ruth, Judy and Annie were very clear in their knowledge of the rule. Acquisition of the silly bands, however, did not mean they were not willing to test the rule and lie about their involvement in a transgression. They were willing to challenge the limitations placed on them by the institutional behavioral system in order to acquire the coveted item. This act was one of the ways they built their friendship and connections to one another.
While we had lunch, all four girls shared their part in a classroom incident happening earlier in the day. Depending on the member of the group relating the details of the transgression, the responsible party in error shifted between members of the group. Judy was clear in her version about Annie being the guilty party, “She lied. Karen was sitting in her regular seat and Annie went over there and then Karen and Annie went over to the rug in the corner they started trading silly bands. And I told the teacher and nobody knew that I told.” Annie clarified what she saw as the truth, “I'll tell the story… And then Karen started crying because the teacher, well we can't really play with those anymore. So, the teacher told us to put them all in a plastic bag that she had and then she said, ‘oh, look, I have a lot of silly bands that I can wear!’”

Judy’s assessment of the trading incident and conversation with Annie and Karen brought her to the conclusion, “Well, what I thought happened… Well it was true, but it was the other way around. Nancy forced Annie and Karen to trade. They didn't really want to do it.” The violation of trading silly bands led to the girls experiencing actions of mistrust and lying to each other and a person of authority, Mrs. Z. The incident, resolved by the teacher in a quick sweeping of the bands into a plastic bag, had not been resolved in the minds of Ruth, Karen, Annie, and Judy. They felt the need to relive it at lunch and continued to work through the details attempting to make truth of the situation. The girls were willing to express their perception of the incident and defend their accusations (Brown & Gilligan, 1992), yet sacrificed a bit so as to not cross the border into challenging their friendship. Their actions stayed true to maintaining the continuity of their relationship through a change in thought rather than risk separation or replacement (Gilligan, 1982).
A Broader View of the Effects of the PBIS System at Lakeville Elementary School

Informational fliers were located in the main office that explained the PBIS program as being designed to promote good behavior in all of the students of the school. The evidences of telling children how to behave and providing extrinsic motivation to do so were apparent throughout the culture of the school. The students were told examples of how respectable, responsible, and ready to work behaviors manifested themselves in different locations of the school. My data support that Karen, Annie, Judy, and Ruth have learned how to whisper unnoticed when they are told to eat silently to be respectable; they chanted the rules when prompted; when students in the school did not behave as they are told, Karen and Annie voiced their confusion as to the institution of a punitive system of monitoring their behavior; children’s lavatory usage was monitored; Molly was willing to pick up garbage from the floor of the cafeteria to be rewarded with a horseshoe ticket for her responsible behavior; Mrs. Z was willing to interrupt academic instruction and submit to the frenzy of allowing Molly, Karen, Annie and Judy to retrieve unrecorded tickets in need of being recorded on a tally chart in the room; teacher assistants were allowed to interrupt academic instruction to announce they were present in the classroom to record the name of the student (never one of the five girls involved in the study) with the most “caught you” slips for the week and the total number accumulated by the entire classroom; Mr. Smyth was willing to devote a portion of the second grade student’s day each week to tell them how they are expected to behave during various portions of the day and announce the winner of the cafeteria horseshoe ticket count from the previous week; and a showcase in the lobby of the school is devoted to
publically acknowledging the weekly tallies of how of all of the classrooms fared in the “caught you” counts.

Internalization, the process by which the social becomes the psychological, forms through structures transmitted to the child by others through speech, social interaction, and the processes of cooperative activity (Vygotsky, 1968). Molly, Karen, Judy, Annie, and Ruth were expected to display good behavior by engaging in the components of the adopted PBIS program. Their cooperative behavior already occurred without the need of extrinsic motivators. Data I collected and discuss later in the chapter reveal Karen and Judy and Ruth and Annie were friends because they valued the exchange. All of the accumulation of recognition for appropriate behavior was acquired by individual student’s behavior. Students are told the behavioral expectations and the children meeting the expectations were acknowledged by the receipt of an extrinsic reward. The data do not demonstrate the children being brought together to be instructed in social emotional literacy. They are not being taught the skills of friendship formation or becoming a member of a community. When a classroom was awarded a prize, it was not an earned community-based effort, but rather based on a tally of the number of times an individual student acted in an appropriate manner. Being told what a behavior is and seeing the value of a desired behavior are not the same. Providing all of the children the opportunity to acquire the appropriate behavioral skills necessary to develop relationships and build community is not evident through the PBIS system as it is being implemented at this early stage of development at Lakeville Elementary School. This has direct impact on their ability to develop friendships based on collective connection, rather than fostering competition.
Institutional Limits in the Classroom

Beyond the parameters the five second grade girls experience due to the structural limitations and behavioral management systems of Lakeville Elementary School, their access to developing relationships with children of their choice was also limited by the individuals empowered to structure their groupings during the day. My data support that during the predominant portion of the students’ time in the classroom, their seating arrangements, with whom they were paired with to complete an assignment, and the small group and large group interactions of the children were structured by either Mrs. Z or a teacher assistant.

Dewey (1916) states that within a social group, the “individuals use one another so as to get desired results, without reference to the emotional and intellectual disposition and consent of those used” (p.5). He parallels this group to that of the workings of a machine, not a social group. This type of relationship would only require the giving and taking of orders which would modify actions and results, but not effect a communication of the sharing of a purpose which is necessary for the establishment of a community. Work may be accomplished, but without a shared purpose or meaning. Dewey (1916) states that, “so far as the relations of a teacher and pupil remain upon this level, they form no true social group; no matter how closely their respective activities touch one another (p.5). Much of the movement of the five girls is orchestrated by Mrs. Z according to their academic needs. Karen, Annie, Judy, and Ruth achieve the goals set by their teacher within the imposed structure. But do they operate within a community where relationships are fostered and students are empowered to work collaboratively toward a common goal?
The classroom environment in which Molly, Karen, Ruth, Annie, and Judy spend their day was constructed in a manner to have some of the structures; tables, bookcases, carpets, the teacher’s desk and chair, the easel, the teacher’s rocking chair remain constant. The stable structures of this classroom were arranged so as to provide nooks and spaces where the students could work with a partner or in small groups. The arrangement of the children’s desks changed twice during the months of observation, from rows to a horseshoe shape encircling six strategically placed individual desks. Name cards were placed on every student desk. Molly and Annie sat at desks in the middle of the configuration. Molly’s desk was next to Sean. Annie’s desk was by itself in the front portion of the six desks located in the middle of the horseshoe. Ruth and Judy sat next to each other in the front corner of the semi-circular arrangement. Karen’s spot was located on the other side of the room in the middle of a string of desks. Location of the desks was, “Where Mrs. Z put us,” according to Annie. Desks were a home-base for each of the girls. The carpet offered closer proximity, but seating still was not left to the choice of the students.

As they entered the classroom at the beginning of the day, Ruth and Judy went to their desks to an awaiting paper task. They placed their homework from the previous night on the corner of their desks. Molly, who did not have a consistent record for homework completion, began her day awaiting the arrival of the teacher assistant to determine what her first task of the day would be. If Molly, Ruth, and Judy had completed their homework, they were allowed to find a book in their “just right” book bin and move to a more comfortable spot in the room to read. This allowed the three, whose homework and first assignment of the day were completed, to sit with a
student of their choice. Ruth found her spot and waited for Annie’s arrival to the
classroom. Annie rode a bus that was one of the last to arrive, so often she missed out
on the freedom of choice of partners the students who arrived early go to experience.
Ruth often joined Karen and Judy during this time period, or waited for Annie’s
arrival. Most mornings, Molly returned to her desk to complete an assignment. Their
patterns of behavior that Mrs. Z found acceptable during this portion of the day was
rewarded by lauding the behavior of one of the students, “I like the way Judy is sitting.
Karen, will you move over next to her.” This is yet another example of Mrs. Z’s use of
competitive modeling through the use of comparing the behavior of one child as being

The carpet located in the front of the room served as a gathering place during
transitions to and from the classroom as well as when group lessons were conducted
by Mrs. Z. It was used frequently throughout the day. A bench and a sling-type chair
were positioned on the border of the carpet. Ruth’s assigned seat for group work was
the sling-back chair. Molly sat at the edge of the carpet closest to the teacher. Much of
the time, when the other students left the carpet for individual or small group work,
Molly remained and sat in the rocking chair used by the adult who had conducted the
lesson. Karen, Judy, and Annie took their positions on the carpet mingled among the
other children of the class. Much like the desk arrangement, seating on the carpet was
assigned by Mrs. Z. Reading always commenced with the students instructed to meet
on the carpet at the front of the classroom. While waiting for Mrs. Z to begin, Molly
used her proximity to the easel to rearrange the letters and suffixes on the chart. Her
actions were never prompted by a teacher request, but she was thanked by Mrs. Z.
when the task is completed. I propose that the nature of the rigidity of the seating arrangements on the carpet provided little opportunity for the girls to engage in friendship formation behaviors.

The assignment of partners continued when students left the carpet to practice skills introduced in the lesson. After the group lesson in retelling the details of a story using a graphic organizer, Mrs. Z assigned certain children to various locations in the classroom to complete the independent assignment. Judy and Karen, self-professed friends, were allowed to work together during writing time as they were writing partners. During a writing lesson, they were instructed to turn their chair and have a knee-to-knee discussion with the child next to them. Annie attempted to move her chair next to Ruth and was told by Mrs. Z she was not with the correct person. Annie informed Mrs. Z, “I was moving to the closest person because my partner is absent.” Ruth, by the way, sat nowhere near Annie.

Discussion on the carpet during a mathematics lesson was introduced as “turn to your partner next to you and discuss how to make the equation.” Math partners were not the same as reading partners. The subtle difference found Molly and Ruth creating equations on the carpet.

Conversation with Karen about who she had for partners lead to the following data, “You sit near Beth and two boys. Do you ever have Beth as a partner?” Karen responded, “Sometimes, if we have partners.” Further questioning about partnerships, “Do you ever have either of the boys as a partner?” revealed, “No. Usually I know who my partner is because Mrs. Z tells us.” The girls’ teacher played an instrumental role in the groupings they experienced.
The students found themselves being recommended as partners if Mrs. Z felt they had knowledge of a skill to a level indicative of mastery. While she was conducting a whole class lesson modeling a writing technique using a graphic organizer, she placed information on the incorrect spot of the organizer. Ruth told her she was not using the correct space. Mrs. Z ignored Ruth’s comment and continued on with the lesson. After a few more examples, the teacher realized Ruth was correct, acknowledged her error, and told the class they could use Ruth as a helper if they were confused with their work.

Even I, as the interviewer, decided very early on in the interview sessions that since Molly, Karen, Judy, Annie, and Ruth interrupted each other often in conversation, I would set parameters as to the sequence of speakers and how the answers would be given. "You will all get to answer, but we will go around. Everybody’s going to get a chance. So, should we start with the girl in the teacher's seat?" This imposed sequence of conversation moved to a more free flowing exchange as the months continued, but there were definitely times when the members of our interview sessions were at my choosing and at my pace.

I am not arguing for a school, or a classroom for that matter, to be without specific structures to guide how its members interact with each other. Much to the contrary, structures are important and necessary to make clear the expectations under which the institution functions. What I am arguing for is the establishment of a structure that honors the expertise of all of its members. Students are members of the classroom: the younger members who can enter into a partnership where their voices
are heard and trust is granted. Teachers must find the balance that works with a particular group of students in their particular setting.

The students in the classroom transitioned throughout their day working with partners most often selected by an adult. The partnerships were chosen by ability, academic or behavioral. Students were recognized for their abilities and singled-out as a good choice for a partner. Other partnerships, selected by the choice of the students, had structure placed on their interactions. Transitions were not an opportunity to socialize, but a purposeful activity of getting from one place to another in a quiet, efficient manner. This purposeful assignment of work partnerships significantly shaped the opportunities for friendship development among the girls.

**Conclusion**

I propose the data presented in this chapter support the limited opportunities Molly, Annie, Ruth, Judy, and Karen experience for interaction with other children of their own choosing. Friendships developed during the previous two years of their schooling, may or may not have the opportunity to continue based on which elementary school they attend for second grade. Their classroom time was devoted to academic endeavors where partnerships were most often dictated by the teacher in order to ensure optimum achievement. The opportunity for unstructured social interaction, recess and lunch time, provided the students their best shot at developing friendships. The 23 minutes set aside for the children to have lunch provided very specific limitations to the girls’ opportunity to interact. The mandatory silence imposed by the institution relegated the children to engage in some of the behaviors
that are the harbingers of behaviors used during adolescent bullying. The children seized the opportunity and found methods to maneuver around the limitations placed in them by the agenda of the institution. They developed a set of criteria and commonalities that were used in their formation and maintenance of relationship with others. These criteria will be discussed in the following section of this chapter.
CHAPTER FOUR
RESULTS
SECTION 2
EXAMINATION OF THE BEHAVIORS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF SECOND GRADE GIRLS DURING FRIENDSHIP FORMATION

Karen: “Yeah, I tried to be nice to everybody in the class. I want to be the nicest kid that ever lived in my family”.
Ms. Mc: “I think you're both very nice. You are nice to each other and you’re nice to other people. You two seem to have a good friendship, don't you think?”
Karen: “Yeah, we made up instead of BFF; SEBFFFFL which means super excellent best favorite friends forever for life!
Ms. Mc: “What do you like about her most?”
Karen: “She cares about me”.

This is but a snippet of the hours of conversations I had with the five second grade girls who comprised my study group. Through their own voices, Karen, Molly, Judy, Annie, and Ruth helped me to define the patterns of behaviors they undertook when establishing friendships. We used our time together exploring the idiosyncrasies of their behaviors and the qualities and characteristics that comprised eight-year-old girls’ friendships. We talked of home and school. Much in the style of Brown and Gilligan (1992), and true to the tenets of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), I talked with the girls in an open-ended, flexible manner. The stories unfolded in their
voice at their pace. My questions and interjections came from following the associative logic of their tales. In addition to our conversations, I followed them through their day observing and recording their actions. My analysis of their interactions and our informal and formal conversations lead to the formalization of theory relative to the interactions of second grade girls during friendship formation.

In this section of the chapter I argue that despite the extrinsic limitations placed on Karen, Ruth, Annie, Molly and Judy by way of their being members of the student body at Lakeville Elementary School, these girls exercised definitive patterns of behaviors as they formulated relationships with each other. The girls had social agency. They were deliberate in their selection of friends based on commonalities discovered through their interactions and conversations. They liked to talk. They were observed often gathered in small groups, simply talking to each other. They were ruckus at times and lowered their voices to whispers at others. They understood when it might be necessary to keep a secret, as the term secret was in their vocabulary and actions.

I propose Molly, Karen, Judy, Annie, and Ruth valued kindness, helpfulness, and a sense of humor in their relationships. They used their imaginations to occupy their time whether creating a club, reenacting a life situation, or chasing a boy in a fantasy game. Data derived from my interactions with the girls was a direct representation of their actions and in their voices. The literature can now reflect more about the behavior patterns of the second grade girls with whom I spent several months.
The observational and interview data I gathered in this study support the importance of relationships to the social development of seven and eight-year-old girls. I argue there were distinct behaviors present when young girls established and assessed relationships with peers. Girls who labeled themselves as friends shared similar interests and expressed value in being friends over time, “we’ve been friends forever.” In this chapter I will begin with data supporting the desire of the girls to share their time with partners of their own choice. I will then move to examine data relative to the behaviors of the girls as they engage in their friendship formation. Finally, I will cite definitive data relative to the valued relational characteristics of second grade girls. Woven throughout this section of the chapter, I will point to the manner in which some of the behaviors of Annie, Molly, Judy, Karen, and Ruth bear recognition as parallel to the behaviors employed later in life as methods of female bullying. I saw and heard few data I could claim were examples of existing bullying among the girls. They were, however, practicing some of the skills of exclusion, whispering, secrets, and learning intimate facts about each other that bear consideration as harbingers of the techniques of adolescent female bullying.

Relationships play an important role in the social development of young girls (Gilligan in Simmons, 2002). By the time they are ten or eleven years old, girls recognize that “nice behavior” (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 45) elicits acceptance by others and they are willing to sacrifice their own wants and needs in order to avoid conflict with others. Girls view a world comprised of relationships rather than people standing alone, a world that coheres through human connection rather than through systems of rules (Gilligan, 1982).
My data add to the already established theory relative to a segment of girls slightly older than my sample. I make the following specific claims as to the established patterns of behavior and interests of seven and eight year old girls as they developed friendships: 1.) seven and eight year old girls made choices that resisted the institutional agenda; 2.) they used talk and conversation as a method to try out ideas on each other, discover similarities, and share secrets; 3.) they used some of the strategies they learned in the academic endeavors of their school experience in their friendship formations; 4.) the girls who identified themselves as friends shared common interests which brought status to their friendships as currency for inclusion and exclusion in a group; and 5.) while female bullying was not a factor in the relationships of the girls involved in this study, some of the behaviors the girls exhibited were parallel to those used by girls when bullying other girls during adolescence.

**Resisting the Institutional Agenda – Partner Selection versus Partner Choice**

As my data supported in the previous chapter, the structure of a school schedule, the behavior management system of the school, and the influences of the adults in the setting established limitations to the opportunities for students to interact with children of their own choosing. Every opportunity for interaction represents an opportunity for children to practice communication and interpersonal skills. Ruth, Annie, Judy, Molly, and Karen grasped each opportunity to interact with their peers by crossing the borders imposed by the establishment (Thorne, 1993). When they were allowed to choose a partner, the opportunity developed for the each of the girls to
explore the establishment of relationships. When allowed free choice, my data reveal the girls made different selections of mates than those assigned by an adult. In the case of 60 percent of the study participants, the academic partner choices made by Mrs. Z, their teacher, were not reflective of the girl’s personal choices during unstructured times of the day. The examples below help to elucidate this assertion.

For the students in Mrs. Z’s classroom, the rug in the front of the room was a regular gathering spot for the children during large group instruction. All of the students in Lakeville Elementary School had a Literacy Block at the same time every morning. During a portion of that time, four students from Mrs. Z’s class left the classroom to receive instruction from a reading specialist. Molly was one of the children to leave the classroom during the Literacy Block. During a transition from a group introductory lesson to independent practice, Mrs. Z conducted the students’ departure from the rug in a deliberate manner. She controlled who they worked with and where they completed their work. She told Bobby, John, and Lamar, “to meet Miss Barber at the moon shaped table in the front of the room.” Two pairs of students were asked to, “leave the rug and return to your desks to complete the workbook pages.” Karen was told, “You may leave the rug and work with your partner and Ruth you can work with them because Andrew is absent today.” The teacher-directed transition continued in this manner until all of the children were positioned in partnerships in various locations of the room. Molly returned near to the end of the reading period and sat in the unoccupied teacher’s rocking chair. Annie and Judy were instructed to return to their desks to complete their assignments, independently.
During the portions of the day devoted to academic endeavors, Mrs. Z’s precise directions of movement left no room for choice of partners. Partnerships were exercised based on academic pairing not personal choice or collaborative community. As I have previously indicated, I support teacher direction to facilitate classroom instruction. I would be the first to invite organized movement of any group of people. Of interest here was the consideration that the girls would not have made the same partner choices as those assigned by Mrs. Z. The rug, however, sometimes provided opportunities for a different set of circumstances.

It was a Tuesday. I came into Mrs. Z’s classroom to observe patterns of partnerships between and among the girls. In particular, I was interested in the pairings of the girls during an academic activity. I had a copy of the weekly schedule of the class, so I anticipated observing the students during a reading lesson. In order to transition the students into the reading portion of the morning, Mrs. Z told the children to go to the rug. Molly sat by herself right in the front of the rug below the easel. She busied herself rearranging the letters and prefixes on the easel. Karen and Judy were able to squeeze together next to each other. Mrs. Z approached the rug, surveyed the terrain, and told certain students they are not on their “spot” on the rug. She, Mrs. Z, had assigned them places on the rug close to the person she had assigned as their reading partner. Karen and Judy had to separate to their designated seats on the rug for reading. They had made the choice to sit next to each other during this portion of the reading lesson. Their teacher had a different idea of an acceptable partnership and seating arrangement. To satisfy a budding curiosity about a pattern to their behavior, I returned to the data collected during previous classroom observations. I noted Judy
and Karen’s continuous attempts at sitting next to each other on the rug. They were successful 20 percent of the time; a ratio that would indicate the attempt at sitting next to each other worth their trying the action repeatedly. They were successful, sometimes, in the classroom and the cafeteria (as previously documented) at being rewarded for behavior that suited their needs and subverted the agenda of the adults.

Another example occurred later in December, when, during a math lesson being conducted on the rug in the front of the room, the classroom telephone rang. Ruth, who was seated in a sling-back chair positioned at the corner of the rug, got up to answer the phone for Mrs. Z. The lesson was interrupted when Ruth informed Mrs. Z she needed to “come to the phone and talk with Mrs. Jacobson, the Administrative Assistant.” Mrs. Z instructed the students to “turn and talk to your partner”; no specific topic was given to the students. The girls, Karen and Judy, took the opportunity to move and talk to a “partner” of their choice, each other. Ruth returned to her chair from answering the telephone to be joined by Annie. Molly turned to look at Mrs. Z, but did not move her seat. When Mrs. Z returned to the rug to continue the math lesson, Annie and Judy took the opportunity to move back to their spots on the rug while the rest of the children were coming to attention to return to the lesson. As with their efforts to circumvent the rules of silence in the cafeteria, the girls took advantage of the momentary confusion to return to their preferred spots. Given the opportunity, the girls moved to talk to a friend and did not remain with the partner chosen for them on the basis of reading ability by their classroom teacher.

The actions of Annie and Ruth were important because they demonstrated one manner in which the girls developed a creative way of dealing with their relative lack
of power (Thorne, 1993). Thorne refers to this movement of children as an “intricate choreography” (1993, p.36). Goffman (in Thorne, 1993) used the phrase “with-then apart”. Both suggested a variable and complicated process unfolded as children came against the rub of imposed grouping. In the cases of Annie, Ruth, Judy, and Karen, they grasped the opportunity to make their own choices of companions at every perceived opportunity. Their tactics were sometimes subversive. Their behaviors were not harmful to others as subversive behaviors can be in adolescent bullying. But, they were honing subversive measures, nonetheless. They relented and changed their seat when told to do so, but nevertheless continued in their attempts to exert their own power of choice over that of the institution, Mrs. Z.

**Behaviors of Girls as They Develop Relationships**

**Talking With Each Other**

Brown and Gilligan (1992), Orenstein (1994), Simmons (2002, 2004, 2011), and Thorne (1993) collected data through interviews and observations with upper elementary girls, adolescent girls, and teens. Their wisdom has been respected, reported, and represented as the voice of girls and young women in our society. They brought together females or groups of females, listened to their voices, and analyzed their conversations. It was through reading their work that I came to value the power of the voices of the participants in research. Much like the aforementioned researchers, the girls in my study exhibited the desire to come together and talk. To coin a phrase used by a mentor of mine, Phyllis Bonenfant, these girls “had the gift of gab.” Molly, Karen, Ruth, Annie, and Judy were observed talking to each other throughout the day.
and sharing conversations with me, also. My observational and interview data reflect the girls used conversation to discover commonalities and made personal connections. Their strong verbal ability and propensity to express openly their thoughts in a righteous manner (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Thorne, 1993) aided the girls in learning about their potential friends in myriad areas. As they might with an article of clothing, the girls were trying each other on for fit. Rather than stretch a garment, they stretched lines of communication.

McNelles & Connelly (1999) identify that girls achieve intimacy through discussion and self-disclosure. Such was the case in my experience with Molly, Karen, Ruth, Judy, and Annie. During my research at Lakeville Elementary School, the locations of the conversations varied from the classroom, to the playground, to the lunchroom, to other locations in the school, and to our meetings. Karen, Judy, Annie, Ruth, and Judy shared their thought in many forms and levels of conversation. They, along with the other second grade girls, were often observed engaged in groups of up to five simply sitting and talking with each other. The playground lent itself to such small clusters of girls by the closeness of the swings on the swing set and the benches located along the perimeter of the fence enclosing the play area. During more than one observation, Ruth, Karen, and Judy spent their morning’s recess sitting on one of the benches, talking.

Due to the external structural limitation of silence during a good portion of the lunch period, conversations held during lunch time in the cafeteria were a bit more challenging for the girls. When I entered the cafeteria for the first time, I was amazed by the imposed silence. Nonetheless, Annie and Ruth positioned themselves so as to
be able to talk openly when appropriate or subversively when the silent portions of the lunch were imposed. When Annie returned from depositing her trash, she could always be seen stopped at other tables from where she had eaten her lunch. She sat down and appeared to attempt to disappear into the crowd of students so as not to be detected by the teacher assistant as having returned to the wrong table. The girls she sat with crossed fingers with each other and talked. Annie’s behavior was not only seeking to engage in conversation with other second grade girls, but also an attempt to choose a mate with whom her partnership was restricted by the rules of cafeteria organization. Annie was not alone in her attempts to change seats to engage in conversation when she returned from depositing her trash. Judy, the student with the allergy to peanuts, returned to the classroom’s lunch table after she deposited her trash. Karen, who ate her lunch with Judy each day, would also return to the class table after they dumped their trash. The efforts to move and choose social partners demonstrate yet another manner in which the girls sought to engage in conversations for as long as time would allow. As with their movement on the rug in the classroom, the four girls used the time when a transition or interruption occurred to select partners of their own choice.

Unlike their very structured partnership time on the rug, during their time in the classroom, the girls had opportunities to talk with their academic partners during other times of the day. Sometimes they had the opportunity to talk to a partner of their own choosing. When this happened, Mrs. Z reminded all of the students, “sit eye-to-eye and knee-to-knee as you do in reading.” Karen, Judy, Annie, and Ruth formed their usual pairs. Molly was always assigned a partner by the teacher from the pool of
students who, like Molly, were slow in making their own partnerships. Molly shared in conversations with us when we shared lunch in our small group, but never broke the barrier of being chosen as a partner by Karen, Judy, Annie, or Ruth during classroom activities. She joined the lunch group at my invitation or the invitation of one of the other members of the study. While at lunch, she talked, but was not always engaged in a conversation with the other girls, as will be evidenced later in the chapter.

Clearly, activities involving children working with partners was part of the social development expected of second grade students in Mrs. Z’s classroom. In a child-centered classroom community, a strategy for partnering children is to ask students to choose an “unlikely partner” (Leo, 2007; Thorne, 1991; Wallace & Knotts, 2004). The premise behind this strategy is to allow students the opportunity to work with someone they would have never chosen as a work mate. They expand their circle of acquaintances and exercise their skills in developing a limited working relationship. They have the power of choice and the opportunity to experiment with their relational skills in a safe environment. Many resources in the area of social emotional literacy talk about “unlikely pairs in grouping.” I often wanted to make the suggestion to Mrs. Z to look at literature on methods of making suggestions to students for choosing unlikely partners. Then, she would not select a partner for the child, nor allow for total freedom of choice, but rather ask the students to make partnership decisions in unique, original manners. She came close in one of her ideations of partner choice, “Talk to your partner and tell me what you think.” Students turned to person near to them and discussed/listed what needed to be done. There was freedom of choice as to whom they chose as a partner, with the only qualifying restriction being they could not,
“move your chair too far from your desk.” What if their freedom of movement extended to an “unlikely partner?” Would the girls experience the opportunity to turn their propensity to talk into finding commonalities with someone new? What might they learn about a stranger in their own classroom? How might they begin to respect and trust someone in a new relationship?

A Deeper Look at the Functions of Conversation among Seven and Eight-Year-Old Girls

Brown and Gillian (1992) conducted a five year study of 100 girls between the ages of seven and 18. They created a “guide to listening” (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p.22) that provided a pathway into the relationships of the females with whom they conversed. I, too, designed a multiple step listening protocol to transcribe and analyze the hours of conversations with the second grade girls. The specifics of the protocol were delineated in the methodology section of this paper. On most of my visits to Lakeville Elementary School, I left with a promise to at least one of the girls of when I would return and a potential list of lunch mates for my next visit. I arrived, tape recorder in hand, ready to record our conversations so as not to miss any of the dialogue. After all, it was the voice of the girls I wanted to capture and analyze. As I sifted methodically through the layers of data, I came to the conclusion that second grade girls possessed the social agency of weighing conversation and used conversation effectively in expressing their opinion. They recognized and verbalized personal injustices and injustices they perceived were directed toward others. They were ripe to use their verbal abilities to discover commonalities between themselves
and others. Molly, Annie, Karen, Ruth, and Judy experienced cognitive dissonance in their initial attempts to engage in conversation. They applied a strategy learned in their reading class to remedy the discord.

**Making Connections**

Most often during their conversations, the girls would build off of each other’s comments. However, if there were three or four girls coming together during an interview, while the one of the girls explained or clarified an event to me, the remaining girls might discuss the same event between themselves. The girls would shift their behaviors between two-person conversations and the group conversation in a second’s notice. They were learning the nuances of engaging in a conversation instead of talking and learning to use conversation as a method of building relationships.

Conversations that began about random topics or resulting from random actions often led to connections among the girls. They were learning facts about each other. Early on in our lunches together, Karen took a cheese stick from her lunch box. This simple action rendered a discussion about a random topic that in turn led to four girls discovering commonalities about themselves. In this case they learned they shared dietary commonalities. More important than the topic of the conversation, their exchange also created a tension that brought the girls to employ a relationship strategy of taking turns to afford all parties equal opportunity to participate in the conversation.

The conversation about a random topic began when Karen, Judy, and Ruth invited Molly to join us for lunch. Judy had observed Molly by herself on the
playground. She asked her to come in to lunch with us, and then told the other girls she had invited her. “She needs a friend” was what Judy told the other two girls when Molly was out of ear-shot. Karen began the lunch conversation, “I know four ways to eat a cheese stick,” as she took a cheese stick out of her lunch box… “The second way: peeling it with my teeth,” as she proceeded to use her front teeth to peel down the cheese stick. Ruth responded to Karen by making a connection, “I used to eat a plum with my bottom teeth because these two teeth were gone”… showing us her front teeth. Karen continued… “and my third way is to eat it like a hot dog.” Judy, "That’s like corn." Karen acknowledged, “Yup, like corn.” Molly added, “I eat hotdogs like corn because it bothers my front teeth” to which Karen replied, "When I drink through a straw it sometimes freezes my front teeth.” These commonalities connected the girls to one another.

The conversation shifted out of control and proceeded at a fast pace with demonstrations of eating styles, views of front teeth, and offerings of the many ways teeth were sensitive to cold; “it tickles,”… “it just hurts,”… “It stings,”… “it tickles,”… “no,”… “it does to me.” The girls tended to speak over each other until Molly asked, “May I tell you something?” I replied with, “you may tell me something.” Judy, who had originally tried to interrupt Molly by saying, “I have a connection” again, repeats the phrase, "I have a connection." Molly, Karen, and Ruth allowed Judy to speak this time. Judy was on to something. Molly asked me if she could speak to me, not add to the groups’ discussion. Her request was overridden by Judy getting to add her piece. But, of significance was that the girls began to employ
this method of “making a connection” more prominently as an entrée into conversations.

The girls began to seek harmony in the discord of the discussion much like Gilligan (1993) found in her talks with older girls. With increased frequency, the girls would reel in their conversation pattern with attempts to invite themselves into the discussion by means of the technique they learned to use to make connections in their reading class. “May I make my connection now?” asks Karen. “Yeah, then can I speak?” asks Ruth. I could not help myself, I guess, when I added, “Certainly! I like when we are all listening to each other’s contributions.” I continued, "I'm curious about something. How did you learn about the expression ‘I've got a connection to that?’” Judy did not skip a beat disclosing, “We learned it in a way…. Like; text- to-text, text-to-world, text-to-self”. I responded to Judy and the rest of the girls with, "I love it! So you're taking something you learned in reading and you're applying it to your real-life conversations?” Judy, “Yeah, I guess so.” Molly concluded, “I guess so, too.” My observations in Mrs. Z’s classroom informed my comment. The girls had transferred a skill they learned in reading. They found a connection between what they had to say to the thought of someone else in the conversation. They liked to talk and they were learning how to effectively engage in conversation. They were applying the tools they learned in school to their social connections.

A Shift in Conversational Style

When I first came together with Judy, Ruth, Molly, Annie, and Karen, it felt as if the eight-year-old girls found comfort in trying their ideas out with one other person.
They would talk to each other and then bring the thought to the whole conversation much like the “turn to your partner” protocol used during their academic experiences. As the interview sessions grew in number and my interview data accumulated, the second grade girls developed a personal protocol allowing them to make connections during conversations. They listened for opportunities to interject their own life experiences into conversations. The jumping all over each other’s conversations behavior diminished greatly and was replaced with a level of comfort they would, too, have the opportunity to add to the conversation. The girls experienced entrées to commonalities previously unknown. They had grown in their cognitive development as a result of our social interaction. I harkened back to the writings of Vygotsky (1968) as I analyzed these data. This growth in their ability to communicate instead of simply talking was cognitive development directly related to our interaction. Their zone of proximal development had shifted. They talked to each other not over each other. I propose their growth in their ability to communicate conversationally was related to the time we spent together in the interview portion of this study. Of equal importance, it revealed a specific relationship building strategy that these girls employed to secure their friendships.

*Whispering as a Form of Conversation or Exclusion*

While some forms of conversation lent themselves to normal levels of voice, the communication among the girls often took another form, whispering. This pattern of behavior was observed in multiple settings over a range of time. The lowered voices used during whispering were often accompanied by hand-covered mouths and heads.
drawn in close proximity to one another. Whispering among the children also was
most often accompanied by a turn of the head by at least one of the girls away from
the conversation and giggling. Whispering allowed the girls to have conversations
with each other even when direction was given for them to cease talking and
overcome one of the limiting actions of the institution, silence.

For example, on one occasion, four girls sat next to each other on one of the
lunch table benches. Annie and Ruth sat together on the bench at the other side of the
table. The teacher assistants had signaled “the clap” for silence during this portion of
the lunch. Annie and Ruth whispered to each other and tried not to let the teacher
assistant in charge of lunch supervision see them. Clearly, their conversation had not
ended even though the call to silence had been clapped. The teacher assistant directed
her comment to Annie, “You are not following directions, so you are not being
respectful!” (a comment linking the whispering behavior of the girls to the PBIS
program described earlier). The girls giggled and stopped their conversation.

As a form of conversation, whispering can be done to avoid detection between
girls to share a common interest or mischief. Annie and Ruth whispered behind their
hands to each other. Annie had a paper magic square folding item with numbers on it.
She had it on the bench out of direct sight of the teacher assistant. She whispered and
played the paper game with Ruth when they were supposed to be silent. They avoided
detection. On another occasion whispering, giggling, and clapping brought a
confluence of activity to the lunch period. Once again it was a time during the lunch
period when the students were expected to be eating their lunches silently. A couple of
girls, Annie being one of the two, imitate “the clap,” the signal the teacher assistants
used for attention and to begin and end the students’ silent behavior during the lunch period. Annie and her partner in the clapping activity whispered and giggled with each other. They put their hands back to eating quickly so they would not get caught. Other students began to imitate them by trying to get the rhythm of the “clap”. The teacher assistant surveyed the room looking for who caused the commotion. Annie was not discovered as the student initiating the whispering and clapping in this situation. The numbers of incidents involving whispering were accumulating.

If Annie and Ruth or Judy and Karen were in attendance during our lunchtime together with any of the other five second grade girls in the study, they often engaged in a whispered conversation between themselves. They did this while waiting for others to join the group or while a discussion took place between the larger group. The conversations were often, as whispering is, inaudible. Sometimes a portion of the conversation was heard, but rarely enlightened the discussion. I never attempted to stop the whispering, but merely noted it as a behavior when it occurred. “We’re just telling each other something,” accompanied by a shoulder shrug, and a tilt of the head was the response I received from Annie when I asked her if she wanted to share what she and Ruth were whispering about. They both giggled. I felt excluded from their conversation even though I was sitting at the same table.

Our lunchtimes together continued to be an opportune time for conversations with the girls. When I left each session, one of the participants would ask when I would return the next time. They clearly liked to talk. I often began my visits in the classroom or at an event or function involving Karen, Molly, Judy, Annie, or Ruth. On this particular day, I was having lunch with Annie and Ruth, self-identified as friends.
They had invited Molly to join our lunch group as they had observed her by herself during the recess period. Molly talked about her younger brother. Ruth and Annie ignored her talking and held a quiet conversation of their own for at least two minutes while Molly continued on with her story. Their conversation was too low to be picked up by the recorder’s microphone, but continued throughout the two minutes while Molly told her story. Later, during the same lunch period, while Molly explained her friendships, Annie and Ruth again whispered to each other, “What's with the apple juice?” The two friends, Annie and Ruth, both asked for Molly to join the lunch group when they perceived her to have spent her recess time alone. Even though they had included Molly physically in the group, they had also excluded her in their conversation with each other through whispering when she spoke. In this way, whispering was a strategy of bonding and exclusion.

I argue there is significance to the whispering behaviors of the second grade girls that caused exclusion and subversion of the institutional agenda. My previous work with adolescents and female bullying always makes me weary of subversive behaviors like whispering leading to exclusion. Exclusion is one of the main covert tactics used by girls to bully other girls (Olweus, 1993; Simmons, 2002). Indirect aggression, also known as female bullying, allows the perpetrator to avoid confronting her target. Covert behavior is used to make it seem as though there was no intent to hurt at all. Social aggression is intended to damage self-esteem or social status within a group. It may include some indirect aggression like rumor spreading or social exclusion. Girls have a higher level of verbal abilities than boys and are generally socialized to avoid overt physical behavior (Leckie, 1998). To elude social
disapproval, girls retreat beneath the surface of sweetness to hurt each other in secret. Indirect aggression allows the perpetrator to avoid confronting her target. Covert behavior is used to make it seem as though there was no intent to hurt at all. Social aggression is intended to damage self-esteem or social status within a group. It may include some indirect aggression like rumor spreading or social exclusion. While the level of malice may be lesser at this early age, the presence of the pattern is important to note. Molly experienced whispering as exclusion, but whispering can also lead to secrets.

**Whispering and Secrets**

Rachel Simmons (2002) and Peggy Orenstein (1994) wrote about the propensity of two adolescent friends divulging secrets to each other. The secrets provided a bond between the parties. They fostered intimacy. However, these secrets became weapons if the relationship between the girls became estranged. Words became powerful ammunition when girl turned against girl. Data I collected indicate there are incidents when the conversations and whisperings led to requests for the information to remain confidential between the parties, secrets. Keeping secrets was not a behavior exclusive to the girls during school time, but was also discussed as a behavior reinforced in situations at their home. These were not the secrets parents whisper in the ears of their children as part of a game. The girls also expressed concern that if a secret was disclosed it would elicit retaliation. At the age of eight years old, all five girls had experienced telling secrets and being asked to keep secrets. They were not the adolescents of Simmons writings, but add to the literature on the
employment of secrets being a part of the communication repertoire of girls at eight years old.

Annie, in one incident, felt when keeping a secret from Ruth she was the owner of exclusive information. Ruth had a birthday party that involved an elaborate dinner and an overnight sleep over. Only two of the girls in the group, Annie and Judy, were invited to the dinner. The secrets began with the manner in which Ruth distributed the invitations. Judy disclosed, “Everybody was watching Ruth, thinking will she stop at my desk? She’d just come up to you and whisper; here I got something for you. Don’t tell.”

“Karen was mad” was Judy’s response to how her friend felt by not being invited. The secrets did not end with the invitations. Ruth’s Mom had hired a limousine as transportation for the evening. Ruth and Annie discussed their ride in a limousine as part of a birthday party celebration. Annie lowered her voice and said, “I was the only one that knew. I knew it all along, but had to keep it a secret. My Mom told me to.” Ruth, “No, my Mom knew too.” The birthday party of second grade Ruth was an opportunity for secrets to lead to the obvious exclusion of others in her class and Annie feeling like she was the keeper of exclusive information. The girls were practicing secretive behaviors. In this instance it was a party. But, the behavior shared by these girls was sanctioned by their parents. What does that do to the level of acceptance of their behavior?

In a different instance, I found myself being asked to become the owner and keeper of a secret. While we were on the playground, Karen Judy, Molly and I were talking about leadership in girls. Karen, “I do, but don't tell Angela because she will
scream at us and I mean scream! Really loudly!” I responded to her concern, “Don't worry I won't tell Angela. Our conversations are confidential. Do you know what confidential means?” Molly, “Secret.” I continued, “Well, not really secret.” Molly added before I could continue, “Well it's not bad secret. It's just something that you don't say because it will hurt others. So, you just want to tell that person because they asked you the question.” “Tell me more,” I said. Molly continued, “Like when you answer a question or tell the teacher something you don’t want them to tell you told.” Karen added her clarification, “like Angela will scream if she knows we told you she thinks she’s the leader of the girls and we don’t think she is.” “So you’re telling me a secret about Angela? I asked. “Yeah,” “yup,” were their responses. I had been trapped by their behavior. I joined in their secret knowledge. Our conversation about leadership led Karen to disclose a fact she did not want repeated. I called it maintaining confidentiality and she called it keeping a secret. With either label, Ruth, Molly, and Karen had secrets to disclose about another girl. And, I had become complicit in this act as well.

In late November, Annie and Judy whispered to each other as they waited for Molly to get her lunch. Annie is whispering to Judy, “If you promise you won't tell anybody, I'll let you know where the teacher hides her best books. She lets me read them over and over again.” Judy, “Why is it a secret?” Annie, “…because the teacher really doesn't want us to read them.” I had overheard their whispered conversation and responded, “Mrs. Z must know you read them because you record them in your journal.” Judy added, “I know you read them. I've seen you read them. Everybody knows you read them.” As it turned out, only Annie thought she had a piece of
exclusive information to secretly share with Judy. Nonetheless, secrets were being offered for exchange between the second grade girls. Secrets are a valuable weapon in female bullying (Simmons, 2002). The second grade girls were learning how to collect them at an early age.

**Caring and Helpfulness**

My conversations with Karen, Ruth, Annie, Molly and Judy reveal data they enjoyed talking and employed the behaviors of whispering and keeping secrets. My data further reveal that as the girls engaged in their interactive behavior of communicating with each other during the establishment of relationships, they began to disclose another valuable behavior exhibited in the determination of friendship, helpfulness to one another and kindness and caring for each other. Noddings (2003) described caring as an ethical ideal rooted in the interdependence of two people. Helpfulness, given and accepted, brought fulfillment to both parties. Judy, Karen, Molly, Ruth, and Annie displayed kindness toward each other. I argue the data I collected support the girls practiced acts of caring, helpfulness and kindness as a component of friendship behavior. They expressed value in the acts of kindness and helpfulness through their comments and acknowledgements. As stated in the beginning of the chapter, Karen was quick to tell me that Judy, “cares for me,” in her description of the quality that made Judy her best friend. Friendships involved caring and helpfulness to each other for the eight-year-old girls. Helpful, kind, caring behavior between and among friends existed in whatever locations the girls were found. They complemented each other in their actions and complimented each other with their words.
For example, Annie had already spent a portion of the “silent” lunch period whispering to Ruth. It was now near to the end of the lunch period. Students were throwing away uneaten food and trash. The teacher assistants were supervising the clean-up effort. Annie returned to her seat with a roll of bread. She had a conversation Ruth, her friend she has chosen to sit next to at lunch. Then, Ruth got up, went to the lunch counter, and returned to her seat with a packet of butter for Annie. Annie placed both butter and roll into her pocket. This showed helpful, kind behavior on the part of Ruth toward her friend, Annie.

This type of helpful, gathering behavior was exhibited in the classroom between friends, also. Mrs. Z had just concluded a group lesson in reading. The students were told to return to their seats to do the workbook pages that accompanied the lesson. The girls got to stand first to find their places to work. Karen had trouble managing the pile of her book, workbook, and whiteboard back to her desk. Judy carried the white board and workbook for Karen. Both girls smiled and giggled as they moved to their desks in the room.

Aside from helping each other physically, the girls also provided assistance with academic assignments. Karen and Judy were sitting on the floor in the back corner of the classroom completing a written response to a reading passage. The task for each of the girls was to reread a book at their reading level and then proceed to complete the written assignment using the content from the book they had read. Karen noticed Judy, who has selected Corduroy as her book, had missed one of the steps in the process. Karen, “um, you are supposed to underline that.” Judy, “I am stuck on this word.” Karen looked at the word, and proceeded to tell Judy the wrong
pronunciation of the word. Judy repeated the word and then substituted it in the text.

Neither girl noticed the word did not make sense in the context of the passage. As the time passed, Judy went up to the teacher’s work table and returned with two pens.

Now, Judy and Karen had the same type of pen with which to complete the assignment. Judy informed me, “These are the teacher’s pens but we can borrow them…they are gel pens.” She looked over at the work Karen had completed on the assignment, “You write really good!” Judy then turned to me and said, “OMG, she writes really good!”

Helpfulness on the part of the girls took on other forms when the eight-year-old girls perceived another female member of their class in need of assistance. I asked Molly to meet me for lunch as I often observed her completing activities by herself. I gave her the option to choose Karen, Ruth, Annie, or Judy to join us for lunch, if she desired. She selected Judy and Ruth to join us. Molly went to get her book in her locker which gave me the opportunity to ask Judy, “Did it surprise you that Molly chose you to have lunch with you? Do you consider her your friend?” Judy, “Well yeah, I guess we are her friends. We try to stop Nathan from being annoying to her.” I replied, “Do you, that's nice.” Ruth smiled at me.

On another occasion, Karen invited Molly to join us for lunch. I did not initially intend Molly to be part of the interview on Monday. I wanted to have a discussion with Annie about her playground activity. She, however, asked to invite Molly because she perceived her as being sad and having difficulty on the playground with some of the other children. Molly, Annie, and I shared our 23-minute lunch period together discussing some of the activities Annie liked to do while on the
playground. I asked her, “What are some of the things you like to do at recess? I’ve seen you coloring or drawing.” Annie, “Yeah, I like to sit and talk and color with Ruth. We trade silly bands and I usually go over to the bars and hang upside down because Ruth teaches me gymnastics. Can I show you?”

Helpfulness on the part of the students, at least on one occasion, sometimes came into question. Prior to the end of lunch, I moved to a table that was separate from the usual lunch table. Four children, Annie, a second girl and two boys, sat at the lunch table. I asked the students that are at this table why they are not sitting with the class. One of the boys informed me that it was the “Bad Table.” The boys responded, “I’m bad,” “…me too.” Annie looked at me, smiled, and whispered, “I am sitting here because I am helping to make more room at the other table.” This was, indeed, a table set aside for children who had broken some rule of acceptable cafeteria behavior. But for Annie, she was taking her chances I did not know that was the purpose of her sitting at the table. She would much prefer I think she was being a sweet, smiling, helpful second grade girl. She even whispered the information to me. She was learning the importance of image.

Evidences of kindnesses and helpfulness were present during my data collection involving incidents on the playground, in the classroom, in the lunchroom, in the hallway, at assemblies, and in discussion. The second grade girls displayed helpfulness, caring, and kindness in their words and actions. They linked friendship and kindness in descriptions of behaviors and characteristics respected in their relationships.
Common Interests in “Having Stuff”

Identifying the common interests of the girls as a factor in their friendship formations has been a consistent research question from the inception of my study. Previous studies (Baldwin in Markovits et al., 2001; Ladd, Price, & Hart, 1988; Markovits et al., 2001; Parker & Seal, 1996) suggested patterns in the preferences and maintenance of friendship formation have gender implications. Children attained power through the social construction of their relationships exerted along the lines of gender (Lorber, 1994; Orenstein, 1994; Orenstein, 2011; Simmons, 2002). I examined data collected with the second grade girls along the lines of how their common interests made for inclusion in friendships.

As I analyzed data collected with the second grade girls in this study, I have added to the literature of my fellow researchers by determining patterns in the common interests held by the second grade girls in the development of friends and relationships. Examining patterns in the behaviors of Molly, Karen, Judy, Annie, and Ruth led me to the following proposal: the eight-year-old girls who shared friendship also shared interests in clothing and accessories, reading materials, games of imagination and play, and humor. In addition, they formed inclusive alliances where criterion for admission was controlled by the members of the group. The common interests of the seven and eight-year-old girls served to connect some of the girls and isolate others.

Data were replete with evidences of Karen, Annie, Judy, Ruth and Molly’s fascination with clothing and accessories. Their collective, common interest in these topics was shared internationally by fellow females. Orenstein (2011) presented
compelling data about the effects of marketing and the fashion industry on the self-images of girls. The standard of beauty was set by what the industry presented to the public. The clothing and accessories of dolls made in the images of Disney characters or heroines featured in media designed to capture the interests of young girls set an unrealistic image of beauty. Girls aspired to the unnecessary and unattainable body image of a plastic figurine.

It was no surprise to me when the clothing and accessories worn by the second grade girls became part of the conversations between them and among us. They compared and shared approval of garments quietly between them with a “thumbs up” signal and in open discussion. Their shared interest in fashion was the impetus for a group of the girls forming a “club.” Membership into the “club” was based on the creation of drawings of acceptable clothing. Consistent with the pattern of behaviors I shared previously, the second grade girls were very willing to discuss their shared interest.

Annie had offered to talk with me about her involvement with other girls in a “club.” I invited her to lunch and told her to invite whomever she chose to come along with her to talk about the “club.” I began with a very pointed question to Annie, "So, Annie, you were telling me a while ago about.” Annie interrupted me by saying, “the club!” I acknowledged her answer, “yes, a club. So, can you tell me who's in the club, and what kinds of things you do?”

Annie proceeded to tell me, “Well, we pretend like we are part of the fashion world and stuff. It's me and Ruth and Judy. And we do design and stuff, design fashion. So we each have a notebook and we do design and stuff and then we show
each other…. And really look at it and see which one’s the best and stuff. And then we like try to sew it or make it or something.” She is corrected by Ruth, “We never sew it, though”. Annie, "I know."

The girls continued to share the details of their club, “we kind of just make designs to make them, you know, and.” During the discussion, Annie remembered, “I have my notebook with me.” Ruth and Judy encouraged her, “you do? Go get it!” “Yeah, go get it. She has hers!” After more than one trip to her locker, Annie finally retrieved the notebook containing her fashion drawings. All three the girls tried to figure out if one of them had a notebook with them so they could show me what they did for their fashion design “club.” When Annie returned with her notebook, she opened to a page and pointed to one of the pictures and asked Ruth and Judy, “Do you remember this picture?” As the girls share Annie’s pictures with me, they began to share the details of the importance of the drawings, “it's kind of been a long time since I've done anything in it.” Judy, “We haven't done it in a long time either.” Ruth, “We don't really draw as much anymore.”

As the conversation progressed, I learned the drawings in the notebook had given way to an address book kept by Annie, “No, we really don't. Now, I have an address book for people who are trying to do it... be in the club. It does not include the boys. They asked to be in it, but we have addresses that people didn’t get yet, like of Judy’s mom.” Pushing further, I asked the girls, “How do you decide who gets to be in your address book?” Again, it was Annie who answered, “Well, we have to, we have to, well, it's just the girls. So, if somebody draws like just a skirt or shawl we have to see how good the drawing is before we let them be in the club.” My final question to
the trio of girls, "Oh, so you decide who gets to be in the club?" Judy, “Well we don't hurt their feelings or anything… We just say maybe you can work on it a little bit and maybe you can get in next time.” Annie, “Cause sometimes their coloring isn't that good.” I learned through our conversation that drawing and fashion was a common interest in the relationship of the girls. Annie, Judy, and Ruth talked about their creations and decided if they wanted to include or exclude members into their circle, “club,” based on the girl’s ability to meet the arbitrary standards they had set for inclusion. Boys need not apply for membership because of their gender.

The club the girls previously described included four members of the study, Ruth, Karen, Annie, and Judy. Inclusion and exclusion in the club was a mystery to me, but further analysis of data and conversation led to the coda of the “club.” Annie maintained an address book that she brought to lunch on many days. I noted its existence, but learned of its relevance to the “club” during a conversation started with my question, “How did you decide to make a club?” I learned girls interested in joining the group would approach Annie or Judy, “When I first started to do it people would say, ‘can I be in it? Can I be in it?’” They had differing opinions about who would be approached more, and which of the two would have the final say as to inclusion in the “club.” “And then you let Angela in. And I said nope, you have to ask me.” Both maintained, “I was the boss of it. I started the club. I started the club,” until Judy acquiesced; “Now I think we both kind of started it.” Annie was not interested in sharing origin rights to the club and continued despite Ruth’s effort to quell the disagreement, “It's okay… Let's not fight about this. People would ask us and then we would just do it whenever we had time to do it…decide if they could join the club.”
Data indicate that choice was involved in exclusion or inclusion in the girls’ club, however criterion for involvement and who made the decision was not as specific. The girls were instituting the exclusion they had witnessed each day on the playground. They were also feeling the power of inclusion.

In other discussions, Annie, Ruth, Karen, Molly, and Judy talked about the acquisition and accumulation of another popular accessory, silly bands: shapes made from elastic the children coveted, traded, and wore on their wrists. I had seen them encircling the wrists of both male and female second grade students. The overwhelming presence of silly bands led me to believe they were part of the currency of power in the second grade. I had observed silly bands being traded between the girls on numerous occasions. I brought up the topic during one of the times I was talking with Karen and Judy. “Jake gave me a military one. It's a tank engine.” Judy’s response to my question, “Do the boys have different silly bands from the girls?” brought me to the knowledge that, in fact, there are silly bands preferred by the boys, but it was the acquisition of the bands themselves that presented the difficulty, “I guess there must be a lot in Tennessee because my mom brought home a whole bunch. She did that because everywhere we went around here that we heard they had them they were all sold out.” Judy and Karen helped me to understand the phenomenon from their perspective when they responded to my inquiry, “So, what's the deal with having the most?” Judy, “Well, we haven't really counted but I think Annie has the most. She has them up her both arms usually…but, it might be Alex because she said she has 90!” Judy let me know that not only did she have more than Alex, but she also had some silly bands too special to trade. She would, however, trade with Karen, “any
time she needed one I have extras of.” The silly brands brought status to the girls who were fortunate enough to have them to wear.

To be sure, the fashion industry was a common interest among the members of the second grade girls involved in the study. Two of the girls, Judy and Karen, brought light to the acquisition of silly bands through gifting one another and Ruth enlightened me further when I approached her and Annie on the playground bench during a second grade recess. I went underneath the play gym to see what they were doing, “What do you play here?” Ruth led me to discover, “Well, we trade silly bands or we can play house.” I was determined to learn more about this interest of the girls, “Tell me about trading silly bands and your silly bands.” Ruth revealed, “I have 119.” After we established my amazement at the number she possessed, she regaled the assortment on her arm. Annie, who did not have nearly as many silly bands visible, “sometimes I look for one I know Ruth wants and we trade.” Annie knew the subject of her next trade with Ruth. “So, is that your goal to get a dog, or you don’t care?” Annie, “I have to find one first.”

The acquisition and accumulation of silly bands was a common interest of four of the girls in the study. They helped each other acquire them and kept watch of the acquisition of the bands among their peers. They were entrepreneurs of sort: trading and keeping stock of an item that brought commonality to their friendships. Molly was not part of any of the conversations we had on silly bands, but joined the accessory conversation at another time during a classroom discussion held in December. I sat on the rug in the back of the classroom to observe and talk to Molly, Karen, and one other girl sitting together on the rug. They had chosen a book to read together. I noticed
Molly had on a hair band with reindeer antlers on it. I asked her to, “Tell me about your hair band.” She responded, “I wore a funky one yesterday – it had candy canes…..my Mom brings them home for me all the time.” Her comment led Karen, Molly, and a fellow classmate, Jenny, to talk about a store with lots of “hair stuff” and their all liking to wear hair bands and get “hair stuff” at this store. Even though I found another connection between the girls, I felt a bit guilty because I have taken them away from their reading assignment. I reminded them to think about what they should be doing and moved to another group. I was pleased to see Molly making a connection with Judy and Jenny about a topic so clearly important in the lives and friendships of second grade girls.

Fashion and comparison between girls on their fashion taste made its way into times that were intended to be devoted to learning about the behavioral expectations of the school. For example, during the lunch period, Annie and Ruth were comparing wristbands as the teacher assistant was talking about the tickets and prizes awarded to various students who had exhibited respectful behavior during lunchtime. Or, during the PBIS assembly, when Mr. Smyth discussed appropriate bathroom behavior, while Molly and Judy pointed to each other’s socks, giving a thumb’s up sign indicating approval, and giggling.

Fashion also entered the conversation between Karen and Molly as they described acceptable clothing for certain physical activity. Karen, “Well, she does cartwheels all the time because every day she’s wearing jeans. She can do cartwheels.” Molly, “Well, it’s not a bad thing to wear what I wear.” I am curious, “So what does wearing jeans have to do with doing cartwheels?” to which Karen lets us know her
opinion, “Well, like you’re supposed to wear sweat pants, not jeans. The jeans don’t stretch so much. I just like to wear stretchy pants and not jeans. Skirts some days, too.” As is consistent with eight-year-old girls who will often interrupt the calm with their opinion (Brown and Gilligan, 1992), the conversation occurred as a matter-of-fact statement shared by Karen with Molly. Karen had made a judgment about what clothing was acceptable to wear for certain activities. Her social construction of proper attire was not of the same standard as Molly.

On another occasion, a fashion accessory came into play as Molly made a connection with me and eventually engaged in a conversation with another girl at the lunch table. On this Wednesday, I sat at the lunch table next to Molly, who was by herself. When I sat next to Molly, the girl sitting on the other side of me, Sarah, slid down next to me. I was now between two girls who had not been together during the lunch until this point. After some discussion about her food, Molly made the comment, “I really like your bracelet. My Mom has one with stuff on it like that.” Sarah joined the conversation with her question, “Where did you get it?” I proceeded to talk with the two girls about the charms on the bracelet and the meanings attached with each. The two girls, who remained apart until I sat on the bench, talked with me about the bracelet and compared the colors of my jewelry to those of the bracelets owned by someone in their life. A piece of jewelry allowed the girls to discover a commonality with each other and an adult. Communication was brought together for the girls through the interjection of an adult into the setting. It made me consider what options might be open for girls like Molly who often sit alone at lunch.
All of these examples document that second grade girls use their material possessions as currency when building relationships and creating connections. Significant to the research around adolescent girls, the second grade girl’s use of material goods has the potential to exclude as well.

Reading as a Common Interest

At Lakeville Elementary School, second grade was a time when literacy was woven into the fabric of every element of the academic day. Children in this second grade class had personal bins of books at their reading level, the “just right reading bin,” within easy reach. They were encouraged to make selections from the bin and read or reread the stories to practice fluency. I reported data where the students’ progress was rewarded through celebrations honoring the amount of books they had read. The girls shared their accomplishments with pride. They also shared interests in commonalities among their choices in reading materials. From pop-culture magazines to chapter books assigned as part of the reading program, the girls made connections in their relationships through the printed word.

Such was the case in early October when there was a book fair in the school. Students selected books to purchase with a portion of the profits made during the book fair donated back to the school. The second grade class went to the book fair in the morning. Annie and Ruth purchased diaries, equipped with locks to maintain the privacy of the entries. They were eager to share their purchases, and brought them out onto the playground and then into the lunchroom. Ruth and Annie sat next to each other in the cafeteria and compared the pre-printed pages in the diaries. Judy and
Karen also shared reading material during their recess and lunch time. Their choice went to reading the captions and looking at the photos in teen magazines. Karen brought them for the reading pleasure of the two friends. During a lunch period, I joined them at their lunch table to find Karen and Judy whispering to each other as it is supposed to be silent in the cafeteria at this point. They whispered and asked me if I liked one of the people whose picture was in the magazine. I shrugged my shoulders and shook my head silently indicating I did not know the identity of the person on the page. I left the table so as to not get the girls in trouble for talking during the silent portion of lunch time. They giggled and continued to whisper about the items in the magazine.

Books and other reading materials allowed the girls to learn more about their common interests and support each other’s selections. The girls used the books to reinforce their opinions on topics of interest and bring clarity to the topics of discussion. My data show four of the five girls often used books to accentuate their conversations. They shared books on the carpet together when they had time to do so in the classroom and were often seen with reading materials on the playground during recess and then in the lunchroom afterwards. Use of the printed page was a factor in the manner in which they shared their time as friends.

Of note, also, was my data revealed Molly would often have a book with her during recess and lunch instead of engaging in conversation with her peers. Books served a different purpose for her. Observation of Molly often made me think of people I saw sitting alone in a restaurant, reading while waiting for their meal. When I commented to Molly, “You read quite a bit,” she replied simply with, “Yeah, I like to
read.” No further explanation was given by Molly or solicited by me. She was comfortable with her pattern of behavior. Molly did not use books to make connections or explore common interests with the other girls. I wondered, did she use the books to avoid eye-contact with her peers enabling her to not have to engage with them?

Games of Imagination

One of the major opportunities for the children to develop their friendships was during the 23 minutes they spent daily on the playground during recess. Like other researchers collecting data on friendship patterns (Bolton, 1999; Markovits et al., 2001; Parker & Seal, 1996), I observed that the girls experienced the playground in a very definite manner. The data I collected through the months provided access to the patterns of activities and interests shared by the second grade girls in the study. The girls clustered in small groups ranging from two to four children and engaged in playing imaginary games together. Their activities ranged from running and chasing each other to the limits of the play area to sedentary games. The girls often brought small items able to be concealed in pockets or backpacks. Since toys were not allowed in the classroom, the girls’ power of imagination was most often exercised during the portion of the day they spent on the playground or in the lunchroom.

Imaginary games took many forms. Karen, Molly, Annie, and Ruth engaged in imaginary play in the form of “playing school.” Annie sat on the bench nearest to the school door and read from a book. Karen, Judy, and Ruth sat on the ground in circle
around her listening to her read. Judy asked a question and was told by Annie to “raise your hand.”

On another occasion, Molly had a toy in her pocket. When she retrieved it during lunch time and began spinning it on the table, Zach told her he had a “megamind toy” like that one. She spun it around until a teacher assistant came near the table and she returned it to her pocket. She branched out from her book at lunch to a small toy. I was sorry she felt the need to conceal it as it might have offered her the opportunity to make a connection with Zach during lunch time. Molly and Zach experienced the limitations placed on them by the agenda of the institution.

When I returned to the literature to inform what I was observing on the playground, I found significance in one of the activities I had observed, the girls playing chasing games. Thorne (1993) described the activity of cross-gender chasing as often being the result of “little to do” (p.69) during the periods of recess and lunch. Considering the number of children enclosed in the playground during recess with limited equipment and only materials brought from home to occupy their time, my data of instances of chasing by the girls is consistent with Thorne’s findings. Thorne also noted variations by age in chasing activities. In her data, students in the first grade engaged in fantasy scenarios in their cross-gender chasing games. The process of induction was also observed in younger children, along with girls chasing games including a safety zone that girls could enter to escape from the fray of the game (p.70). The second grade girls at Lakeville Elementary School often engaged in cross-gender chasing games mimicking imaginary fantasy characters. At other times, however, data on chasing reveal no intended meaning. As was noted in Thorne’s data
(1993), cross-gender chasing was accompanied by lively discussion. Such was the occurrence with my data, also.

Each playground observation involved a chasing game of some sort; sometimes the boys, sometimes the girls, and most often cross-gender chasing. The chasing games peaked my interest as they involved the only contracted period of physical activity for the girls. The chasing noted here involved observation and conversation surrounding four of the girls in the study: Karen, Judy, Annie, and Ruth.

On one crisp fall morning, Karen and Judy chased a boy, Rob, around the playground. They circled the jungle gym equipment five or six times until Rob scurried under the piece of equipment. The pursuit ended with them giggling to each other and taunting him to come out of his hiding place. Karen noted later, “When people are chasing us, we both run and stuff.” This was not a new activity begun in second grade as she shared, “When we were at our other school we would run away from people. Like there was this guy and we ran away from him and we hid a lot too.”

Judy also admitted to her love of chasing, “We love to do a ton of stuff together. Well, like we have play dates, and run a really lot.” She spoke of cross-gender chasing in her description of, “Well a lot of times we run a lot because he chases us. Well, he's a fourth grader. He's really weird. He always chases us… and he makes this really weird face.”

The girls identified involvement in the chasing games as a characteristic they enjoyed in their friendship. Annie was talking at lunch about Ruth, “What I like about Ruth is that she’s fun and when we're being chased by John, the fourth-grade boy, sometimes she'll get Robin, another second-grade girl, to stand guard. She will yell,
‘John’s coming!’…. And then we run as fast as we can.” Judy added to the data on chasing, “Sometimes we even pretend we’re dead. We get like this,”… she laid on the floor with her eyes closed and pretended she was dead...“because we really want Kyle to chase us. It's fun to get exercise from running.” Molly added her opinion to the conversation, “I never do.” She was accurate in her appraisal of her involvement of chasing others. She was never observed involved in the activity. Her comment spoke to her level of involvement in the activity, but did not minimize the connection chasing brought to the other four girls: Ruth, Annie, Karen, and Judy.

**The Influence of Boys in the Relationships of Girls**

While this dissertation is about girls’ friendships, boys do play a role in their lives at Lakeview Elementary School. On one specific occasion, the cross-gender chasing involved two of the girls, Annie and Ruth, chasing and being chased by a group of second grade boys. The dynamic was consistent with the manner in which Thorne (1993) reported boys involved in boy-chasing, but different from the cross-gender chasing games I had observed Annie and Ruth involved in on previous occasions. Annie wielded an item like a sword at the boys while she chased them. I began with, “I have a very important question I have to ask you. A couple of the days ago at recess I saw you playing with the boys, there was a bunch of boys, Kyle and Chuck. Was it a Harry Potter game? You were running around.” Annie clarified the day, “With a stick?” I acknowledged the item she was wielding, “Yes, you had a stick. Well actually you had a jump rope or something.” We confirmed the sword-play, the characters being part of the Harry Potter series, and then I asked about why she was
playing with the boys. Annie, “I was Jenny. Kyle convinced me to do it because I
know more about Harry Potter than he does. Yeah, he always wants to be Harry. He
tries to be a leader and everything.” In her mind, Annie knew more about how to play
an imaginary game of Harry Potter than the boy who thought he was the leader. She
was doing him a favor. I never spoke with Kyle about his impression of Annie’s
involvement in the chasing game. In retrospect, it was this conversation with Annie
about her interaction with Ruth, Kyle, Chuck and the other boys forced me to
reexamine data relative to the influence the boys had on the relationships of the girls.

As the girls were negotiating relationships within the confines of the school,
the data I collected also reflected the role of boys in structuring the relationships of
girls. For the most part, the behavior of the boys influenced the girls’ relationships in a
subtle manner. The boys held an influential position of power simply by behaving to
the socially acceptable expectation of boys in this school setting (Gurian, 2001;
Pollack, 1998; Thorne, 1993). My data reflect a contextual example of gender as a
social construction (Lorber, 1994).

The influence the boys had over the girls manifested itself on a daily basis in
the lunchroom. The arrangement of the area in which the children sat to eat their lunch
was a string of four rectangular tables. Benches were attached to both sides of the
table. Twenty-two children needed to fit on the benches during the lunch period.
While both the boys and the girls had to vie daily for their seat at the lunch table, I
propose the data reflected the males remaining in their preferred choice of seat more
frequently than the females. The seat-choice behaviors of the boys brought no
comment from the adults supervising the cafeteria. The girls offered little protest as
they changed their intended seats at the lunch table. The girls unsuccessfully attempted to leave items to indicate they would return to a chosen spot to eat their lunch. I argue, this accepted behavior pattern further minimized the amount of time and choices the girls had when selecting their lunch time companions. Conversation, already limited by the silence instituted during the lunch period, was further restricted when the girls were squeezed-out of desired seats by the machinations of the boys. More often than not, the girls acquiesced to the boys’ seat selection.

During the lunch time, data reveal the boys saved seats for one another and looked for each other as they approached the table. Sean, who I came to memo was the mayor of that end of the table, was always the first member of Mrs. Z’s class to sit at the table for lunch. He spread out his lunch brought from home and waited. This was also the behavior of the girls, but with differing results. During one instance, Annie was already seated at the lunch table waiting for the arrival of Ruth. Jake sat next to Annie. Ruth tried to squeeze into a space between them, next to Annie, but Jake held his position and pushed Ruth out of the way. Annie, already into taking food from her lunch box stayed put, and Ruth went further down the table to find a seat. On other occasions, Annie would have followed Ruth. She did not on this occasion, so her seat selection was secure, but not so for her friend, Ruth. Jake had limited their ability to sit with each other during the lunch period.

On another occasion, Ruth and Annie attempted to place an item on the table to indicate they would return to the spot to consume their lunch. The two girls have each brought a book in from recess. They each laid their book on the lunch table as a place holder while they went to get their lunch. Adam sat on the bench where the books had
been placed and proceeded to slide then into the middle of the table further down the row. He did not honor the books as a place holder, but moved them so he could sit in place he wanted. Lunch tray in hand, the girls returned to the table, made a comment to Adam, and took their books and moved to a different spot. By this time, the clap had occurred and Ruth and Annie could not talk with each other until near to the end of lunch. Again they had fallen prey to the seat selections of the boys. They also had fallen prey to the institution allowing the behavior to continually impact their choices. I had to know why Annie, who I saw as one of the more verbal of the group, did not protest to the teacher assistants when items she thought would save her seat were disregarded by the boys. Her response tipped her hand, “She’s just going to tell me to find another seat.” The behaviors of the boys were accepted practice by the teacher assistants and the girls affected by their actions.

Sometimes, a girl would choose a seat only to move because of the boy who decided to sit next to her. Karen, who often sat with Judy at the “peanut free” table, sat on the bench with the rest of the class. When she sat with Judy, only those invited to sit at the table were in attendance. On this particular day, Judy was absent. Karen had begun her lunch when Kyle placed his lunch tray on the table and began to sit next to her. Karen got up and moved. Kyle followed her to two different spots. I heard an, “AH!” as she quickly sat and put her hand out on either side of the bench to “save seats” for her friends. Kyle went to the other side of the table across from Karen, sat, and smiled and nodded at her. He was sitting across from Karen, not next to her, but he certainly had controlled where she sat. His facial expression after all were seated
would lead me to believe he felt fine with the manner in which the seating arrangement ended.

Judy and Molly did not experience the influence of the boy’s actions during the lunch period for different reasons. Judy had an allergy to peanuts, so she ate a separate table near to the end of the cafeteria. She invited friends to eat with her at a table where seating was plentiful. Molly always ate alone in the cafeteria unless she was part of the group of girls who joined me for lunch. She sat at the table with her class, usually next to a group of boys, and rarely talked. She chose her seat, put down her lunch tray, and it was like she was not even there. She told me, “I like when we eat lunch together,” “it’s fun,” but would only say, “I sit where I want” when asked about her lunch time seat choice. I went back to my thought that her book was her lunch companion.

On more than one occasion, I sought to talk with the girls about how the actions they described during our conversations were examples of leadership on their part. Karen, Judy, and Molly disagreed with Angela’s self-decreed leadership role among the girls, but they were united in their opinion of who was the leader in their class. All five girls, on separate occasions and in group conversations, identified Kyle as the person who they perceived to be the leader of the class. They identified him definitively as trying to control the actions of the boys and girls in the class. He was the boy who would always burp loudly in the lunchroom after the children were “clapped” to silence. His behavior was never acknowledged by the teacher assistants, and caused giggles and laughter from others in the cafeteria.
The girls and I discussed the dynamics of when they played cross-gender chasing games with the boys. The girls acknowledged the control Kyle possessed over the “chasing game” they played. Annie was clear about her opinion when she stated, “I have to tell you something. Kyle will say to me, ‘if you want to play that part’… like say you're playing two parts and I'll ask him… okay pretend you're Kyle ‘since she's playing two parts can I play one of her parts?’ And he says ‘no’ and then he walks away and we keep asking him.” Ruth added, “and he always says no and we keep asking him.” Judy continues, “and Kyle is the leader and he tells other boys to go fart over there or go fart in our face”… “Kyle gets to tell the boys and the girls what to do because he acts like he's so popular and all the girls like him or something”… “Yeah, we don't really like him at all”… “He farts too much and sometimes he makes fun of people”.

To the girls, it would appear they felt leadership was synonymous with getting others to act in a manner you chose. They allowed Kyle to manipulate their actions during the chasing games, an integral part of what they enjoyed doing together as friends. They were grappling with his popularity and what it might mean to “like” him (Thorne & Luria, 1986). The girls were experiencing a social construction of gender that allowed “boys to be boys” and the girls to negotiate within a male-dominated structure (Sadker & Sadker, 1994).
Inclusion and Exclusion as it Relates to Second Grade Girls

I had to analyze data including Molly’s interactions over the months many times. At first, I saw hers as an exclusionary tale. Molly was not often invited to events or naturally part of the stories between the other four girls. When we ate lunch as a group, she told stories of her own she viewed as related to the adventures and activities Karen, Ruth, Annie, and Judy regaled. I honored her attempt to make connections with her classmates in her own style with her own tales of adventure. Her experiences were not the same as those of the other girls in the study. Molly made forays into the lives of the other four girls during classroom activities and conversations at lunch. Sometimes her attempts were mere talk and other times her words found meaning in the lives of others.

I first noticed a pattern to Molly’s behavior when she repeatedly spent her time at lunch and on the playground alone. From the diagram of the children at the lunch table, she sat at the end of one of the tables. On most of the days, she was diagonally across from two girls and at the end of a group of girls at the adjoining table. She positioned herself in a spot to be able to make conversation with her classmates, but did not engage in one. She brought a book on most days and read as she ate. On two occasions, I reported her drawn into interactions at the lunch table through her actions and mine. She was working her way, slowly, into finding comfort in the company of others.

Friendlessness during childhood may be a temporary situation. However, chronic or continuous friendlessness is an extremely unpleasant and lonely state (Parker & Seal, 1997). I did not envision Molly as friendless. But, that may be my
bias as I came to know her over the months. My data document her willingness to be drawn into situations and find where she fit. Her potential to embrace the qualities and characteristics that constitute friendship between her and second grade girls has yet to be realized. As a researcher, she is a continuing topic of consideration.

**Considering the Data as a Whole**

The girls in the second grade had social agency. While they might lack the sophisticated vocabulary to assign labels to all of the characteristics they valued in their friends, they were very specific in their descriptions of favorable qualities and activities. My data leads me to argue Karen, Judy, Annie, Molly, and Ruth engaged in specific behaviors when developing and evaluating relationships with their peers. They possessed shared interests, qualities, and characteristics with their friends. They valued kindness, caring, and helpfulness in discussion of what made a personal relationship important. Maintenance of friendships and longevity of relationships presented itself in many conversations. The girls eagerly shared their voices and presented their version of what is was to be a second grade girl engaging, developing, assessing, and maintaining friendships.

Shortly after I had read the assent statement to Ruth, she said to me, “Here’s what I do you do when I want to be somebody’s friend…I just ask them, ‘Can I please be your friend?’” If only the ensuing observations and conversations revealed it to be that simple. Molly, Ruth, Annie, Karen, and Judy were deliberate in their actions and able to articulate their feelings. The girls were slow to label the actions of their peers, but detailed and specific in their retelling of behaviors exhibited during friendship
development. They recognized how the actions of others affect them. As Judy stated, relationship building for seven and eight year old girls may begin with a simple question, but it is the evolving communication and interactions between people which led to the decisions that come with any relationship whether you are seven or seventy.
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

It was one of those beautiful December days that called you to go outside if the opportunity presented itself. We decided to take advantage of the sunshine, so Annie, Ruth, and Karen and I sat outside on a bench in the playground. Over the course of the months we had talked about many things, but I wanted to be sure I had not forgotten to ask them anything they felt was important.

When there was a break in our conversation I asked, “So, is there anything in particular when I tell my story about second grade girls that I need to be sure to include?” Ruth responded without hesitation, “That we are all active and deep, deep, deep inside we’re all friends.” I probed a little further, “deep, deep, deep…. so what's on the surface?” Ruth, “On the surface is most girls are friends and most boys are friends.” Karen added, “Yeah, and sometimes the boys and girls are friends.” They nodded to each other. “You girls are awesome, I will make sure to include that,” was my reply. Once again, the girls made me smile and provided me with the entrée into the findings and discussion portion of this dissertation.

Ruth articulated what I had come to see through analysis of my data collected over the months with the girls; second grade girls were deliberate in their actions as they maneuvered their way through the impact placed on them by the institutional structures. The girls had agency. They developed friendships through constant communication. Second grade girls are talkers. Through their interactions they discovered common behaviors and characteristics; what they “liked” about each other
that caused them to want to spend time together. They use these commonalities to include and exclude others in their friendship decisions. Also of note, the five girls in my study; Karen, Annie, Ruth, Molly and Judy, were practicing strategies, in a non-threatening manner, that were commonly displayed by their adolescent counterparts during relational aggression otherwise referred to as female bullying. They were the subversive behaviors that are so easy to miss, yet could so easily become the subversive tactics of female bullying (Simmons, 2002).

Girls view a world comprised of relationships rather than people standing alone, a world that coheres through human connection rather than through systems of rules (Gilligan, 1982). Though not studied in her work, the seven and eight-year-old girls in my study could certainly be added to Gilligan’s (1982) claim. Additionally, my data allow me to make three distinct claims about the friendship formations of seven and eight year old girls in the second grade.

**Claim #1:** The institutional structure of the school impacts the development of friendships between and among second grade girls.

**Claim #2:** The behavior patterns and common characteristics shared by seven and eight year old girls during the development of friendships were deliberate.

**Claim #3:** Seven and eight-year-old girls used their common interests to include and exclude members in their group. They demonstrated examples of behaviors used by their adolescent counterparts during female bullying.
The Impact of the Institutional Structure on the Friendship Development

The following is a representational table (Table 2) of the manner in which the various institutional structures impacted the friendship formation behaviors of the girls. The two left columns describe the institutional structure that affected the girls as well as the activity under which the institutional structure took place. The remaining columns list the behaviors the girls engaged in while under the influence of the institutional structure. What struck me when I organized my data in this format was the preponderance of X’s which appeared in the furthest right columns. I argue that the negative characteristics of the imposed institutional structures; limiting the opportunities of the girls to be with each other in an unstructured setting, subversive behaviors, whispering, telling secrets, and competition, resided in the right columns. While no institutional structure appeared in all of the “negative” columns, taken as a collective whole, the X’s cannot be ignored. Institutional structures imposed on the girls negatively impacted their ability to form friendships.
Table 2: Institutional Structures Impact on Friendship Formation in Second Grade Girls

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Institutional Structure Impacting the Girls</th>
<th>Fosters Communication Between/among the Girls</th>
<th>Explore Common Interests</th>
<th>Limitation of Opportunity to Interact with all Children</th>
<th>Subversive Activity of the Girls</th>
<th>Whisper</th>
<th>Tell Secrets</th>
<th>Competition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recess</td>
<td>Only second grade children were outside at the same time</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recess</td>
<td>Used as a punishment – students excluded for various infractions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Students sit at assigned tables separated throughout the room with only their classmates</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Silence</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PBIS</td>
<td>Awarding tickets for positive actions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PBIS</td>
<td>Instituting rules without student input</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner choice by teacher</td>
<td>Teacher assigned students’ partners</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If the structures and culture of the school place limitations on the girls in developing friendships, what do the data suggest they offer the girls? Clearly when children are brought together in any social setting they interact with each other. Their interactions are influenced by the adults in the setting just as the adults are influenced by the children (Thorne, 1993). The girls in my study acted, reworked, resisted, and created. Though their opportunities to make choices were limited, they made choices none-the-less. Gender was constantly being created and recreated through their interaction with their environment and society. They learned the societal expectations
of being a girl. The girls learned the discursive patterns which reinforced when they were doing a good job at “being a good girl” (Davies, 2003).

**Second Grade Girls Were Deliberate in Their Friendship Formation**

“We are active and deep, deep, deep down we are all friends.” These are not words to be taken lightly. These are the words of a young girl adding an important slice of data to my study of second grade girls and the literature about them. Ruth and Karen’s summation of “what needed to be said” about them indicated a recognition of their frenzied motion as a characteristic of “who they are” and cited the importance of their relationships with one another, “we are all friends.” They could have chosen any words as their message of importance about themselves, but there it was, friendships synonymous with the fabric of their being. They used the vehicle of conversation and their interactions together to establish their friendships in a deliberate manner.

Throughout our months together, the second grade girls acted and spoke deliberately about kindness, caring and helpfulness. They identified them as qualities they valued in their friendships, “she cares about me.” Karen, Molly, Judy, Annie, and Ruth displayed deliberate acts of kindness, caring and helpfulness toward each other (and it should be noted without the distribution of a ticket for their actions). They retrieved items for one another as acts of kindness, caring, and helpfulness. Incidents of one of the girls in a friendship dyad measuring the ability of her friend to need assistance to complete a task entered the data on more than one occasion. They helped each other and the larger community. Molly used the end of her lunch period each day to “be responsible” and helped clean the area around her class’s lunch tables. They shared their talents with each other. They celebrated each other’s accomplishments
both in the setting of school and within their personal family structures. They took note of the skills and gifts of others and acknowledged them. Data I collected support the claim that second grade girls linked the concept of friendship with words and actions of kindness, caring, and helpfulness. All five girls used their voices to tell their stories of how kindness, caring, and helpfulness entered into their interactions with others they identified as “friends”.

**Commonalities and their Influence on Second Grade Girls’ Friendship Formations**

My data provide evidence of the significance of commonalities being disclosed and discovered during the formation of friendships between the second grade girls in my dissertation study. The girls used their skills of conversation and communication to divulge their likes and opinions to each other. They built on each other’s ideas and finished each other’s sentences. They learned to take whatever the topic of the conversation might be and weave in a common link of their own. Through their conversations, the girls discovered their common interests in fashion, silly bands, reading and books, and playing games of imagination. They sought each other out on the playground during recess to engage in activities that included their commonalities. They also made exclusionary decisions based on their interests not matching those of other children.

In Table 3, I have provided a visual arrangement of the categories my data reveal to be the commonalities the girls expressed as important in their friendships. Of interest is the fact that while all of the items listed brought some of the girls together, they could also be examples of exclusion if examined in other instances. Linked with
inclusion were the concepts of status and power. Linked with exclusion were the concepts of aloneness, judgment, and deceit. These were the actions and words attributed to second grade girls talking and acting deliberately to achieve a desired goal, friendship.

Table 3: Commonalities as They Impacted Inclusion or Exclusion in a Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Stuff”/common interest</th>
<th>Inclusion</th>
<th>Exclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fashion</td>
<td>X Club</td>
<td>X Wearing jeans every day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hair bands</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bracelet brought connection between two girls/ wristbands</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Club</td>
<td>X Began with an interest in drawing fashion items in a notebook</td>
<td>X Boys not ever members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Allowed other girls to draw in the notebook without being members of the club</td>
<td>Girls ask to join and are judged based on their “drawing ability”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Members each had a notebook</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address Book</td>
<td>X A second stage of organized membership in a group that evolved from the “club”</td>
<td>X Boys not ever members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brought a sense of power to the girls to have membership in something when others wanted to be “in the club”</td>
<td>Girls ask to join and are judged based on their “drawing ability”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silly Bands</td>
<td>X Collected them</td>
<td>X Girls tried to trade for them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Traded them</td>
<td>Girls lied to each other to get more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kept track of who had the most – status</td>
<td>Some girls did not have access to them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kept track of who had unique bands that others did not – status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>X Celebrations of books read</td>
<td>X Molly read during lunch and recess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pop-culture magazines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Read to each other about interests</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Read books on the floor together at the start of the day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Buying the same book at the book fair</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imaginary games</td>
<td>X Spent time together in cross-gender chasing pretending to be characters in Harry Potter</td>
<td>X If the girls did not take on the role they boys wanted them to play, they did not participate in the game</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When I began looking at my data on the commonalities the girls shared in their friendships, I considered the categories in terms of how they brought the girls together in their friendships. When the ideas of status and power became intertwined with the categories, I had to reconsider what I was actually witnessing. For status and power to be had by one group, there needed to be another group that followed, or felt inferior, or was excluded. Status and power can only be had in relation to a group that is not as privileged or powerful. My data reveal that Annie and Ruth along with Karen and Judy were drawn together by similar interests and commonalities. They felt included in a bond of friendship through their inclusive interests.

My data reveal those same categories proved to become factors of exclusion for other students. In reference to the five participants in this study, Molly was often alone and sometimes excluded. I did not see her as the friendless child described in the studies of Parker and Seal (1996). Nonetheless, my data present instances of exclusion of Molly even occurred when she was invited to join in with the other girls. Such were the cases during the times she acquiesced to allow other girls to speak when clearly she was waiting to join the conversation, or when the other girls would whisper to each other when she was attempting to add to an ongoing conversation. Karen, Judy, Annie, and Ruth had shown concern at her being alone and kindly invited her to join us. They stopped short of continuing the caring to respect her voice once she joined the group.

Molly wore jeans every day which allowed her to perform her perfect cartwheels. But, at the same time Karen criticized her for not wearing a variety of clothes like the other girls. She was aware of the popular fad jewelry, silly bands, but
did not have any. She was not a member of the “club”, but had never really expressed an interest in becoming a member. I know she could draw and color well (a deciding factor for inclusion in the “club”) as I had seen some of her work. Molly was passionate about reading, a common interest in the friendships of the other four girls. Molly, however, used her reading as an isolated pastime during lunch and recess. She sat alone and often played alone during recess.

I purposely included Molly in my data collection because she was always on the periphery of activity. I found her interesting in an unidentifiable way. She sat by herself during group times on the rug. Her helpful activity in the lunch room was always within view of an adult; she caught their eye on her way to deposit the garbage in the trash bin. Molly joined any group when she was invited, and the girls still invited her to join them when we had lunch together. Yet, they ignored her contributions once she was there. The question for me was how much longer would this last? Molly was the girl who was alone. I struggled because there were sparks of connections for her, too. She had the hairbands that they girls were so interested in. She hid a toy in her pocket and tried to get the attention of the boy sitting next to her during lunch. She talked with me and Sarah about my bracelet. Is it again the institution that allows her to slide below the radar because she is quiet and doesn’t cause a stir? Whose job is it to notice her?

I do not think I can count the number of times I have heard the colloquialism “they are like little sponges” in reference to the ability of young children to absorb all that they encounter. Molly, Karen, Judy, Annie, and Ruth witnessed exclusion of students and transferred it to their own circumstances. It occurred every day, exampled
by the institution that was charged to prepare them to become members of a
democratic society (Dewey, 1938). The consequence of non-compliance was
exclusion. Those witnessing the exclusion were to leave the person alone.

Parallels between the Behavior of Second Grade Girls and Adolescent Female
Bullying Behavior

Much of my work prior to this research study has been with adolescents. I have
worked with groups of middle school students in forming a Peer Leadership Group
charged by the School Committee of the town to address bullying in the middle
school. I helped the members of the leadership group understand the discrete
characteristics of female bullying. I almost left that extensive knowledge base behind
as I was examining my data gathered with the second grade girls. I did not witness the
overt bullying behaviors that so often tragically made the headlines. But as I analyzed
the data, I realized I had witnessed behaviors that were small-scale exercises of what
becomes a larger-scale practice when adolescent girls bully each other. My intent in
presenting this as a claim of my research is to include it as a cautionary slice of data.
The impact of the institutional structure allowed the second grade girls to engage in
behaviors that have parallels in the behaviors of their adolescent female counterparts.

As presented in the literature review, Simmons (2002) described many of the
actions, interaction, and behaviors her research revealed occurred during female
bullying. Covert behavior is used to make it seem as though there was no intent to hurt
at all. Social aggression is intended to damage self-esteem or social status within a
group. It may include indirect aggression like rumor spreading or social exclusion.
Girls’ subtle, manipulative, and indirect use of language constituted a social process which either binds friendships or rejects them.

I argue that the efforts of the second grade girls to maneuver within the restrictive, limiting institutional structure of the school offered them the opportunity to practice some of the same behaviors that become destructive to friendships during adolescence. They were learning to become subtle and manipulative in their efforts to partner together in the classroom and overcome the silence of the lunchroom. Language, conversation, and communication were a central mechanism in the development of their friendships. They went to subtle, covert, and manipulative measures to communicate with each other. They were learning to employ subversive tactics to achieve their personal goals. They also experienced the power of possessing material goods and using that power to exclude others from activities. They were practicing and experiencing exclusion in various ways. Were Annie, Ruth, Molly, Karen, and Judy being bullies or bullied? I argue they were not. Their actions did not fulfill the three necessary components of bullying; negative actions, repeated over time, and carried out by a single individual or group (Olweus, 1993). They were not victimizing others as happened during bullying. But, they were, I argue, introduced to and made to practice some of the same behaviors so often used in female bullying as a method to handle to restrictive limitations placed on them by the institutional structure of the school. Theirs were not malicious acts, but acts of circumstantial manipulation.

Schools, by virtue of the fact they are institutions designed to bring education to students, need to be able to meet the needs of all children. In doing so, establishment of a system to convey the rules and parameters of the institution are
essential to the delivery of skills. The children need to feel safe and secure in their school environment (Kagan, 2001; Kessler, 2000; Kohn, 1993). The established behavioral management system of Lakeville Elementary School fostered flies in the face of allowing the students to become active participants in the climate of their school. It provided an expectation that the girls would follow the rules without question as to their effectiveness. They were experiencing the domesticating education of Finn (1999). The girls were taught to follow directions and rewarded for their docility and obedience.

What might happen if they were afforded the opportunity to experience an education that empowered them (Anyon in Finn, 1999)? If their educational structure were more akin to that of children with affluence and privilege who learn to produce works and create products because of the rewards of hard work and the position of power it places them in when negotiating with the figures of authority and true power. I am not suggesting that my second grade girls could run the school better than the existing structure. But rather, I am acknowledging all five girls are more than able to contribute their perspective to the structures that make up the institution. They need to be given the support and instruction as to how to use their agency and communication skills to become part of a community of learners. The empowerment of collaboration in an institution can be felt by girls in the second grade (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Kohn, 1991; Thorne, 1993). What might happen if they were allowed to experience that power? They should be taught the skills of consensus and collaboration and allowed to practice them in their school setting. Girls who are deliberate in their actions, manipulate their environment to meet their needs, and use their behavior to
include and exclude others in their group are displaying behaviors of choice. My data confirm the five second grade girls of Lakeville Elementary School displayed these behaviors. Imagine what might happen if they were asked what they needed in their day in order to learn? I would suggest silent lunches and limited time to interact with children of their choice would not be on their list. Asking them to become a part of the planning allows them the voice they are more than able to contribute and the commitment to make the plan come to fruition. School as an institution is all of the members it serves. Children are a part of the institution. They should be included as such.

**Limitations of the Study**

As a researcher, I must be mindful of the limitation brought to this study both by myself and the five girls whose actions and voices it represents. Analysis of my data may be confounded by the limitations of self-report during the observation and interview stage, my own personal biases, each of the participant’s access to their thinking about relationships, and the ability of my data to speak beyond these children, in this particular setting, at this particular time.

One limitation of this study is the self-report that is necessary during the interviews with Annie, Molly, Ruth, Judy, and Karen. Self-report can lead to data being inaccurately presented by the interviewee to represent what she thinks the interviewer wants to hear. Grounded Theory Methodology requires that I, as researcher, present my theory from the point of view of the students under study. Control for this factor was attempted through the rapport that was established between
the researcher and the students. We spent much time together, talking. I reread my notes of our interactions and conversations and entered the setting each time looking to build on or clarify points so as to bring clarity and refinement to my generating theory. If data seemed inconsistent, I had the option to revisit it during a subsequent visit and ask the girl to help me understand her thinking. In addition, the girls seemed to counter another’s statement if it did not match the way they thought it should be told. Their data came together under my analysis to form the theory presented in chapters four and five. My findings represented relative to the potential the behaviors presented were more of a critical ethnographer. To have left them from the discussion would have provided the reader a disservice. They provide the reader with the opportunity to approach these data with an eye for the future. Knowledge of the parallels to adolescent bullying combined with the documented desire for the young girls to be able to communicate has the potential to allow educators and clinicians working with young girls to consider methods of encouraging supportive, communicative, problem-solving behaviors.

When the researcher is also an employee of the setting, as I was in this district, personal bias on the part of the researcher is always in question. In discovering theory, I needed to generate conceptual categories or their properties from evidence; and the evidence from which the category emerged was then used to illustrate the concept (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). My work as a consultant in the district afforded me insights into the workings of the building and the school system as a whole. I could have applied those insights through systemic comparative analyses (Glaser & Strauss,
1967). In this study, I used comparative analysis to discover and ground theory in evidence provided through the data, thus minimizing my bias.

The peer relationship patterns of thinking of five second grade girls in an urban setting will only offer insight into what is happening for and between them in this particular setting. While their present peer relationships were investigated and theory generated about their behavior, the information cannot be generalized to the rest of second grade girls.

Additionally, I must be cognizant of the fact that the students may not have access to their thinking about relationships. Developmentally, females in grades 1-3 are able to express emotions through words, are more sensitive to social and personal context, but are less able to separate emotion from reason (Gurian, Henley, & Trueman, 2001). These qualities and characteristics in conjunction with the experiences in the context of the school should provide the students the tools to access and express their thinking about relationships.

One final note as to the limitations of this study was my elimination of the factor that social class may have added to my analysis of data. I did not interview the families of the children, nor did I overtly seek to layer factors of social class into my data analysis. I am aware that the addition of the social class structure of the girls might add to the discussion of their ride in the limousine during the birthday party. I could also have included comments relative to the social class structure of the girls during my discussion of the seating opportunities in the cafeteria. Who receive free and reduced lunch in the cafeteria might very well have had overtones of social class.
To have eliminated analysis of these data relative to the social class structure of the sample in no way deters from the findings and theory I have presented.

**Parallels to Consider**

My data lend significance to the study of second grade girls in myriad ways. The young girls in this study were resourceful in their attempts to communicate with each other. They displayed specific behaviors in their friendship formations and honored specific characteristics and values in each other. Fellow educators can use these data when considering methods of development of programming involving young girls. These data add to existing literature in identifying specific behaviors which can be used as a cornerstone from which to empower young girls.

Also of consideration is that all of the members of an institution should be mindful of the lessons they are teaching children through their actions (Sizer, T. & Sizer, N., 1999). Through analysis of my data of the girls’ behavior, I began to use the inductive reasoning inherent in qualitative methodology to consider some of the more subtle, manipulative behaviors in a different light. Is there any relationship between an institution providing a structure for girls to practice covert behaviors in order to have access to communicate with each other and the covert behaviors used by adolescent girls to practice relational aggression and bullying? Do girls who incorporate the structures used to make connections in reading to their structures to engage in conversation stop there? Do they extrapolate the examples of exclusion witnessed as acceptable methods of dealing with children who do not meet the expectations or agenda of another person to a method to deal with similar situation in their personal
lives? Adolescent girls use exclusion as a weapon during female bullying (Simmons, 2002). These are questions in need of further study. Of significance from my data in this study are the patterns of covert behavior, manipulation, and exclusion that the second grade girls are beginning to practice during their friendship formations.

I do not mean to intimate that these girls will be bullies. I have no crystal ball to read into their future. My data indicate that the agenda of the institution to control the actions of young girls can foster the development of behaviors that are techniques used in bullying in adolescent girls. I propose the members of an institution do not seek to stifle conversation, but rather use it to engage the students in being part of the decisions that guide the establishment. Bring the voices of the girls into the mix that becomes their school. Ownership is a powerful tool. They deserve the opportunity to own their decisions and communicate their ideas. Their friendships are based on such actions.
CONSENT DOCUMENT
Rhode Island College


To the family of:

You have been asked to take part in a research project described below. The researcher will explain the project to you in detail. You should feel free to ask questions. If you have more questions later, Sheila McGraw, the person mainly responsible for this study, 401-474-0213 will discuss them with you. As your child is a minor, younger than at least 18 years old, your parental consent is needed for her to be in this research project. Your child will also be asked whether he/she wants to participate and his/her wishes will be followed.

Description of the project:
Your child has been asked to take part in a study that will examine how and why female children make particular choices in the development, dissolution, and renewal of peer relationships. Consent is being sought from both the families of the boys and girls in the class as girl’s interaction often involve the boys in the class.

What will be done:
If you decide to take part in this study here is what will happen:
- Observation of the students on the playground and in the classroom
- Interview of the child which will be audio-recorded to ensure accuracy of information
- Photographs of the children engaging in activities throughout the school day

Risks or discomfort:
The project documents events that are already taking place during the interactions between the second grade students. The interviews seek to clarify impressions and interpretations of the patterns of behaviors of the girls in the second grade. The girls may also experience discomfort in who will have access to the information that they are sharing. In order to eliminate any feelings of discomfort or inaccuracies in reporting of interview data, guided interviews will be conducted in private locations by me, as the researcher. Girls will once again be reassured of the confidentiality of the information shared during the sessions. The tape recording of the interview will aid in accurate transcription of the conversations.

During the interviews, the researcher may have access to information that should not be held in confidence. Such information might include abuse or the student having thoughts of harm to themselves or others. As I am a certified teacher of the state of RI with reporting responsibilities, access to information that should not be held in confidence (as delineated in the Risks section) will be reported to the Principal of the school. In doing this, the expectation is that the information will be handled along the policies of the school and the state of Rhode Island.

As the research is being conducted in a school setting, the work of the researcher will not interfere with the educational instruction of the children.

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Date 12/12/96 – 6/12/70
RIC Committee on Human Participants in Research

Page 1 of 2
Benefits of this study:
Although there will be no direct benefit to you for taking part in this study, the researcher will learn more about the cognitive processes that girls engage in relative to peer relationships. Such information will be of benefit to the educational community as a whole.

Confidentiality:
Your child’s part in this study is confidential. None of the information will identify her/him by name. All records will be maintained by the researcher outside of the setting in a secure location. It will be stored for a minimum of 3 years after completion of the study. Specific information gathered in this study will not be shared with the school. A summary report will be made available to the principal, if requested.

Decision to quit at any time:
The decision to take part in this study is up to you and your child and is completely voluntary. Your child will be asked separately whether she wants to participate. Both you and your child may decline to participate or may change your mind at any time with no negative consequences to your child’s grades or standing at the school. If you wish to quit, you simply inform Sheila McGraw at 401-474-0213 of your decision.

Rights and Complaints:
If you have any questions about the study, you may contact Sheila McGraw or Dr. Lesley Bogad Rm. 217 Henry Barnard School Rhode Island College 600 Mt. Pleasant Ave. Providence, RI 02908. If you have any complaints or concerns about your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact the Chair of the Institutional Review Board at IRB@ric.edu or by calling 401-456-8228.

You have read the Consent Form. Your signature on this form means that you understand the information and you agree to give permission for your child to participate in this study.

Please initial each section separately as you have the right to agree to each part of the proposal on an individual basis.

I ___ Do ___ Do Not give permission for my child to be observed during the school day ________________ Parent initials

I ___ Do ___ Do Not give permission for my child to be interviewed ________________ Parent initials

I ___ Do ___ Do Not give permission for my child to be photographed ________________ Parent initials

Signature of Parent/Guardian ___________________________ Signature of Researcher ___________________________

Typed/printed Name __________________________________ Typed/printed name ___________________________

Date ____________________________________________ Date ____________________________________________

Please sign both consent forms, keeping one for yourself

McGraw Consent Form

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Appendix B: Informed Assent Paragraph for the Children Involved in the Study

How Young Girls Engage, Develop, Assess, and Maintain Relationships with Peers
PI: Sheila McGraw

Child Assent Script

* Good Morning (afternoon), Hi, Hey, Hi {name of child},

* How are you today?

My name is Mrs. McGraw. You may remember me from being at {name of school} for the last couple of years. I was in your classroom and on the playground and in the lunchroom. Do you remember?

I don’t work here anymore, but I’m doing a study with the teachers and students in the second grade. I want to learn about you and your friends and some of the ways that you play together and apart. I want to know about what you like about some kids and how they become your friends.

If you choose to be in the study, then I’ll sit in your classroom and around the school taking notes about what I see second grade students doing. Later on, I will probably invite you to lunch or make a plan to meet you at recess and ask you to help me to understand some things that I saw or heard.

We already told your parents about the study, and they said it’s okay for you to do it if you want to. If you don’t want to be in the study, you can say “No” and nobody will be mad at you and it won’t hurt your grades or anything like that. Also you can change your mind at any time and nobody will be upset and nothing bad will happen.

You need to know that I promise that your name and what you tell me or what I see will not be told to any other adults. That is called being confidential. Have you heard that word before? Do you understand what it means to be confidential?

There is only one thing that I will have to share with someone else in the school, and that is if I think you are in danger for any reason or if I see you hurt yourself or someone else on purpose. I will talk with you first before I talk to anyone else so that we can talk about what I thought happened and who I need to share the information with. I wanted to let you know that this might happen if you tell me that kind of information. Do you understand that?

So, like I said earlier, you don’t have to do this if you don’t want to and nobody will be upset.

Do you have any questions about the study?

Would you like to do it?

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Date: 12/29/2010
RIC Committee on Human Participants in Research


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